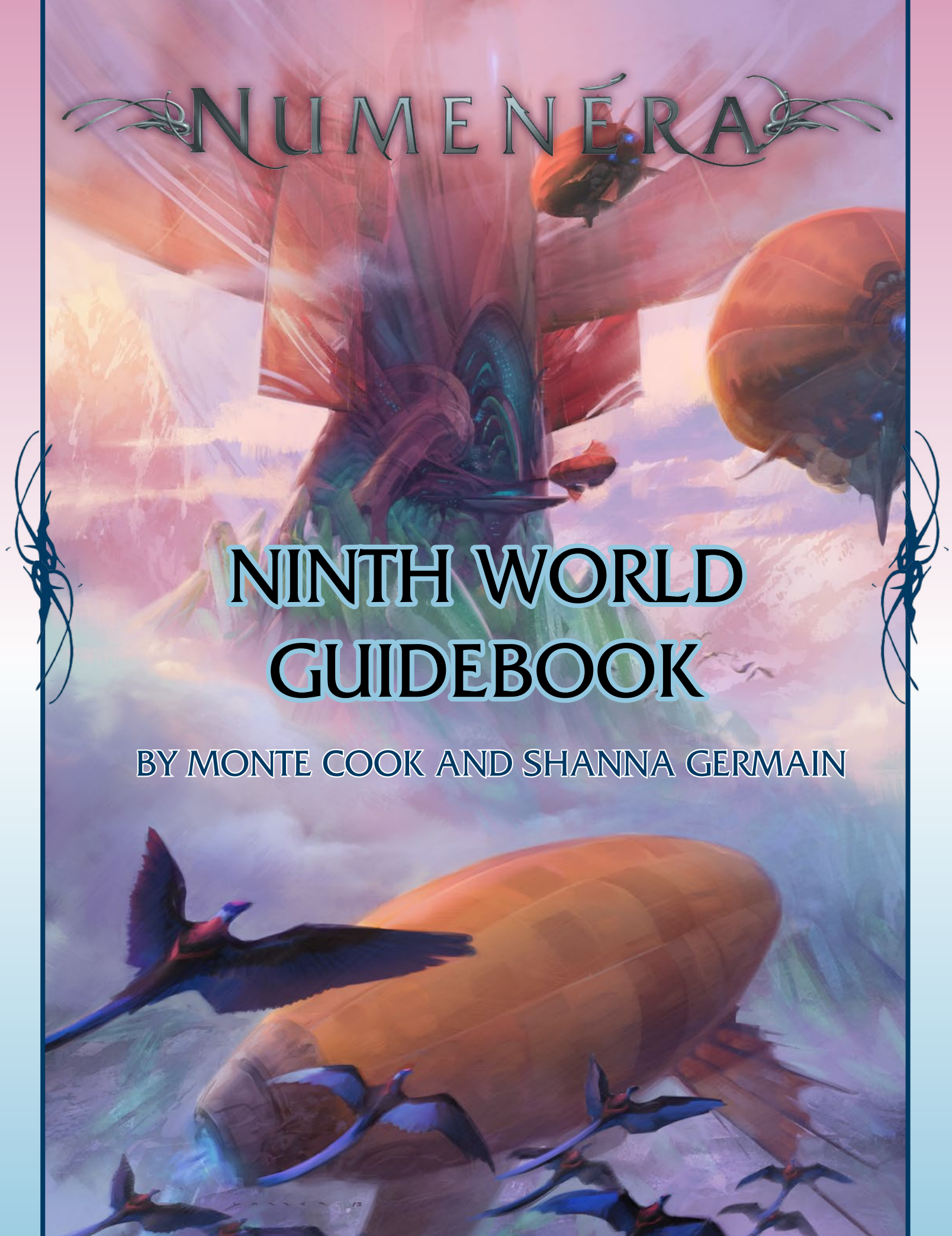


The background of the cover is a vibrant, painterly illustration. It depicts a fantastical scene with a large, orange, egg-shaped object floating in the sky. Several dark, winged creatures with red and blue markings are flying around it. In the foreground, a large, dark, winged creature is shown in flight. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall style is reminiscent of classic fantasy book covers.

NUMENERA

NINTH WORLD GUIDEBOOK

BY MONTE COOK AND SHANNA GERMAIN



NUMENÉRA

NINTH WORLD GUIDEBOOK

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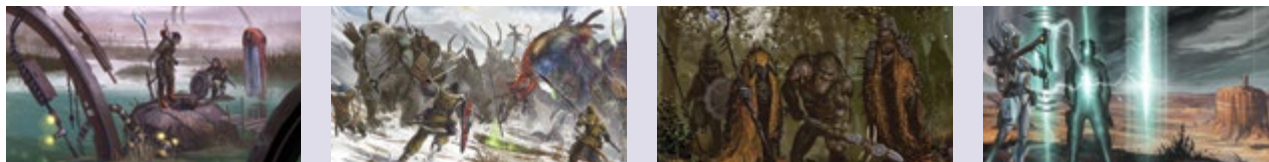


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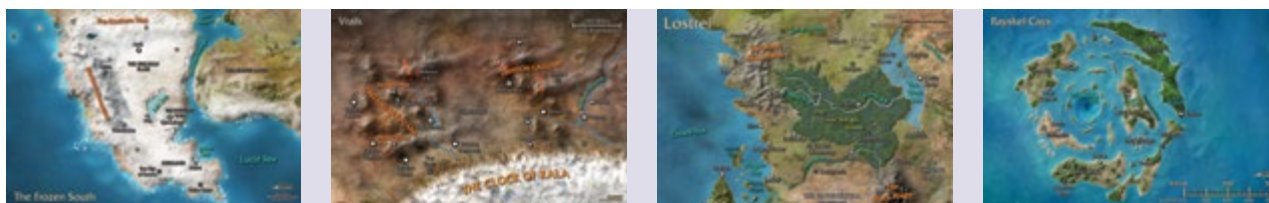
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NUMENÉRA



NINTH WORLD SUPERCONTINENT

PART 1:

BACK TO THE NINTH WORLD



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Ninth World presents a strange dichotomy of old and new, so it is entirely appropriate that you hold in your hands a new book about a setting already detailed in the *Numenera* corebook. The *Ninth World Guidebook*, however, presents all-new locations, most of them vast regions well beyond the maps you already have.

I imagine that about half of you reading this are thinking, “This book is long overdue—there isn’t enough detail in the corebook for me.” And the other half might be thinking, “Why on earth do I need this book? The material in the corebook is more than enough. Surely adding to it will oversaturate the setting and step on my toes as a GM.”

Believe it or not, I’m sympathetic to both groups. And we’ve striven to try to please you all with this book. That was no easy task, but then, nothing worth getting excited about is ever an easy task, right?

As I mentioned, most of the locations in this book are in whole new regions. This means that they cannot contradict anything you’ve put in your campaign already. Even the areas of the Steadfast and the Beyond that we’ve detailed here are out of the way and remote. For example, we didn’t add a bunch of new material to Lhauric without warning, superseding all the material you’ve generated for that city in your home campaign. We don’t want to do that. The Ninth World of your campaign is yours, not ours, and we don’t want to contradict anything you’ve already done.

And we don’t have to. The Ninth World is big enough for all of us.

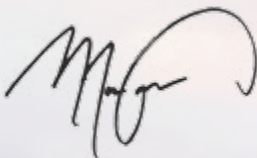
It’s important to remember that the area shown on the poster map in the *Numenera* corebook is only about the size of the continental United States. There’s still a lot of land mass on the planet that is completely unknown. Although the new regions greatly expand the amount of the world now detailed, there’s still a lot more. That means there’s room for you to create whole new lands and kingdoms, swamps and mountain ranges, and anything else you want. And, of course, just like with the Steadfast and the Beyond in the corebook, if you want to stick new cities, locations, or features into Lostrei, Vralk, Corao, or anywhere else in the *Ninth World Guidebook*, there’s plenty of room for that as well.

Even with this new book, the Ninth World remains a vast, mostly unexplored wilderness. The areas that we have mapped still have miles and miles of unlabeled regions for you to expand upon. Ninth Worlders don’t always know what lies over the next big hill or what waits on the other shore of the strange lake. You can put anything you like over there. There could be a large city or a huge ancient complex of your design and it won’t upset anything we’ve done. As we did with the corebook, we placed symbols for villages, fortresses, and more on the maps in this book for you to use as locations for your own creations. We won’t ever detail those unlabeled symbols—they are all yours and we won’t step on your toes.

Although it is in no way required to use *The Ninth World Bestiary* with this book, you’ll see some references to creatures found in those pages. Use of that book will enhance your enjoyment of this one, but wherever possible, we included a few details about the creatures referenced to give you an idea of what they’re like.

I hope you enjoy this book and find it a great addition to the weird and wondrous world so incredibly far in our future. May the material here add to your campaigns for years to come.

—Monte





CHAPTER 2

THE SOUND OF A BEAST

Since this morning, when I woke up with a damn caffa grub hanging off my neck, I'd been daydreaming about killing Palmer in his sleep. The only thing stopping me was I couldn't figure out the best way to do it. Sometimes I favored the quick blade across his snoring throat. Other moments, I imagined drugging him and rolling him into the fire. Once in a while, I thought I might just throw him to the next creature that attacked us in the dark. Mostly, though, I dreamed of transforming in the shadow of night and dragging him off to the wilds with my claws in the tender bits of his belly.

Palmer snored like a creature with eleven noses, so I figured that whatever I did to him would be lost in the great cadence of his sleep. No one would hear a thing. In fact, they'd all cheer me in the morning because they'd actually been able to sleep through the night for once.

I was so lost in this daydream that I nearly backtracked us. No one noticed until Norlup said in that quiet way he has, "Are we going down? Aren't we supposed to be going up by now?"

That's what they get for putting me in the lead. Norlup's got the enhanced eyes and ears, but he's the fallback type. You know, the guy who likes to bring up the rear. Which is okay by me most of the time; if anyone's going to stand behind me and send streaks of lightning over my head, I want it to be Norlup.

Of course, not getting us lost is supposed to be Palmer's job. His claim of knowing this area like the face of his own mother is the only thing he's said so far that's truth. Turns out, his mother abandoned him or died or some such before he was old enough to talk. Lucky her.

Palmer, who hadn't noticed our lack of proper direction—for a guy who claims to be good at everything, he's actually kind of shitty at most things—but acted like he did, said, "Where is your mind, Deni? You trying to kill us?"

"Just you, Palmer," I said. I couldn't help it; it just slipped out.

From behind us, Norlup gave a snort of laughter in the dark.

"Oh, great beast of wildwoods, coming to eat me," Palmer quipped. It was too dark to see his face, but you could just tell he was doing the "fake fear" look, all wide-eyed and sarcastic. See why I want to kill him? Anyone would.

This was the last time I took a job with someone whose most glowing recommendation was that he'd once resisted the urge to have sex with a rubar on a dare. There was another guy with us, too, although both "guy" and "with us" were liberal uses of those words. A varjellen, with a name that was so hard to put on the tongue that we just called him Ech. He was mostly a—let's say captive rather than sacrifice—and he was smart enough not to say much.

They'd hired Palmer on to get us where we needed to go, they'd hired me on to protect Ech from outside dangers, and I was pretty sure they'd hired Norlup to protect Ech from, well, me. Clearly that was all working top-notch.

The tunnels had been Ech's idea, which would make them seem like a bad choice, him being our captive and all, but in fact they'd turned out well until this morning, with the caffa grub incident. But that was mostly Palmer's fault.

The tunnels kept us off the plains, which was in the middle of its spring storms. You only have to see one tornado laden with flesh-eating fungus, picking up whole herds of giant camethosaurs and throwing them around, to want to avoid that for the rest of your life. Of course, these hollowed pathways brought their own set of dangers. Like the grubs that had latched onto me this morning, after Palmer insisted that all those holes in the ground were just erosion. Which they were, if erosion meant blood-sucking, face-eating larva wanting to use my body for a new home. Not to mention the

chance that we'd get lost and die down here. The tunnels were ancient, half built and half dug, and we'd passed our fair share of the long-dead down here, Palmer palming any spoils that remained...

...and there it was, a glimpse of understanding into why Palmer bugged me so much.

"Hey, Palmer, is that your real name or your occupation name?" Couldn't believe that had just occurred to me. Sometimes I'm slower on the uptake than my countenance would imply.

"Both," he said, quick and quipped. But you could tell he'd just thought of it, too. Which made me feel a little better, even though I knew he'd be introducing himself as "Palmer the palmer" from now on. Like he'd been the one to think of it. Probably even make a flourishy hand gesture to go with it. *Tada*.

Norlup and Ech were quiet in the back. Not the planning-something or dying-from-something kind of quiet, but the utter silence that comes from being hard on the move for a long time. I call it the plod, that death to sound.

The tunnel took a sudden hard climb for the surface, and I led my ragtag team along it. I knew we were under the plains somewhere, but other than that, it was *knock-synth-throw-drit* that we'd come out close to where we needed to be. At worst, I was pretty sure we hadn't gone backward. At very best, we'd land on the outskirts of the plains, having missed the death tornados, and be well

on our way to delivering the goods and parting ways.

Norlup caught up to me. He's tall and wide in the face the way I like my men to be, and quiet, thank drit, but that whole lightning thing isn't for me. I'm of the earth, planted like a stone.

"Something behind us," he said.

"Something like Ech?" That man was the easiest captive I'd ever had. He kept pace, ate what we offered, stayed quiet, and didn't try to escape. I wished I could trade him places with Palmer.

"Something with more feet," he said. "Listen."

But Palmer was talking poor Ech's ear off behind us, and I couldn't hear a thing beyond that.

"Crowd?"

"Creature," he said.

Damn. I'd rather fight a whole army of humans than a single creepy-crawly. The tunnels weren't very big, but they were wide enough to let Palmer and Ech step by me. Ech cast a glance my way—in the light of Palmer's glowglobe, bulbous eyes raised a question that I couldn't answer.

"Palmer, hush for a minute," I said as they went by.

You could see his face getting ready for a retort, but then we all heard it. That scrape of carapace, the click of approaching pincers. Big pincers. Coming down the tunnel. Norlup had been right about a lot of legs and wrong about his use of the word creature, singular.





"Protect Ech," I said. Which, you know, seemed obvious, but sometimes the best thing you can do to prepare for battle is remind people of their purpose. "And keep pushing forward. I think we're close."

I thought no such thing, but they bought it and sometimes that's all that matters. I imagined any creature crawling through a tunnel would be slow, but not this one. Pincers first, then its triple-toothed mouth, one pair of red eyes, then another, then a third. I'd forgotten that slicer beetles burrowed.

It was a young one, only slightly taller than me, but it already had its second carapace. There were more behind it. You could hear them, chittering, impatient. Feeding time.

"Go," I said. Obvious again, but it was the best I could do before the beetle was on me, open mouth and giant front legs working to get a good angle. I'm better with my verred, but it's too long for a space like this, so you need to adjust. I tugged my punch daggers out of their sheaths and tried to calculate the quickest path to the weak spots.

I like to go for the eyes, but with a slicer beetle, that's three pairs of peepers you've got to put out before it does you a bit of good. What I wanted was a place where our baby hadn't gotten his adult covering yet.

I caught a glimpse of Norlup off to my right, his short blade crackling with energy. He was waiting for me, I think, and I gave him a nod of appreciation for that.

"Let's push him back," I said.

My plan was to back him up into the tunnel, kill him quick, and leave his body there to block his siblings while we made a run for it. Not the best plan I've ever had, but sometimes living through something is a big enough goal.

Norlup and I moved forward together. I kept looking for a weak spot, a thin bit of shell, but he was solid. And not at all disturbed by Norlup's crackling energy in his face. My punch daggers slid over the green-grey of his covering without making a scratch. I had a feeling my plan wasn't as rock-strong as it had seemed at first.

I figured we had three ways about it. One, I could keep shell-punching the thing until it bit my face off. Two, I could send Palmer in as bait. Three, I could— And that's when everything exploded in my face. Bug guts and eyeballs as big as my fists and bits of shell rained down on me, slicing as they went. I shoved Norlup out of the way of a falling piece of pincer, hearing him grunt as we hit the tunnel wall. Something long swept down my face, so sharp I wouldn't have known it was opening my flesh if not for the sudden wet heat of my own blood.

Palmer.

I turned, teeth gritted, tasting the horrible blackness of bug parts and the copper of blood.

Palmer stood there, still poking at some device he had strapped to his wrist as though he didn't realize he'd already set it off.

Behind the fragmented bits of beetle, the sound of a swarm let loose. Clicking and skittering.

"Run," I said. "Palmer. Go." I didn't mean to shove him as hard as I did, but sometimes I forget my own strength. He tripped, stumbled, and then righted himself and ran. Ech was nowhere to be seen, but I'd worry about that in a minute.

Behind us, the beetles were keeping pace. They seemed to be having a little trouble fitting through the tunnel, which was narrowing as it rose toward the surface, but only enough to slow them down.

We slammed around a corner, Palmer in the lead, and Norlup's still-crackling blade just in front of me.

"We might have to—" I started. But before I could finish, there was light, offslant, surface light, making me blink and stop short.

Then Palmer was whooping and hollering and running toward the surface. It got really tight at the end, and he planted his head on the curve of the tunnel, which did not make me laugh, not even one bit. But I noticed that both Norlup and I ducked our heads as we pulled out to the surface.

Ech was already up there, waiting for us. We were officially the worst captors ever.

We were near the edge of the plains, almost perfectly so.

"Impressive," Norlup said. And he did something with his face that looked like a smile, but I couldn't be sure. I'd never seen him do that before.

"What is that?" Palmer said.

The good thing about the plains is you can see right across it and you know what's coming at you. That's the bad thing about the plains, too.

What was coming at us looked like a wall. A moving, swirling, wing-filled wall. Above it, the clouds hung low and heavy, pregnant with waiting, outlined in a watery purple that shifted and shuddered. You couldn't look at it too long because it made your brain feel numb. I didn't think it was tornados, but what it could be, I didn't know.

"Norlup?" I asked.

He shook his head. Ech did the same before I even asked him.

"Let's go," I said. The beetles would have to dig through the tightened tunnel, but it wasn't going to take them long. And if those clouds were coming our way, I didn't want to be part of it.

We ran. The clouds swung low after us, silent. The beetles crawled up from the depths. And still we ran.

The edge of the storm caught us just as we hit a deep patch of woods surrounding a crumbling synth tower. It was possible to outrun creatures, but not the weather. Not across the flat of the plains.

The tower, moated by trees in the middle of nowhere, shimmered and tugged at the edges of reality.

“Illusion?” Norlup asked.

I didn’t think so. It seemed real enough. I wanted it to be real enough.

“Do we go in?” he asked.

As if in answer, the rain came down, black and thick, pounding on the cracked earth, breaking holes into the surface. And with it, black jellyfish that floated into our hair, propelled themselves against our skin. If they’d bitten or stung, it would have been bearable. Instead, they sought out wet warmth, their long tentacles waving around my eyes and the corners of my mouth, their bodies pulsing beneath my armor toward my center.

I smashed one against my face and found it oozed something warm and tingly.

“Yes,” I said. “Everyone in.”

Palmer was the first to the door, Ech the last. Palmer fumbled with the lock while the jellies landed, splashing on his hands. I almost felt bad for the guy.

“Let me,” I said.

I put my shoulder to the door, testing it to see where it might give. The lock was solid, but the hinges less so. I levered my two-pronged verred into the hinge side and butted my weight against it. Once, and again. It creaked but didn’t budge.

A feathery tentacle swept the corner of my eye, and I shuddered. “Help me,” I said.

Norlup brought his hands up to the lock side, did something that made everything glow in a momentary flash of colors.

“Try it now,” he said.

I threw my weight against the levered verred and felt the wood and metal start to give way. And then I was inside, tumbling across the threshold.

“That was easy,” I said. But then I realized that we hadn’t cracked the door; someone had opened it from the inside.

That someone was now staring down at me, holding a long, thin rod in his hand.

“If you’re coming in, come in,” he said. “The natblak will eat you alive if you let it. Well, it’ll eat you alive whether you let it or not, to be true.”

Wet, shivering, covered in oily tentacled creatures, we gathered inside the doorstep as he shut the door. He flicked something at the end of his rod so that it vibrated lightly and then waved it over us, a gesture





that made Ech cover his ears and cringe. I wondered if it made a sound, something we couldn't hear, or if he just had a fear of pointy things that vibrated.

Almost instantly, we were dry to the bone, clothes and hair and jellies, the latter crumbling into bits of dust that fell to the stone floor around us. Behind the man, a spiral staircase rose out of sight, curving, loop-de-loops that kind of made you dizzy just looking at them. Other than that, the room was mostly bare.

"Better," he said with obvious approval. "Clearly, you're neither from around here nor stormchasers or you'd be better equipped to handle the natblak. So tell me, exactly why are you beating down our door in the middle of the day with neither invitation nor expectation?"

"I'm Deni," I said. "We're—"

The man waved a hand at me. Every finger bore at least one ring of glass, glittered colors that sparkled even in the low light. Inside them, creatures—real? created?—caught in whole.

"I don't actually care, particularly," he said. "I was just making formalities. You may stay until the storm passes. Then you need to be on your way. Help yourself to anything you like on the main floor, but don't do anything stupid.

"If you are about to take an action and you have to pause and ask yourself if it's stupid, the answer is yes."

You know that moment when you hear someone talk the way that you think? Yeah, I hadn't either until that very second. Turns out, my thoughts sounded like assholes. But at least they were honest assholes. The only thing this guy didn't do that I would have done was look pointedly at Palmer when I said stupid. Every time I said stupid.

"Your kindness binds us," Ech said. It was the second time I'd heard him say such; the first was when I'd given him his first meal as our captive. I thought then that he was being sarcastic, but now I could see he'd meant it.

The man started for a second, then laughed, nodding. "I suppose it would if it were kindness in the least. However, it is pure selfishness on my part. Dead bodies on the doorstep are an ache to the whole of the house.

"Come," our host said. Something about his voice, or maybe it was the device he still carried, continued to bother Ech. The visitant was clearly trying to remain polite, but he hung back, covering one ear and then the other.

We followed our host out of the main room into a small, square room. The furniture was a mishmash of pieces, almost piled on top of each other.

"All I ask is that you stay here, in this room, on this floor," he said.

He left us shortly after, saying something about

seeing to the house in the storm.

Palmer shrugged and pulled an upside-down chair from its perch on a table. The movement revealed a black box beneath it, and Palmer turned his attention toward it.

"Look at all of this stuff," he said. "Who puts their guests in a store room?"

"Don't take anything," I said.

He lifted both his palms at me, grinning. "Of course not, oh great beast of the wild."

"Palmer," I said, my voice more growl than I meant it to be. Most people—well, no, not most people—the few people who knew about me believed my change was moon-driven, something of the sky and tide. But that was a fallacy I let exist purely for my own benefit. Surprise is a power all its own, and severely underrated.

Most of the time, I controlled my change. When I was younger, I wanted to understand it more. Where did the creature come from? Was it part of me? Was it even part of this world? But the truth was, the older I got, the less I cared. I understood how to control it, how to break the world open and take what I needed when I needed it, and mostly that was enough. When it slipped in out of nowhere, like it had just now, it meant I was overtired, underfed, and overly fed up.

Palmer stepped back a little, not in fear, but in a single show of smarts. Don't poke the sleepy, ravenous, cranky creature.

"What do we do now?" he asked.

I waited for someone to answer, and then I realized everyone else was waiting for me to answer. Oh, good.

"I don't know," I said. "Eat? Sleep? Both?"

Ech had already set himself down on the floor in the corner.

"That plan works for me," Norlup said. "I'm going to see if I can find food."

No one said what we were thinking, about how our host had said not to leave the room. He seemed nice enough; what would he do if he found Norlup in the kitchen, sweep him for storm jellies again with his vibrating rod?

Just as he was about to leave the room, Norlup stopped and lifted his blade as high as he could over his head, trying to touch the ceiling. "Look at that," he said. Built into the ceiling was a round metallic disk, as big around as the four of us put together. Maybe bigger. It didn't look like decoration, but like a cap on the end of something, or a door. But who puts a door into their ceiling?

"What is it?" Palmer asked. Either he actually thought that one of us was going to identify the thing we'd just stumbled on for the first time, or he was asking the air.

Either of which seemed like they'd give him the exact same response.

"Deni, can you touch it with your verred? It's longer."

I did as Norlup asked, pushing the tip of the verred carefully against the very center of the disk. Despite the metallic appearance of the circle, my weapon sunk easily into the material, pushing it upward without breaking it.

"Odd," Norlup mused.

"Maybe you should stay here." That's what I meant to tell him. Never let it be said that I was a coward, but never let it be said that I was stupid, either.

But as soon as I opened my mouth, I realized that Norlup didn't stay in the back because he was timid or because it kept him safe. He stayed in the back so he could explore things that the rest of us missed. And so I kept quiet when he did that thing with his mouth again, almost a smile, and stepped out of the room.

Palmer was keeping his distance, off in the corner, digging through the piles of furniture and boxes and bits of metal. As long as he didn't steal anything, him keeping his distance was just fine with me. I hadn't forgiven him for the bug spit yet.

Ech was sitting next to a central heatmaker, a small round device that seemed to run on a hidden power source. I'd never seen one so small before, and I wanted it. He gestured me over, and I sat, feeling the heat wash over me.

"Can you build something like that, Ech?" I asked. I don't know why I asked; I already knew the answer. Maybe I just felt bad that he was such an easy captive and I hadn't really talked to him much. Or maybe it was something more sinister. With me, you just never know.

He seemed to take my request seriously, leaning in and pressing his hand to the device, far longer than I could have stood. "Perhaps," he said. "If I had my workspace and my tools."

There was no remorse in what he said, nor any sense of blame, but I felt the loss of his life in that short sentence. This is why I don't like having people around, why I don't want to know anything about anyone; you start talking to them and suddenly *snap*, they break your heart in the most accidental ways.

The rain and the jellies came down outside, the sound of them splatting, wet and heavy, against the tower all around us. Occasionally, one would propel through some opening and flutter around for a bit. Palmer started scouting for them, smashing them between the flat of his hands. The smack and squish of his actions were both gross and reassuring. I had no idea what we were going to do while we waited for the storm to pass. Please drit let it end sooner than expected.

Norlup returned from wherever he'd been and settled in next to me, leaning in. "I found a kitchen, but no food. No pantry," he said. "How do they eat?"

"They?" I asked.

"He didn't say anything about anyone else," Palmer said. I hadn't realized he was close enough to hear.

Norlup shook his head, pointing upward. "There is movement up there, more than one person might make. And yet, our host is surprisingly quiet."

He was mulling something. You could tell by the way he pulled his lips in. Whatever it was, I didn't like it. In a short time, I'd come to trust Norlup's instincts more than I liked to admit. Trust and I never did get along that well.

"How can you hear anything over these jellies?" Palmer asked, as he smashed another one. I wondered if I could kill him tonight, just push him out the door into the storm. Or maybe our host would go all creepy-crawly on us, and attach to Palmer's neck like a caffa, and I wouldn't even have to get my hands dirty.

From somewhere above, there was a buzzing sound. Not the storm, but something metallic. The kind of sound that made Ech flinch against it.

Norlup stood up. "I'm going to see what I can find out."

"Want me to go with you?" I asked. *Please say yes.* But he didn't.

And then he was gone, and Ech and I were left with the sound of Palmer ending the lives of creatures between the slap of his hands.

I heard Norlup go up the stairs in the main room and then the storm drowned everything out. It was really coming down, jellies and drops and whatever was caught up in that whirlwind of water and death. Ech looked like he was half asleep, although it was kind of hard to tell with his eyes always partway open. And Palmer was just Palmer.

Our host came back, suddenly in the room. His entrance must have been drowned out by the storm because I didn't hear him until he started talking.

"What did I say?" he asked. "What did I say about stupid?" I thought he was holding something in his hands, but it was just that he was wringing them, fast and hard.

Of course, I looked right at Palmer. "What did you do?" I asked.

He shrugged, all wide-eyed. This time for real. "I've been right here," he said.





When he held his hands up, they were covered in black jellyfish goo, running down to his elbows.

"The other," our host said. "He—"

A sound from upstairs, even through the storm, a drag and slash. The circle above us shuddered. For about half a second, I thought it was going to come tumbling out of the ceiling right down on us.

"Where's Norlup?" I said.

Even before I finished, I was heading for the main room and those stairs. Damn people. You fall into like with them, and then they go and do something stupid. Thought I'd made a good choice with Norlup. He seemed smart, he seemed safe.

Our host put his hands out to stop me, but I ran right through them. Not into them, but through them. Barreling toward the stairs.

"Hologram!" Palmer said from behind me. The first smart thing he'd said since I'd known him. Okay, maybe the second smart thing.

Our host wasn't just a normal holo. There was something inside the blank space, a rebuilding network, invisible tendrils that reached and snagged at me as I hit the stairs. A moving web, a strand of which caught my ankle.

"I tried," our host said, not to us, his voice crackling into garbled nonsense. "Not my..."

I jerked free of the tensile grip winding up my leg, pointed at Palmer.

"Keep Ech safe," I said.

A look back told me that Ech didn't need saving. He was standing up, moving toward the barely-there body of our host with a sense of purpose that I hadn't seen in him before. A pair of tools was gripped in his fists. So much for Palmer frisking him. I turned from them and found my feet again on the stairs. The steps did a funny thing under my feet, but I'd seen something like it before. Designed to keep people from getting up there, they slid down against your climb. I took them two at a time, countered against the downward slope and used my body on the railing. How the hell had Norlup gotten up here? He wasn't as strong as I was.

And then I found out. Something reached out of the air above me and wrapped my waist with all the need and finesse of a lust-filled teenager. It looked like a metal spine, stacked vertebra that went on and on. I was thinking how to get out of it and then it squeezed—something cracked in my back that I hoped was just a bit of armor and not my ribs—and plucked me up.

I could hear footsteps scrambling up the steps beneath me, and I opened my mouth to tell them to stay back, but nothing came. I needed every bit of throat space to let the air back in.

My head washed hard against something and I realized I was upside down. Which is why you'll never catch me in a robe. Not that I care who sees what, except for me. All that damn fabric just gets in the way.

The spine pulled me up and up. It cranked and clattered above me, but you could tell it wasn't totally machine. There were bits of leftover... something... around the metal, like it had been pulled through a body. I hoped that body wasn't Norlup's. I hoped it wasn't about to be mine.

Two grey streaks zipped by me, heading down, and a second later, you could hear the sounds of two bodies getting wrapped up in metal. Right, that was probably Palmer's idea of keeping our captive safe. I should have known.

The tower was taller than seemed possible. We went up a long way, floor after floor, spaces of nothing but lights, echoes of voices, shadowed crevices. I couldn't see most things as well as I wanted, and some I saw too well. Don't take this the wrong way, but in the end, I closed my eyes. I'd say it was vertigo, but mostly it was all those things stuffed into crevices that I didn't need to see.

The drop was almost gentle, finally. A floor beneath my feet—sometimes you take what you can get and some solid footing is better than upside down with my eyes squeezed shut—and a moment later, the sounds of Palmer and Ech landing near me. I knew that sound; we'd heard it from above us before.

In front of us, two bodies hung down from somewhere so far above I couldn't even see where it started. Well, not bodies, really. Half bodies. Human chests, one male, one female, their arms little more than stumps with wires and lights. One giant spine running above and below them. The man's face was wrapped in metal and synth, but the woman's was uncovered. One fake blue eye stared at me. The other, black and square, looked dully into the distance.

They might have been human once, but I didn't think so. I thought they, it, whatever, might have been something entirely alien, and were now a little machine and a little human and a little of whatever they'd originally been.

I felt like a bit of prey who'd been dropped from a mouth just to see if it's willing to run.

I straightened up, held my ground. "What did you do with Norlup?" I asked. Sometimes you have to take the most obvious route toward what you want. There's a law

about that or something, but I can't remember what it's called.

There was no answer from the creatures. So much for that law. It was time to start swinging. My verred slipped into my hands the way she always did, ready for anything I asked of her.

"Palmer? Ech?" I didn't dare take my eyes off the creatures in front of me, but I needed to know they had my back, in whatever ways your captive and your campfire nemesis can have your back.

They both responded.

So did the creatures in front of us. Not speaking, but showing. Sliding a wall back like removing an eyelid, and that kind of painful ache, how bright it was, before it settled into something you could see.

Behind the creatures, rows and rows of pellucid containers, all shapes and sizes. Inside each, something captured. Beast. Man. Food. Weapons. Nothing was spared. The containers were piled on each other, some smashed half open, the thing inside decaying or decayed. The scent, released when the eyelid opened, came over me, cloying, maggoty, rot and mildew, the gut-scent of things long dead.

Collectors.

This whole tower was a trap. Death wrapped in a come-hither promise. I could see the holes in the floors, too, the clear tubes that ran downward, the same size as the circle we'd discovered in the ceiling.

"They're—" but then I stopped. I couldn't find the air to say the word. I couldn't find the air for anything. Because there, in the front, hands up, blade still crackling in his grip, was Norlup, captured. Staring right at me through the container, his mouth open as if he'd been in the act of saying something when those things caught him. His free hand raised as if to ward off what he'd seen coming.

He wasn't dead, not yet, but he was dying. Whatever those containers were built of, they weren't designed to keep things alive. Just preserved.

I didn't know how the creatures worked, and I didn't have time to think about it. I went in swinging, verred meeting metal and fleshy parts with as much power as I could put behind it.

As soon as the point of my weapon touched the creatures, I knew I was in trouble. The blade didn't sink into them, it didn't even hit. Something—a field? armor?—sent a shock all the way up both arms, shaking me so hard it was all I could do to keep hold of my weapon and not get knocked on my ass.

"Don't touch—" I started, but Palmer interrupted me.

"See to Norlup," he said. He had bladed disks in his hands and this look on his face I'd never seen before, as

if he was trying to figure things out, to find a different way in. It was a side of him that I would have taken the time to appreciate and think about if I had the time, but I didn't.

I made my way to Norlup. My verred did nothing to the container in which he was sealed. In an instant, Ech was beside me, the tips of his tools glowing, one blue, one red. He pointed them toward the corner of the container and the air between the tips of his tools sparked in a purple arc of sound and light. A miniscule crack opened in the container, so small it gave me hope and then took it right back.

"Keep going!" I said, my verred still useless, but unwilling to give up.

I couldn't look at Norlup's face. Could not, even though I knew I should. Even though I was the worst kind of coward. Knowing that if we couldn't break him out, he would die inside that box, looking at me, trying to connect with me. And that I'd refused him that. But if I looked at him, I was going to lose it. I needed every bit of strength I had.

Behind me, Palmer was yelling at the machine, whacking it so hard I swore I could feel the sound of metal on metal against the back of my teeth. So much for thinking he was going to be smart about it.

When Palmer went silent, I didn't even have to look to know that he'd been captured.

The creature snaked out a spiny tendril, wrapping it around Ech's wrist. Ech went still. It was so fast, but you could still see it happen. One second his tools were cutting apart the synth box that held Norlup, and the next he froze, shuddered, and disappeared from sight.

The spine, empty now of prey, came for me. I turned, rushing the creature as fast as I could, verred pointed for the one's chest, as if I might accidentally find a heart in there.

And then. Stillness. Silence. I couldn't hear a thing through the synth that surrounded me, held me captive.

I'd dreamed about this moment my whole life, when everyone and everything became quiet. When the world went silent and I could finally hear myself think. Now that I had it, I didn't want it. I couldn't see anything, couldn't feel. I could only hear the nothing. And inside that, I could hear the parts of my brain move, could hear the passage of blood through my veins. Every exhale was a sound as large as an earth shift. Every inhale the thunder of a storm. I could hear death coming for me, and death sounded a lot like myself.

Mostly, I think we spend our lives in a state of suspension. The plod, one step in front of another without thinking, without choosing.

But there are moments when you make a decision.



Something true and fierce, something that changes everything.

I closed my eyes. The flutter of my eyelids was the boom of thunder in the night. Usually the way I become the creature that I am is easy. It's finding a rent in the fabric, widening it until the other can slip through and find me. That entrance of weight and power, the sense that I'm something in addition to myself is welcomed, wanted, ached for.

This time, the way I became the creature that I am was pain. The container crushed my transformation even as it yielded to it. I felt my bones harden against the push, the new width of my back arch into the unforgiving space. The part that joined me felt it, too; its shaking anger at being trapped vibrated down my spine. Nothing would give, not me, not the other, not the container. In the compression, the sound of the change broke into my brain, down my vertebra, ached with sound. I howled, anguish the voice of the living, and my voice echoed back at me, silent.

When the container gave way, it was all at once, so that I was falling to the floor, down on all fours, looking up at Norlup.

He was dead. Most of the time, you look at someone and you're allowed some time pretending to wonder, a moment to hold on to a hope that even then you know doesn't exist. I didn't have that time. I didn't have that hope.

I ran for the conjoined creature on all fours. Ech was, impossibly, already there, his head bowed as he attacked with his tools. As I closed the gap, a spined tendrill snaked out toward him.

"Ech!" I yelled, but I'd forgotten my voice, how to turn the snarl into words. The sound was enough, the way it echoed through the space after all that silence. He leaned back to cover an ear, and the tendrill missed him, snaking by within an inch.

I leapt, aiming for the creature's chests, not caring what I caught as long as it was something vital. I broke it open. Claw and tooth. Nothing inside but more of the same. Metal bones and flesh wires and the sound of things that weren't living but didn't believe they could ever die. Tendrills whipped by me, or tried to snag me, and I paid them no mind.

Honed in on prey. That is the way of the beast that I am. That is the safety and the danger I carry inside me.

When the creatures were shredded and my claws were broken and my teeth ached, I lay down on the floor and hoped I might die. The beast in me was slipping away, back to wherever it came from. In the going, I could sense its trapped anger, its desire to kill me. One of these days, I was going to slip and it would get the

chance, and then I wondered if it would be me going through that rend in the fabric of all things, called into being for another's needs.

Through my pain, I heard a voice.

"They're gone," Ech said.

A moment later. "Palmer, too."

I wanted to ask how Ech had survived, how he'd come to be standing before me, but he put out his hand to help me up, and I saw that he, too, had made a choice. His normally pale fingers and palm were burned to purple, his nails blackened and curled from heat. They would fall off soon, and maybe grow back, but I didn't think his hands would return to normal any time soon, if ever. He'd used his tools to cut himself free, just as I'd used my own.

After a moment, I took his hand carefully and let him think he was helping me up. The stairs allowed us to walk down them. The house didn't stop us from making our way to the front door. I didn't think it could anymore. Our host didn't appear. I didn't think he could do that anymore, either.

I stepped into the store room and looked up at the ceiling. The metal disk was still there, but now it hung open, showing what remained of the clear tube above it.

"They wanted us to stay in here," I said. "Easy prey."

"Thank drit for Norlup," Ech said, and I could almost smile at that, partly for this strange creature throwing my own slang back at me, but mostly because it was true. Thank drit for Norlup. And, I had to admit, for Palmer, too.

I guessed the people who hired us were smarter than they'd seemed. In the end, Palmer had gotten us where we needed to go, I'd protected Ech, and Norlup, well, Norlup had protected us all. The only thing they hadn't counted on was Ech's role as survivor. "What now?" Ech asked, and we both waited a while for someone else to answer.

Outside, the storm had let up, the sky its normal dark that comes only from the night. As we walked away from the tower, I'd say the world was silent around us, but I'll never be able to say that again and mean it.

Everything was full of noise. The crawl of insects beneath the earth, the far-away slide of a trinket across a palm, the way lightning crackled before it flew. Ech's quiet unknowing beside me. Even my own beastly heart, with its constant breaking open.





CHAPTER 3

LIFE IN THE NINTH WORLD



Throughout this book, you'll see page references to various items accompanied by this symbol. These are page references to the Numenera corebook, where you can find additional details about that item, place, creature, or concept. It isn't necessary to look up the referenced items in the corebook, but doing so will provide useful information for character creation and gameplay.

I set out to write a small book, something simple and concrete that would capture the entirety of our world in a few short chapters. I had hoped to make sense of the world around us by distilling the essence of this place that we live into a single note. Schoolchildren would read me and learn amazing things. Scholars would use my book to further their understanding of ourselves and our lives. Future civilizations would be given a true picture of life here. I would have accomplished my one thing in this world, and then could go away to live the rest of my days in peace.

But this world, it is too much. Around every corner, there is some anomaly, something uncategorizable. The sun changes every moment. The mountains shift like living creatures. I place an animal in a category, give it a name and a notation, and then discover that it is not at all what I believed. Not even the weather fits a pattern; here there are storms of sound, there the rains bring dying animals down upon my head.

And yet, I am sure I will find it, the one thing that unites this world, the piece of knowledge and understanding that will allow me to finally finish this work.

I cannot give up this pursuit. I am afraid I will die trying. I would not ask you to take it upon yourself to finish this, should I fail. But if you are so inclined, upon my death you may find the instructions in the left-hand corner of my library, tucked between pages 34 and 35 of the first book that nearly killed me. I trust you know which one that is.

~Naind Oreni, from a letter to her daughter, while writing "The Wonders of Our World: Creatures by Category, Volume 17"





PUTTING YOURSELF IN THE NINTH WORLD

Imagine being someone who has not only lived in a single place your whole life, but who has never seen pictures or videos of another town, city, weather pattern, or natural landscape, who doesn't have the Internet or a cell phone, and who has never traveled in a plane, train, or car outside the place where you were born. The only interaction that you have is with people you grew up with, plus the occasional stranger who comes to town (and who is probably surprised and confused by something that you think of as a normal part of your life, but which is actually a ritual or activity that is unique to your town or family).

This is the mindset of many Ninth World residents. Every time they go to a new place, they encounter a world of bizarre and incredible things that they never dreamed existed, from the striking landscapes, unusual weather patterns, and dangerous creatures to leftover technology, impossible architecture, and people with wholly new outlooks, skills, equipment, and powers.

The only thing that remains the same is that everything is new. Keeping this idea in mind—that characters can quickly become accustomed to constant change, even if they can't begin to guess what will change or how—allows you to look through the eyes of someone who experiences something weird around every corner.



SETTING THE SCENE (FOR THE GM)

The Ninth World is a weird and wild place. So much unknown history, so many races and creatures and peoples and civilizations and technologies creating and destroying. Each of them has left its unique mark. When you combine all of those histories together, you get a place seemingly without consistency or reason, a place where the only expected thing is the unexpected. You get a place where there are more questions than answers, and more mysteries than anything else. Of course, that's all just a matter of perspective, but it is certainly the perspective of most Ninth Worlders. Yet this is the home they have—the only world they've ever known. So they toil to make what sense of things they can. They work to make it their own.

With so much variation, so many unknowns, and so many mysteries, it is difficult to make many generalizations about the Ninth World. Thus, the information in this chapter is, as always, merely a baseline, a place to begin. It is likely that every place deviates from that baseline, whether in small or huge ways.

A large part of that is a cultural deviation. In a land where most people don't travel much because going from one place to another is dangerous and arduous, cultures don't combine very quickly. There's no media, little in the way of long-distance lines of communication, and a general isolation that keeps ideas, beliefs, and language from spreading.

THE NATURAL WORLD THE SKY

At night, the moon is often—but not always—swathed in a wide green band, as if someone took the time to dress it for the occasion. Of course, everyone who's ever gazed up at it has come up with their own story for why it's there. Myths abound about giant serpents that entwine the errant moon for misdeeds, or a green sea that seeps up from the ground from time to time. How can anyone know the truth?

The moon gazes down on all of us, but no one truly knows her.

~Naïnd Oreni's notes for "The Wonders of Our World: Into the Night"



In the 21st century, we know that by the time of the Ninth World, the sun's luminosity should have increased to the point that life as we know it on Earth is all but impossible. And yet this does not appear to be the case. Clearly, at some point in the Earth's past, something happened to change that. It seems likely that the change was deliberate, but no details are known.

Mercury no longer exists in the Ninth World, but it was gone long before that time, so no one is even aware that it is missing from their view of the night sky.

THE SUN

The sun rules the sky in the day, shining yellow-orange and providing light and heat. Not surprisingly, many cultures revere or even worship the sun for the life it grants.

THE MOON

The moon is a smallish light in the night sky, moving through its phases. Without sophisticated viewing equipment, the surface of the moon looks similar to what it looks like now, except that it occasionally appears with a wide green band (visible to the naked eye) across its surface.

In some areas of the world, when the sky is perfectly clear, other moonlike objects can occasionally be seen. These “moons” are always smaller than the primary moon and seem to vary in shape, color, and other features. There is much speculation about whether these objects are actually moons or something artificially orbiting the earth. Of course, for all the Ninth Worlders know, the moon itself is an artifact left over from a prior civilization.

The dyeunos, a group of moon worshippers who study the moon and these secondary

objects, have spent years tracking their trajectories, appearances, and tidal pulls to learn all they can.

PLANETS, STARS, AND OTHER SKY SIGHTS

Ninth World astronomers recognize six planets other than Earth, although everyone has different names and ideas about them.

Venus: Handmaiden of Morning. Venus is seen to be the herald of the sun, or even the sun's lackey or servant.

Mars: The Green Jewel. Bright blue-green, Mars is thought to be a fertile world not unlike the Earth. In many mythologies, it is Earth's “evil twin.”

Jupiter: The Bull. Some see this planet as Saturn's guardian or enforcer. Others believe it to be the representation of the force that moves all the other planets.

Saturn: The Empress. Seen by many as the ruler of the planets, Saturn and its crownlike ring are the subject of much art and decoration.

Uranus: The Lurker. Visible only with a telescope, this planet is very likely not the original Uranus, but instead appears to be a



sphere of white and grey metal with its own atmosphere. No other details are known.

Neptune: The Hidden One. Like Uranus, Neptune is not visible to the naked eye. It is thought by many to be an avatar of stealth and deception.

Stars and Other Night Sights: On an average moonless night, more than 50,000 stars are visible to the naked eye. The vast majority are red dwarf stars and average-sized stars (like the sun). However, there are as many as three dozen visible supergiants, including the three largest: Earline (which has a bright red glow), Immos (the largest star in the sky most nights), and Kelus (which sometimes seems to have a large black spot in its center).

Of course, the Ninth World has its own constellations. Wuolfok the abykos holds Earline and Kelus in its pincers and a cluster of bright stars in its belly. Most nights, Doroa of the Silent Song can be seen reading The Catechism of Lore, a string of amber stars rising up next to her, depicting the Amber Monolith. And perhaps the most popular and oft-spotted constellation of all is the C-formation of High Father Calaval, Amber Pope and Founder of the Citadel of the Conduit and the Order of Truth. There is also a blue constellation in the shape of a half star known as Sritium, which appears at exactly the halfway point of every year and lasts for about a month.

Visible supernovas explode once or twice a year. Many of the explosions can be seen during the day for more than a month after a star's death, and they continue to light up a portion of the night sky for anywhere from two to four years. In many places, people have integrated these sights into their culture, religion, or storytelling.

The entirety of the Andromeda galaxy is also visible to the naked eye, appearing as a giant swirling mass of dark matter, planetary bodies, and stars. Most people in the Ninth World know it as the Veiled Volute or the Spiral Maiden.

There are no known instances of visible auroras, perhaps only because no one has taken the time to write or talk about them. There is a rare daytime display of dark red gasses that blink and swirl, sometimes growing so thick that they temporarily

eclipse the sun. The gasses are so perfectly blood-red in color that this phenomenon is known as the blood churn. People who look at the blood churn for too long report that they experience a wider range of colors in their vision, including the ability to see ultraviolet light, for a period of a few days to a few weeks.

SEASONS AND THE WEATHER

View shows a woman in a long yellow wraparound, clearly a chiurgeon of some sort, leaning over the corpse of a man on a high table. The man's chest is cut open, flaps of skin pulled to each side to expose his chest cavity. The chiurgeon is poking the interior of the corpse with a long glowing rod that gives off a clicking hum.

Off-view voice: What did this man die of?

Chiurgeon: He appears to have flowers for lungs.

View adjusts, moving over the body of the man to show dark purple blossoms filling the interior of his chest.

Off-view voice: How is it possible to live like that?

Chiurgeon: Well, clearly, it isn't.

Off-view voice: I meant . . . how does such a thing happen?

Chiurgeon: I presume you have not yet had experience with the mad nanites, those abominations of the Iron Wind? Be glad, then, for death is the kindest gift such monsters can give you.

~footage from a recorder headband for "The Wonders of Our World: The Weather Will Kill You Us All*" (*working title)

In the Ninth World, the moon's orbit is wider than it is in the 21st century, so the moon appears smaller.

The area between the moon and the Earth in the Ninth World is choked with ancient satellites, stations, derelict craft, and general debris.

Other than the planets, the Ninth World's night sky is almost entirely different than that of the 21st century.

It's possible that what Ninth Worlders are seeing is actually the combined mass of the Andromeda galaxy and the Triangulum galaxy (or some other galaxy) after the two collided—or were brought together—at some point in the past to create a single giant galaxy.

In the billion years between now and the Ninth World, the sun has orbited the entire galaxy approximately four times.



Storms and weather work just like other items and creatures in Numenera, in that they have a level upon which everything—their damage, the difficulty to resist their effects, and so on—is based. Some storms might also cause additional, specific types of damage (or benefits).



SPECIAL STORMS AND WEATHER OF THE NINTH WORLD

Choose one, roll a d20 for a random storm, or combine two for a truly wild experience.

d20	Weather
1–3	Oily black rain (level 3, kills all plant material that it touches)
4–6	Magnetic wind (level 2, bends and twists nonorganic matter)
7–9	Ground clouds (level 4, electrical storm that causes paralysis for one round)
10–12	Needlestorm (level 3, glasslike shards tear into exposed skin)
13–15	Rain of the Living (level 3, rains tiny squidlike creatures that seek orifices)
16–17	Rain of the Dead (level 3, carries a flesh-eating fungus that does damage only to people who are already injured by entering their open wounds)
18	Tornado swarm (level 5 tornados that come in a cluster of 5 to 15)
19	Iron Wind (level 5, warps all matter)
20	Godsend (level 4, wind carries nanites that heal organic matter)

The numenera—and the prior inhabitants that created and wielded it—has reshaped not just the sky, but also the land and the sea, all of which have affected the seasons and the [weather](#).

SEASONS

In the Steadfast (and in many other subpolar regions), there are six recognized seasons each year, based on a combination of the quantities of available sunlight, weather patterns, moon phases, and ocean shifts. Four seasons each last for about one-fifth of the year and roughly correspond to spring, summer, fall, and winter. The other two seasons are each half as long as the others. The first of these, occurring at the very beginning of each year, is called [sable](#), characterized as a period of short days; very little moonlight, starlight, or sunlight; and a lack of fluctuation in the weather. The final season of the year is called the [tempest](#). This is the period when the weather becomes particularly unpredictable and dire. It's the time of year when the [Iron Wind](#) is most common, but other storms are also more likely to appear (and are much worse than at other times of the year).

In other parts of the world people recognize only two or three seasons, such as wet and dry, hot and cold, or tempest and mild. A few places also have “special” seasons loosely based on the timing of important natural events, such as animal migrations, volcanic eruptions, the movement of the giant machine in which their city is built, or the complete evaporation of the local lake.

WEATHER

Dealing with the weather is a hazardous proposition no matter where you go. The [Iron Wind](#) is perhaps the most dangerous, warping every bit of matter that it touches, living or dead. Other storms and weather patterns are nearly as deadly—zapping all of the oxygen or gravity out of a place, causing temperatures to rise and drop so suddenly that a living creature's internal fluids freeze and boil in a matter of seconds, or depositing creatures, bits of the numenera, or other oddities down on unsuspecting explorers' heads.

Some areas of the Ninth World, such as [Vralk](#) and [Rayskel Cays](#), have weather patterns and storms that are specific to those climates, existing nowhere else.



Paralysis, page 95



Weather, page 134



*Iron Wind,
page 135*

Vralk, page 125

Rayskel Cays, page 155



THE HUMAN WORLD

How can anyone possibly know what day it is from place to place? Three months ago, I was in a town where the new year began when the leader's son's best friend's seskii was born. And the year ended on the day the crops were expected to be harvested—crops, mind you, that hadn't even been planted yet.

Or perhaps it was only two months ago that I was there, for they told time by the rattling of a giant mechanical monster that the Aeon Priests kept chained up in the middle of their cave, and things move faster there than I am used to.

I shall be glad to arrive back in Charmonde, where time is as it should be.

~Naind Oreni's notes for "The Wonders of Our World: Timekeeping in the Steadfast and Beyond"

HISTORY

Although the history of the world stretches back an almost incomprehensible amount of time, the recorded history of the Ninth World is only about a thousand years. (This

varies from locale to locale, but never much more than that—sometimes much less.)

The written records of those thousand years of history typically relate how humans banded together to form communities based on agriculture, organizing themselves into cohesive groups, albeit often with a rather rigid internal class structure. They struggled against the myriad dangers of the world and discovered how to harness its magic.

But where did these humans come from? What were they doing before about a thousand years ago? No one knows. There are speculations, and certainly a great many myths—myths often taken as truth. These include gods from the sky giving birth to humanity, humans arising from deep underground like cicadas, or animals transforming into humans out of necessity.

Although the Ninth World has its historians, most don't consider the prior worlds to be a part of history (this is less true in Corao and similar eastern lands). The distinction of the Ninth World from the more distant past is an important one to

The humility taught by thinking about the prior worlds colors many facets of Ninth World humans and makes them different from those in the 21st century. They know they are not the top of the food chain, they know they possess no mastery of the Earth, and they know they are not the mightiest things to ever trod their world's surface.

Corao, page 187

them. That past is mostly unknowable. Still, it puts things in a unique perspective. Ninth Worlders who look at their own history are still humbled by its incredibly short length in comparison to the lifespan of what is clearly a very old Earth.

CALENDAR

While more detailed timekeeping varies from place to place, the Aeon Priests have a widely used standard that most people have adopted in one form or another.

Due to the moon's current orbit, which affects the Earth's rotation, days are 28 hours long, making each year 313 days long. A year is typically divided into ten months of thirty-one days each, with an extra three days tucked between the end of the previous year and the beginning of the new one. There are fifty-two weeks in a year, with six days each. The day without a week is the last day of the old year, and is commonly called Safe Haven, a day in which all debts are cancelled, all trespasses forgiven, and all records wiped clean. The "holiday" comes with a price, of course: a person seeking haven must place a piece of the past (some type of numenera) on the doorstep of the one they wish to grant them passage into

the new year. This practice has waned over the years, partly because so many people started their new year off with the sin of thievery, ensuring that they would need to ask for safe haven yet again. In most places, it is now more a day of reveling, secret kindnesses, and gifts.

People in the Ninth World track the parts of a day in a casual way. Although they use measurements of time equivalent to hours and minutes, as in "I'll be there in an hour," they don't give the hours any numbers as the day progresses. Instead, there are more general times of day marked by the location of the sun: early (before sunrise), morning (after sunrise and before lunch), midday (the brightest part of the day), wane (late afternoon), ebb (when it begins to get dark),

In Numenera, we talk about time in terms of seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, and months, and those concepts are very similar to the way the people of the Ninth World view time, although they probably use different terms that have slightly different meanings.





and night. The darkest part of the night, when it is impossible to see anything at all, is called stark in some places. Stark doesn't happen on a night when there are stars or a moon to light the way.

In addition to (or sometimes instead of) the more common fifty-two-week calendar, some places operate on a societal year, a calendar based on events that are important or memorable to that particular community. Common starting points for the year are things like the day the current ruler was born, the time the town burnt down, or the week the dread destroyer showed up. In some places, every time a new ruler steps up, the existing societal year is thrown out, and a new one is integrated based on that ruler's life. This can be confusing to anyone arriving from out of town (and sometimes even to the town's inhabitants).

RELIGION AND ORGANIZATIONS

The Fahat scare me so badly that I am ashamed of myself as a researcher to be trembling in their presence. Where is your strength, Naind? Where is your pride? Stand up and ask them the questions you came to ask. They cannot think highly of you for sitting on their floor, scribbling notes to yourself as if you were a child. Stand up.

~Naind Oreni's notes for "The Wonders of Our World: How and Why We Worship"

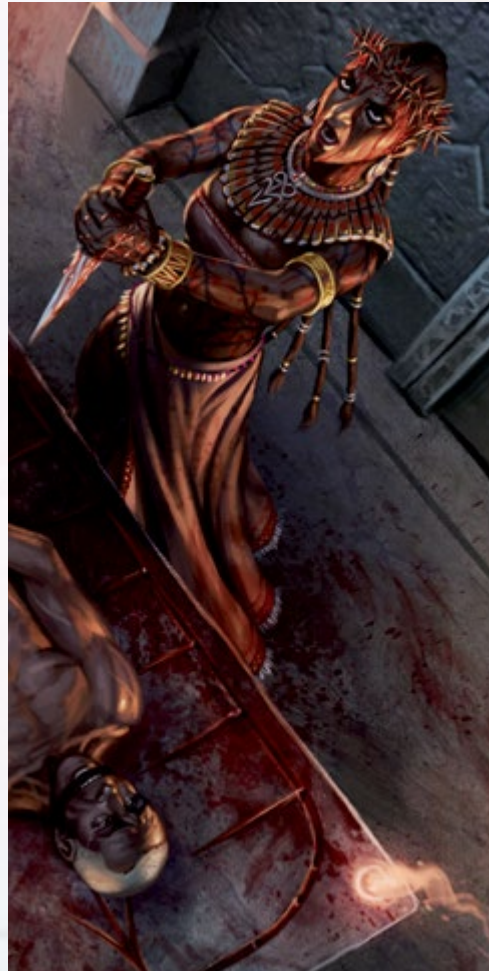
The Ninth World has so many, and such varied, religions that it would be difficult to list them all. And in many places, religion (at least as we think of it) doesn't exist. People there might not even have a concept of religion, or they might have something that we would consider a religion, but that they categorize as a business, an organization, or something else.

The Order of Truth, with its quasireligious

It wouldn't be inappropriate for a GM to use our standard calendar or timekeeping system for ease of understanding when running games. The systems are close enough that either one would provide players with a good sense of the passage of time.

reverence of the past and the understanding its inhabitants had of the forces of the universe, is likely the most widespread religious organization. The rest are more local, typically grounded in the specific physical reality or spiritual beliefs of that area.

Organizations, too, run the gamut, with some as large and dangerous as the Convergence and the Jagged Dream, and others much smaller, local affairs that work toward the good of all. What defines an organization is simply a group of people with a common goal; thus, players may choose to join an organization whose cause they believe in or start one of their own if they have a passion to pursue.



RELIGIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS OF THE NINTH WORLD

Here are some of the more common and interesting religions and organizations of the Ninth World. The most popular location is listed for each, but that doesn't mean that a religion or organization (or some bastardized form of it) hasn't spread to other areas of the world. In fact, it would be entirely appropriate for a missionary or something far weirder to have spread a particular religion to an unexpected location.

RELIGIONS



Challifani, page 197

Fahat, page 211

*Order of Truth,
page 222*

*Our Order of the Lady
of the Salt Way,
page 193*

Gaian animism, page 101

Nacrescenti, page 78

The Red Gods, page 126

*The Transfigured God,
page 191*



CHALLIFANI (the Beyond)

The priests and adherents who worship the million gods of the Challifani practice flagellation, mutilation, and torture to keep their gods happy and their city blessed. In truth, the brain they worship is a deranged biological construction, and the Challifani are various facets of its fractured personality.

FAHAT (the Beyond)

The Fahat may or may not be a religion. Members revere the blessing of mutation, believing mutants to be the equivalents of saints or demigods.



GAIAN ANIMISM (Lostrei)

The Gaians believe that supernatural spirits inhabit creatures, objects, locations, and even concepts. The Gaian belief system involves an almost limitless number of these spirits and claims that humans each have a spirit just like every other creature does.



NACRESCENTI (the Frozen South)

Any one of a thousand or more ice gods, the Nacrescenti are believed to manifest in the blowing snow and the patterns of frozen ice, although never in greater frequency than on the annual holiday called Thousand-Eve, the longest night of the year. Some people believe that each person has his own Nacrescenti that watches over him. Devotion is paid quietly in icons and amulets worn on one's body.



ORDER OF TRUTH (worldwide)

The Order of Truth, also called the Amber Papacy, is not technically a religion, even though it's structured like one. One could say that it's a religion devoted to science, for the Order of Truth reveres the past and the understanding its inhabitants had of the forces of the universe. It is the most widespread, with its strongest roots in the Steadfast and the Beyond.

OUR ORDER OF THE LADY OF THE SALT WAY (the Beyond)

Members worship salt as their god and life, and offer succor and shelter to those in need.



RED GODS (Vralk)

Vralkans are the chosen of the Red Gods and serve as their emissaries on Earth. These gods demand sacrifices of blood. True devotees perform some sort of self-mutilation to honor their gods with the glory of more red (bloody) flesh.



TRANSFIGURED GOD (Lands of the Dawn)

This religion is centered around an orbiting sky god that periodically creates a "chosen one" through which it speaks.



ORGANIZATIONS



ANGULAN KNIGHTS (the Steadfast)

An order dedicated to the advancement of humanity as a race, righting wrongs, passing judgments, and seeing justice done. They hunt mutants, and ignore and abhor local governments, class distinctions, and religious differences, finding them deterrents to their cause.



CONVERGENCE (worldwide)

Members of the Convergence revere the knowledge of the past and seek to use it to grant power to themselves. They will use coercion, deceit, and even violence to get what they want.

DIOSHEN (the Steadfast and Beyond)

A loosely knit organization that consists of coveys—groups that always include one person who can consort with the dead. Members uncover the most precious objects of the recently deceased, and steal them.

GREY COMPANY

(the Steadfast and Beyond)

A group of mercenaries, mostly brigands and bounty hunters, who track down targets and eliminate them for pay.

GUARDIAN WOMB (the Spiritlands)

A charitable organization funded and supported by donations given by Gaian pilgrims coming to the city. It helps the needy—refugees, those in need of shelter or protection, or simply those looking for food or other necessities.



JAGGED DREAM (the Steadfast and Beyond)

A secretive cult located throughout the Steadfast and the Beyond. Its purpose is to engineer conflict on a massive scale.



NUSMEN (the Frozen South)

These barbaric men call themselves Nusmen and claim that they are not of the same stock as other humans, but more ancient. They say that their size, strength, hardy nature, and resistance to cold make them better than lesser folk. Nusmen consider themselves superior, but they are few in number. They revel in violence and blood, using their strength to take what they want.



REDFLEETS (the Steadfast)

A self-governed crew of ocean-loving vagabonds, thieves, scientists, and other miscreants. They sail the seas in search of natural wonders.



SARRACENIANS (worldwide)

This group of scholars is part religious and part scientific. They worship plants, particularly unusual and carnivorous plants and plantlike predators, as their gods.

STEEL STAR (the Beyond)

A radical, revolutionary group interested in overthrowing nobles, particularly in some of the small towns in the heart of the Black Riage.



TEMPLE OF THE WELLSPRING (Lostrei)

A religious organization led by priests called Veilwardens, which take turns conducting the important rituals and ceremonies. Veilwardens see “beyond the veil” to the truth of the world—the world as seen by the spirits. In turn, they manage and watch over that veil, ensuring the safety of both humans and spirits.

Remember that the Ninth World is not shaped by Judeo-Christianity, Islam, or other current religions. The taboos, virtues, rituals, and other behavior-modifying beliefs prevalent in the 21st century are not necessarily true for the Ninth World.



Angulan Knights, page 224

The Jagged Dream, page 224

The Redfleets, page 226

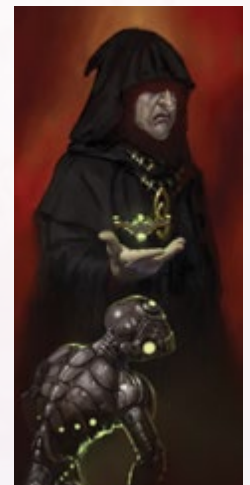
The Sarraceniens, page 226

Guardian Womb, page 108

Nusmen, page 91

The Steel Star, page 63

Temple of the Wellspring, page 108





COMMUNITIES

People need other people. To survive, we must work together. The world is too dangerous and too strange to take on alone—unless, of course, you become the danger or the strangeness yourself.

~Naind Oreni's notes for "Social Structures of the Beyond"

In the Ninth World, a community might be a large city filled with homes of wood and stone, open marketplaces, and maybe a few towers. Alternatively, it could be a cluster of organic pods clinging to the underside of the branches of an enormous tree made of glass and synth. Or anything in between. People gather in all sorts of interesting spaces.

Although large cities exist here and there—usually near coasts or along rivers, but not always—most people live in small villages. In the Ninth World, a village typically ranges from ten to about two hundred people. A town might be anywhere from a bit bigger than a village to a few thousand people. A city usually has at least 10,000 people, and many have more.

The largest cities have 500,000 or more residents, but these are clear exceptions. Typically, a city of 20,000 or 30,000 people is a metropolis by most standards.

LIFE IN A CITY

City dwellers have access to more of just about everything beyond the simple necessities of life—more variety of foods, more education, more entertainment, more health care, more experience with the numenera, and more exposure to other cultures and creatures. City dwellers are usually employed in occupations beyond the production of food (farming, hunting, herding, and the like). Food is usually shipped in from surrounding villages. Instead, the people work as clerks, scribes, cooks, messengers, crafters, artisans, scholars, and more, but the typical resident is a laborer. Laborers include porters, packers, diggers, movers, builders, repairers, sanitation workers, and so on.

Any sort of standard item or service can likely be purchased in a city. Many cities have their own specialties as well, such as a city



known for its textiles, its metals, and so on.

Cities almost always have a handful of experts in the numenera—scholars, tinkerers, or nanos who often have devices available for sale (although the selection can be random, and oddities are by far the most common). This is above and beyond any Aeon Priests who might be present if the city is in the Steadfast.

Cities have schools for young children and very often a trade school or a university. Sometimes there are many different temples and churches for a variety of different religions.

Very often, a wall or similar defensive structure surrounds a city. The Ninth World is a dangerous place. A city—particularly a walled city—will have a force of full-time guards that often double as law enforcement under the command of the city's leader. A dozen or so such guards for every thousand residents is probably typical.

City dwellers rarely know everyone in their community and thus are less worried about strangers and outsiders.

LIFE IN A TOWN OR VILLAGE

In towns and villages, residents have limited access to education, entertainment, and so on. There may be limitations on health care and food variety as well. Most people in these communities are farmers, herders, hunters, or gatherers—in other words, focused on producing food.

Townfolk, and in particular villagers, are usually extremely suspicious of newcomers. Travel isn't common, so outsiders don't show up in the community all that often. Traveling merchants come and go occasionally, but even they come with enough regularity so as not to be outright strangers.

Towns and villages, often fairly isolated, develop their own customs and rituals. It's not at all odd for such a community to have its own unique religion.

CUSTOMS AND RITUALS

Everywhere a traveler goes, there are strange new customs and rituals practiced by the locals. In one village in the Beyond, for example, it is the custom to force all outsiders to spend their first night in a barn



Corao, page 187

with the livestock. In a particular village in **Corao**, all transactions require both parties to swear to their honesty with a complex hand gesture while they recite the names of their parents.

Frozen South, page 77

In isolated corners of the Ninth World, things can get pretty strange. In one village in the **Frozen South**, a young man or woman coming into adulthood must enter a cave and be bathed by unusual energies. Most emerge unchanged, but a few come out with physical or mental alterations. In a town in **Vralk**, anyone wishing to lead the community must descend into an ancient pit of steel and synth and consume one of the fungal worms there without being devoured by the worms themselves.

Vralk, page 125

The variety of customs and rituals is far too extensive to cover. GMs should give most new communities a strange, idiosyncratic custom or belief that makes the place unique.

CLASS

Lostrei, page 100

Most communities in the Ninth World have a strict class structure. Although there are exceptions (such as in **Lostrei**), in most

places there is an aristocracy, a middle class, a low class, and a slave class. The details can vary, as can how one's class is determined. Most of the time, however, the class into which you are born is the class in which you will remain for your entire life.

Thus, the aristocracy are born to their station and have greater wealth and greater access to food, health care, and other resources than anyone else. They also have authority over those beneath them. Sadly, it is the rare aristocrat who does not abuse these advantages. Nobles are aristocrats with titles, such as baron, duchess, and so on.

The middle and low classes are usually different only in the amount of wealth they possess. Middle-class residents of cities and towns often have their own house, for example, while the lower classes live in communal buildings or on the street. These classes have varying rights, but in the end they are almost always subject to the aristocracy. It is possible for a middle-class individual to be wealthy or even extremely wealthy, but not technically an aristocrat. This, however, is rare, in that the class system is constructed to keep non-nobles





from accumulating much wealth and because in some places, it is possible to buy one's way into the upper class.

Slaves are those captured in war or, more commonly, the children of slaves. They can also be members of the lower class that have accumulated high debt and no way to pay. Last, sometimes criminals are sentenced to be slaves. Slaves have few rights and can be bought and sold. In some communities, slavery is limited—you might be a slave until you have worked off your debt—but most of the time, it is a permanent status. In a few places, slaves have absolutely no rights and can be killed without repercussion.

RELATIONSHIPS

Although there are many types of relationships, we'll focus here on long-term romantic relationships.

In most of these, people are encouraged to choose their partners freely. Couples co-own resources, businesses, or whatever is in their possession. If they choose to split, they work out the division of property by themselves or with the assistance of a

mediator. Arranged marriages or the like can happen, but usually only on the two ends of the class spectrum—among the nobility and among slaves.

Couples of all genders, sizes, and sexual orientations are common. Two-partner heterosexual relationships are in the majority, but they aren't the norm, per se. Many people choose to participate in commitment ceremonies. Occasionally, a larger group of adults make commitments to one another, living together and raising children as a communal family.

Not everyone in a relationship makes a formal commitment to each other, but those who do have a number of choices. Ceremonies can be private or public and take the form of handfasting, feasting, exchanging goods and services, or holding a large, elegant gathering in the presence of an officiant. In most cases, living together for longer than a year is considered the same as having a commitment ceremony.

As a general rule, gender inequality doesn't occur in the Ninth World. Although people find many reasons to discriminate against others, gender typically isn't on that list. The common understanding seems to be that gender is less important than other elements of a person and is fairly fluid, able to slide, shift, and even be altered with the aid of the numenera.

Plenty of things illegal in most 21st-century locations, such as slavery, prostitution, and drugs, are legal in most Ninth World communities.

Rayskel Cays, page 155

Vralk, page 125



Ghan, page 145

LEGALITIES

Laws vary widely from one place to another. Sometimes they are not codified, but simply come about as a result of what the community leaders decide. Most often, though, there is at least a simple set of rules that everyone knows and (in theory) obeys. Most places, obviously, forbid murder, assault, and theft.

Other places have a long, elaborate code of laws, interpreted by magistrates and judges and argued by advocates. As often as not, these rules have ties to religious beliefs or community customs. Thus, in a village in the *Rayskel Cays*, for example, it is illegal to touch glass after dark, or in a town in *Ghan* you cannot say the name of your neighbor without stating the direction in which their property lies from yours. These strange, unique laws usually have minor penalties, but that's not always the case. In *Vralk*, for instance, to demean one's superiors for the third time is a crime punishable by death.

ECONOMY

In the Ninth World, traders and merchants are some of the bravest folk around, for

they are willing to move goods from one community to the next. Travel is dangerous and communities are often unwelcoming. Merchants typically travel in bands with guards overland or in sturdy craft along the coast or in rivers. In some places—particularly in the *Steadfast*—they have organized into trading companies that help get the right goods to the right places, more out of the need for security than anything else.

Shins and Coins: “Shin” is very old slang that started in the Ninth World's earliest days as “shinies.” It speaks to a time when humans scavenged for most of what they used rather than crafting their own goods. Shins in circulation today are often from that time—bits of an ancient numenera device of metal or synth, sparkling crystals, or colored glass.

As time goes on, more and more localities try to create a more formal coinage. But shins remain the standard currency in most places. It's not that shins themselves are important. They are just an easily understood unit that often represents barter. In other words, when the butcher





tells the woman in the dairy that a certain amount of meat is worth 2 shins, she knows to give him 2 shins' worth of cheese in payment, even though no shins or coins of any kind are exchanged.

When actual shins are used in trade, the party accepting the payment often refuses a small percentage of the objects as being worthless. A particular merchant, for example, might accept some synth pieces but reject a few dull crystals as being just "rocks." The next merchant, however, might accept those crystals. As a result, traders usually make sure that in any given transaction, they offer about 10 percent more than what's being asked. They don't throw out rejected shins, though—those items are saved for the next transaction because you never know what someone will take. (Communities that have actual coins avoid this issue.)

Wages: In heavily populated areas like the Steadfast, people might earn a daily wage in shins—anywhere from a few shins for a peasant to a few hundred shins for a merchant. Many people, in both populated and rural areas, work for something other than money, such as housing, food, livestock, or other necessities.

Prices: Setting prices for items in the Ninth World can be difficult because there is no centralized economy, and the cost of weapons, clothing, armor, and even the numenera is heavily affected by local



TYPICAL DAILY WAGE IN SHINS

Occupation	Wage
Guard	1–2
Numenera consultant	5–20
Boat captain	5
Craftsperson	4
Engineer	10
Farmer	2–3
Artisan	8
Farmhand	1–2
Animal tender	1–2
Laborer	1–2
Sage/scholar/teacher	5–20
Chiurgeon	8–30
"Fortune teller"	10–20

supply and demand. When setting the price of an object, one should think about how common or rare the item is, whether it's in high demand, and whether it has some special use to those in the area.

The *Numenera* corebook lists starting prices for armor, weapons, and equipment. Those prices can be higher or lower in a region depending on an item's scarcity and quality. Use the following table for additional starting prices for gifts, household items, mounts, and more.



*Armor prices,
page 79*

*Weapon prices,
page 80*

*Equipment prices,
page 81*



EQUIPMENT TABLE

GIFTS AND SUNDRIES

Item	Cost in Shins
Diamond-shaped patch, simple	1
Diamond-shaped patch, elaborate	20
Goldgleam-coated ring	30
Necklace of malleable metal	40
Colored stronglass necklace, hand-carved	50
Living plant hairpin (an oddity, very rare)	100



Aneen, page 231

Windrider, page 152

Skimmers are level 6 mechanical craft that must be preprogrammed with a destination. They skim over the water with four automated synth sails, are 18 feet (5 m) long, and can carry up to six people.

Pushboats measure 20 feet (6 m) and carry up to six people. Someone must constantly turn a crank to keep the motor running.



Ossam's Traveling Menagerie and Soaring Circus, page 165

A mhorinon is a large, public, legal commitment ceremony for the rich or prestigious, headed by a well-paid official, during which all parties sign a treatise that explicitly spells out which items belong to each party and what will happen to those items upon someone's death or the dissolution of their partnership.

HOUSEHOLD AND LIVING ITEMS

Item	Cost in Shins
Bed	10–20
Book	2–10
Book, rare	20–100
Casket or other burial device	20–50
Chair	5–10
Table	10–20
Dishes	10–20
Barrel	5
Crate	3
String (about 10 feet or 3 m)	2

NUMENERA

Item	Cost in Shins
Artifact	50–5,000
Bits and pieces	1–10
Cypher	20–100
Oddity	10–50

MOUNTS AND VEHICLES

Item	Cost in Shins
Aneen or other mount	100–200
Cart, small, hand pulled	25
Cart, large, mount pulled	100
Skimmer, rental	50/day
Small sailing ship, rental	50–75/day
Pushboat	25
Windrider	8,000
Sailing ship, purchase	5,000

SERVICES

Item	Cost in Shins
Lodging, basic	2–5/day
Lodging, high-end	10–100/day
Storage rental	1–3/day
Laundry	1
Bath	1
Cab or ferry	1–2

EVENTS, CEREMONIES, AND EXPERIENCES

Item	Cost in Shins
Mhorinon	5,000*
Ossam's Traveling Menagerie and Soaring Circus	2/ticket
Sexual services, short-term	2–20
Sexual services, long-term	100**
Shrine offering	2–10
Nonsexual escort	2–5***
Entertainment/theater	1–2/ticket
Commitment ceremony	5–100

*plus a fashioned artifact ** or an artifact *** plus jewelry or clothing



COMMUNITY ASPECTS

Sometimes you just need a quick idea to make a community interesting, weird, or appropriate for the Ninth World. Use the following lists to choose or roll one or more aspects of a community.



ARCHITECTURE

- 1 Houses are built inside ancient creatures whose bones and skins were perfectly preserved by some unknown force.
- 2 Large numenera devices walked or flew to this space and settled or died here; now they're the base for all of the city's structures.
- 3 Buildings are tall, thin cones that house creatures in the top half of the structures; these creatures provide heat and energy to the homes and food to the residents.
- 4 Each building is made of different materials, but all the roofs are covered with numenera devices to appease the machine gods.
- 5 Translucent rooms are grown from a numenera device in the middle of town; each room starts as a 3-foot (1 m) cube and takes six months to grow to full size.
- 6 Most people reside in ancient, hollow statues that are 15 feet (5 m) tall and carved with semihuman faces; the statues howl whenever a biological entity enters or leaves.



EDUCATION

- 1 Every morning, students are taught by an automaton in the center of town.
- 2 Students receive lessons telepathically while sleeping.
- 3 Each student works one on one with a specially created, smarter replica of themselves in the form of a crystal.
- 4 Children wear *brain buds* for the first five years of their life.
- 5 A living structure teaches all who enter it; no one is entirely sure how it works, but the children end up very smart (and occasionally die young in bizarre ways).
- 6 The students are all connected during school hours via a brainwire that transmits knowledge; if one student learns something, they all learn it (even if it's false).



Brain bud,
page 302



LEADERSHIP

- 1 A group of Aeon Priests who never leave theirclave govern through thumans that have been biomodded to speak.
- 2 A thinking hyperfungus communicates by implanting spores in everyone's brains.
- 3 A mechanical entity thinks it is a god but actually is the creation of a reclusive nano who lives far away (and who may or may not realize what his creation is up to).
- 4 A collective of spheres works as a hive mind, monitoring everyone's actions, both to protect them and to catch them in any wrongdoing.
- 5 A mutant who escaped the clutches of the *Angulan Knights* spends the town's resources creating devices and building an army to protect herself from them.
- 6 A giant stone tentacle writhes from the ground in the center of town and keeps everyone safe as long as they don't use the numenera near it.



Angulan Knights,
page 224



*Nibovian wife,
page 249*

Father Calaval, page 6



HEALTHCARE

- 1 The town “grows” numenera devices along the walls and floors of an ancient structure; the devices almost always have healing properties.
- 2 A “miracle worker” arrived in town long ago and the leaders have been holding him captive ever since, forcing him to heal anyone who needs it.
- 3 Aeon Priests created a device that heals all wounds; however, its use requires the sacrifice of a certain type of creature that is difficult to catch and kill.
- 4 A small group of **Nibovian wives** lives near the town; they have unusual talents and will heal anyone who helps them conceive in some way.
- 5 A young boy who claims to be the reincarnation of **Father Calaval** has taught the whole town rudimentary healing skills.
- 6 An abhuman was killed in the middle of town; from its body grew a giant blue crystal that radiates healing properties when it is sung to.



TRAVELING VENDORS AND MARKETS

- 1 An impromptu market has sprouted up near a recent numenera discovery; some of the available items have unusual properties.
- 2 A floating device pulled by two abhumans is full of wares. Those who approach it hear a voice in their head telling them how much everything costs and how to purchase their items without being attacked by the abhumans.
- 3 A large orange creature flies into the area holding a list of items and prices in its mouth. Those who put proper payment in the creature’s throat sac will find the purchased items in their packs the next morning.
- 4 Two varjellens set up a cypher shop along a road. Their prices are quite high and they will sell only one cypher to each person, but each item is inside a floating bubble on a string. Until the bubble is broken, the cypher doesn’t count against the user’s cypher limit.
- 5 A very tall humanoid rides up on an **ergovore hound**. He doesn’t speak the Truth, but he communicates through hand gestures, offering food, traditional weapons, and clothing in exchange for energized numenera devices to feed his hound.
- 6 A woman is accompanied by two creatures called **fifeogs** that slightly resemble **blood barms** but are only distant relatives, as they are four times as large, mostly docile, and have objects stored inside their liquid-filled sacs. She wears gloves made of light to slide open the membranes of the sacs and remove any items the PCs purchase.

Ergovore hound: level 4, attacks as level 5; feeds on energy; for more details, see *The Ninth World Bestiary*, page 47

Fifeog: level 5; Armor 3



*Blood barm,
page 232*



PART 2:



THE SETTING



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Chapter 7: Lostrei: The Spiritlands	100
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CHAPTER 4

THE STEADFAST



One might think of the Steadfast as the tamest of places, the—dare I say it—most mundane and boring of places, but one must only spend a few nights within the so-called civilized areas of this region to discover that the heart is blackest where the skin is the cleanest. I shall never get used to this incongruity of nature, and perhaps it is true we as humans are even drawn to it, for it gives the heart no small shock to discover a gaping mouth hidden neatly among the perceived safety of our bed.

~Naind Oreni, first draft of her introduction to Chapter 11 in “The Wonders of Our World: The Steadfast and Beyond”

Although the *Numenera* corebook covers the Steadfast in great detail, it is a vast region that contains far, far more than could be described in even ten times the number of pages (and this is a good thing—plenty of room for mystery and exploration). This chapter provides additional locales in the Steadfast to use in any campaign.

THE JUTTING REMNANTS (WYR LOWLANDS)

Everywhere you look in the Ninth World, you see the numenera. That hill over there? It’s actually an ancient structure covered in sediment and plants. The flat expanse beyond it? A smooth area of paved stone, blanketed by a thin layer of soil and grass. The jagged edge of the stream running past it? The bare metal hull of what seems to have been some kind of vehicle. The floating tower high above? Well, that goes without saying.



But in some places, it seems, one finds even more numenera than usual. It's just more obvious, less a part of the landscape and more like a graveyard. One such locale is the lowlands around the Wyr River in northern Malevich, which is filled with what some people call the Jutting Remnants. These scattered and broken pieces of some enormous edifice jut up out of the shallow waters of a wetland that stretches for more than a dozen miles, winding through the rocky outcroppings of the hills.

The Jutting Remnants are mainly metallic, although some have synth components as well. The various pieces are similar enough that it is not hard to imagine that they were once part of a whole—a very large whole. Speculation is that it was a vehicle that crashed, although other people wonder if it didn't explode high in the sky. Of course, it could just as easily have been an object or a structure that no Ninth Wordler could understand, having met a disastrous fate that is just as incomprehensible.

Regardless, jagged metal bits and spars, flat sheets like sloughed metal skin, and twisted pieces of something quite complex now lie scattered in the shallow waters. Each metal bit immersed in the water corrodes, but at an almost immeasurably slow rate. Occasionally a particularly strange component spurts forth some kind of unknown fluid into the fen, or it buzzes and sparks with dying gasps of energy.

Aside from simple, useless debris and the occasional cypher or oddity, the following are a few of the other recurring types of remnants one can find.

Powered Rings: Throughout the scattered debris, one common element is rings of metal about 25 feet (8 m) in diameter. Sometimes these rings lie flat (and thus are completely submerged), but most often they stand upright in the murk, protruding high above the waterline. Various points on the rings glow with a blue radiance, and each whole ring vibrates ever so slightly.



A few industrious or ingenious tinkerers have found ways to tap into the power that courses within the rings. This power is used to re-energize cyphers, artifacts, and other devices. Just as often, however, a careless or unlucky technician attempts this feat and dies in an explosion of blue light. A few people have reported explorers getting blasted with blue flame for just coming close to one of the rings. Because of all this, many now give them a wide berth.

Black Bells: When explorers wander through the Jutting Remnants, they sometimes come upon weird structures of various sizes made of dark metal, half submerged in the mire and water. They call these black bells. Black bells are most often spheres or hemispheres (more or less) with powered hatches that are almost always quite difficult to open.

"Every black bell holds a secret—many, in fact, but you can't find them all," a veteran explorer will tell you. And it's true. The latter part of the statement is particularly strange. On one day, for example, an intrepid nano might manage to open a black bell and get inside. They're usually not large or roomy. The nano discovers interesting parts inside that she removes to cobble together some cyphers. After a thorough search turns up nothing more, she leaves, and the bell reseals (they always seem to do that). Two days later, a pair of jacks comes to the same



The Jutting Remnants are located in the kingdom of Malevich.

Malevich, page 154



Stratharian war moth, page 261

Ithsyn, page 241

Morl: level 5, resists most physical attacks as level 6, resists mental attacks as level 3; health 30; makes up to three tentacle attacks at once; those struck must make Might defense rolls or be pulled into the morl's body and move one step down the damage track each round; see The Ninth World Bestiary, page 87

Parlous green, page 237

black bell and, after considerable effort, they get it open again. The bits the nano removed are obvious, but despite being less skilled in such things, the jacks find a discovery that the nano missed. That's the truth of black bells. Upon subsequent visits, there's always something that went unnoticed before. It's always worthwhile to go back and look again a day or two later—and maybe again a day or two after that. Sometimes a black bell is stripped completely bare on the inside, fully scanned, and utterly studied. And then a year later, someone goes in and finds a panel that no one found before, behind which lie the controls of a completely new discovery with its own unique functions.

Some black bells are so frequently visited or revisited that people have built wooden piers out to them so that one does not have to wade through the water to reach them.

The piers also make it easier to cart away any good discoveries.

Empty Pockets: The so-called empty pockets of the Jutting Remnants are spots where the water and plant life are displaced by . . . something. It would appear that something invisible, usually about 10 to 15 feet (3 to 5 m) in diameter, rests in the waters of the fen. Investigation reveals nothing—the pocket is as empty as it appears. However, explorers have managed to activate something in the pocket that has drawn them in, revealing an object with a hollow interior that is larger than the exterior—the area of the displacement—would indicate. Some of these intrepid souls have suggested that the pockets are, in fact, inside out in a way that is difficult to understand, and the reason that people can rarely see or feel an empty pocket is that they're looking for the outside when what they're finding is the inside. This would indicate that the hollow "interior" is actually the exterior. In any event, the interior/exterior—whichever is so hard to access—often contains valuable numenera items and components.

Dangers: The dangers are many. The Remnants are thick with **Stratharian war moths**, **ithsyns**, and the amorphous, acidic **morl**. There are also the **parlous green**, carnivorous, quasi-intelligent plants that grow in the fens throughout the Dark Hills. Parlous green seem to thrive in areas with the thickest concentrations of numenera pieces and parts in the wetland.

BALLASTER

In the spring months, sometimes the waters of the fens rise when the Wyr overflows its banks. In such times, the floods churn up particularly strange things from the mire. Creatures that otherwise would never see the light of day, wondrous or dreadful bits of numenera, and diseases or worse are brought to the surface. In no place is this stranger than Ballaster.

Ballaster is another small, isolated village in the Dark Hills. A limited collection of buildings running along the side of the Wyr, Ballaster is no stranger to the rising spring waters, yet





the residents never move or relocate. The rare visitors usually don't stay long—most find the village (or perhaps the villagers) off-putting without being able to specify why.

The dozen or so families of Ballaster avoid the sun at all costs and come out of their homes only in the evening and night, or on overcast days (which are frequent). Without exception, they are pale, almost grey. Even their eyes are pale. Skin afflictions, especially blue-black sores and thick discharge, are common among the residents. They do not seem to cultivate crops, keep animals, hunt, or gather.

The leader of the village—the Speaker—is a woman named **Cacoethes**. She makes it clear, without coming right out and saying it, that visitors are not welcome.

The village has no communal house, no inn, and no tavern. There are no temples, and the residents never talk about any kind of religion. They possess no numenera. The ramshackle buildings drip with moss and dark mold, and some of the villagers' clothing does as well.

The Tower of Moons: **Fnx** stands almost twice as tall as most humans but is as thin and delicate as a spider's leg. Roughly humanoid, it has six appendages that appear identical, though it normally uses two of them as legs and four as arms. Its face is nothing but a glowing sliver of blue.

Whatever **Fnx** was—ancient mechanical man, extraterrestrial, or something far weirder—it is a scavenger and collector now, dwelling amid the Jutting Remains in a complex structure that looks like a gigantic series of multicolored spheres connected by silver tubes. This amazing building is known as the Tower of Moons, but **Fnx** just calls it home. The tower can be seen for miles on a clear day, but clear days are rare in this region. Within **Fnx**'s strange home, one is transmitted to adjacent rooms rather than walking there. Each room is a globe, and gravity is oriented so that as one walks around the interior of the globe, the floor is always down. **Fnx** keeps a variety of scavenged parts and numenera items, including cyphers and artifacts. Its focus, however, seems to be on devices and parts

Fnx: level 6, *Speed* defense and all movement tasks as level 7, all tasks related to the numenera as level 8; *Armor* 4; controls gravity in immediate distance, so foes failing a *Might* defense roll are pinned to the ground or fly off into the air

Cacoethes: level 5; *defense, deception, and seeing through deception* as level 7

The writer Adoral, after passing through Ballaster, wrote in her journal, “I believe that the rising floodwaters of the Wyr bring something to the people of Ballaster. This something, whatever it is, sustains them and preoccupies their entire lives, but it forces them to spend most of their time in their dark, damp homes. I do not fear these people, but I will tell you this: I would fear for my very life if I had to get between them and whatever floats up to them in the spring floods.”



WYR LOWLANDS HEARSAY

Lost in the Floodwaters: A recent flood washed away a small school with some children and a teacher still in the building. Most people fear that they are lost for good, but a few hold out hope that someone can find them. The leaders of the nearby village, Gurrall, have scraped together a small reward for their safe return.

Mending Fences: Two small villages on opposite sides of the river have, more or less, been at war for a generation. Hambrose lies on the Malevich side, and Throa is on the Draolis side. An unfortunate circumstance involving Throa fishermen led to the death of an elder of Hambrose, sparking a feud that has been unending and sometimes brutal. Anyone who can broker a peace between the villages would be a hero in the region.

THE WEIRD OF THE WYR

Arachnophobia: A nine-legged spidery creature has been seen wading through the fens. Upon spotting the beast, even the most stalwart warrior has fled in terror, as if it had some sort of control over the fear response of those it encountered.

The Box: One of the items brought out of the Jutting Remnants is a glass box about the size of a human head. The box, when opened, appears empty, but everyone near the box at the time disappears for a few minutes and then reappears with no memory of the last few hours. The box has passed through a number of hands but is still said to lie within the area around the Wyr Lowlands.



The Dark Hills are located in the kingdom of Navarene.



Navarene, page 137

with uses that are not obvious. It seems to be looking for one or more specific things.

Fnx is not welcoming to visitors, but it is willing to pay others to search through the fens and bring back objects that look “interesting.” It pays in functioning cyphers and oddities. Anyone who manages to get inside the tower might find stranger things aside from the components, parts, cyphers, oddities, and artifacts that Fnx has recovered.

For example, it becomes fairly obvious that Fnx was neither the builder nor the original occupant of the Tower of Moons. In fact, the original owners still appear to live within the structure. Tiny insects buzz about the interior, but occasionally—particularly when viewed in a mirror’s reflection or through different colors of glass—one can see that these “insects” are entities of great stature and obvious intelligence. For whatever

reason, they do not seem to be in sync with the rest of reality in any meaningful manner. So far, all attempts to interact with them or just establish communication have failed. If Fnx can communicate with them, the creature keeps it a secret.

DEMESNE OF THE HIVE-MAN (THE DARK HILLS)

The Dark Hills is a region of quiet mystery. Though it lies almost in the middle of the Steadfast, most people avoid its rocky hillocks





and shallow fens. However, some call the place home. The Wyr River runs through the hills on its way from the mountains in the east toward the sea in the west, feeding the lowland fens, turning them into a misty mire, and sometimes washing out things that are perhaps best left buried.

A small village called Elderbriar sits atop one of the hills, a cluster of simple wooden homes and a few stone buildings. Not far away dwells a strange being that seems to be a living, moving beehive. The people of the Elderbriar have named it (creatively enough) “the hive-man.”

ELDERBRIAR

About fifty people call Elderbriar home. The reeve is a woman named **Gaellas**, whose fully functional left arm is made of ice. She can create other objects out of ice by supercooling the air around her.

Most of the people of Elderbriar tend small flocks of **huerik**, a woolly, human-sized, wingless insect unique to this region. Others explore the lowland fens for small game, berries, and other edible or useful

plants. All of them talk often and at length about the “bees and ghosts of bees” that haunt the area just south of the village and the strange being that watches over them all, the hive-man.

If you want to learn more about the hive-man, you need to speak with **Seida** the Seer. She lives alone in a moss-covered shack just out of sight from the road out of Elderbriar to the south. It’s difficult to ascertain the age of this obese woman because she covers her body in orange paint and uses even more colors to make strange patterns on her face.

Seida has an odd manner of speaking—she treats everything that is happening in the present as if it has already happened. Thus, when she meets strangers, she acts as though she has already met them and seems to know vital details about them. She has the strange manner of singling out one member of a group and treating that person as being far more important than the others, and she makes veiled references to “destiny” and “larger purpose” in regard to that person but never fully explains what she means.

Regarding the hive-man and the ghost

Seida: level 5; any task requiring intelligence, intuition, or insight as level 7

The extent of Seida’s ability to see into the future is uncertain. She may simply be extraordinarily intelligent and intuitive.

Gaellas: level 4, all types of interactions as level 5; can create objects of ice that are her size or smaller from thin air

Huerik: level 2; Armor 1



DARK HILLS HEARSAY

A Little Bit of Knowledge:

Bandits roam the Dark Hills, ambushing those who find anything of value there. Unlike most of their kind, the bandits seem to know a great deal about the numenera. Not surprisingly, they are frighteningly well armed and well equipped with cyphers and artifacts.

Vanished Village: From its secure spot high atop one of the hills, the village of Negrudin has mysteriously disappeared. The entire village is just gone, including the people, livestock, buildings, and even crops.

THE WEIRD OF THE DARK HILLS

The Door: A massive round doorway is set into the side of one of the rocky hills of the region. No one has ever been able to open it, but some people claim to have witnessed it being open. At such times, horrific creatures unlike anything seen before come out and roam the hills, devour seemingly random objects (rocks, plants, metal, synth, and creatures), and then return to within the hill.

Vibrating Ship: A deep blue vehicle flies over the Dark Hills. At times, it shakes and rattles violently, sometimes so much so that small bits of the vehicle fall loose and drop to the ground.

The Face in the Mire: In the waters of the lowland fens, near sunset, sometimes one can see a strange shape. Rising from the murk, a humanlike face forms and sometimes speaks to those who see it. It never remains for more than a few moments. Reports describe the face quite differently each time.

bees, Seida knows a great deal but is reluctant to share her knowledge with anyone who seems to mean harm to either one. She is addicted to the special honey that the hive-man produces and would never wish to see him hurt. In fact, she believes that he is a supernatural being—a god of sorts, or a potent spirit—that watches over all bees. The “ghost bees” are evidence of that.

THE HIVE-MAN

South of Elderbriar lies a lake and a beautiful waterfall. As with any location in the Ninth World, a few ruins and remnants of the past present themselves, but one can almost—almost—mistake them for strange rock formations. Next to the waterfall, however, an explorer will find a strange

Hive-man: level 5, most tasks related to numenera as level 6; a swarm of bees lives within him and defends him, automatically inflicting 1 point of damage per round (ignores Armor) to all foes within immediate range; directs nearby bees of all kinds to do his bidding, particularly phasing bees to control the minds of those who threaten him

What Ninth Worlders call “bees” might not be precisely the same as the current definition, but the insects are close enough that words like “bee,” “hive,” and “honey” all work.

Most of the devices in the hive-man’s control chamber are level 6.





compound of giant bees, along with an artificial being who watches over them and uses them, part parent and part captor. The compound includes dozens of relatively normal beehives and two enormous ones, each the size of a large house. These large hives are the homes of bees the size of human heads. About a third of these giant bees have the ability to move out of phase with the rest of the world, which is why the people of Elderbriar talk about “ghost bees.”

Wandering amid the hives is the so-called hive-man, an artificially intelligent biomechanical being who tends the bees and collects honey. He also collects choice specimens for study and experimentation. The large bees and the phasing bees in the area are the results of his experiments.

It's worth noting that he does not answer to or recognize the name “hive-man” in any fashion. If he had to refer to himself as something, it might be “the Keeper.” In addition, “he” is not really male any more than female. He is unable to speak, but if someone has telepathic abilities, he is more than willing to communicate that way. However, any topic unrelated to his work is meaningless to him.

Next to one of the large beehives, a low cave in the side of a hill leads to a subterranean complex. Its interior walls of smooth metal reveal that it's not all natural. Within the cave system are a number of storage rooms filled with synth containers of honey, and a numenera-filled control

room with monitoring screens that allow the hive-man to see through the eyes of any of his bees and control their actions.

Suspended in the air high above the control room, a series of transparent pyramidal containers hold bees of different sizes that the hive-man is attempting to modify, irradiate, or otherwise use in his experiments. If loosed, these bees are angry and dangerous, many wielding strange powers.

CANYON OF BLADES (THE SAVASHAM WASTES)

Found in the southern region of Pytharon, the Canyon of Blades should be a well-used pass through otherwise rugged terrain known as the Savasham Wastes. But it is far too difficult and dangerous for most to use. The plant known as hiret grass rises up near the canyon mouth like a wall of green more than 15 feet (5 m) high. Hiret grass fills the canyon from side to side, and due to its rigidity and the razorlike edges of each blade, an explorer attempting to get through would be cut to ribbons.

Hacking through the grass is possible but extremely tough and slow—an explorer might get through a few feet after an hour of grueling work. The people of the nearby village of Duhane have a far better way.

DUHANE

Duhane lies on the eastern end of the Canyon of Blades, inaccessible from the

Giant bee: level 2; three to six generally work as one in combat, attacking as a level 4 creature and inflicting 5 points of damage

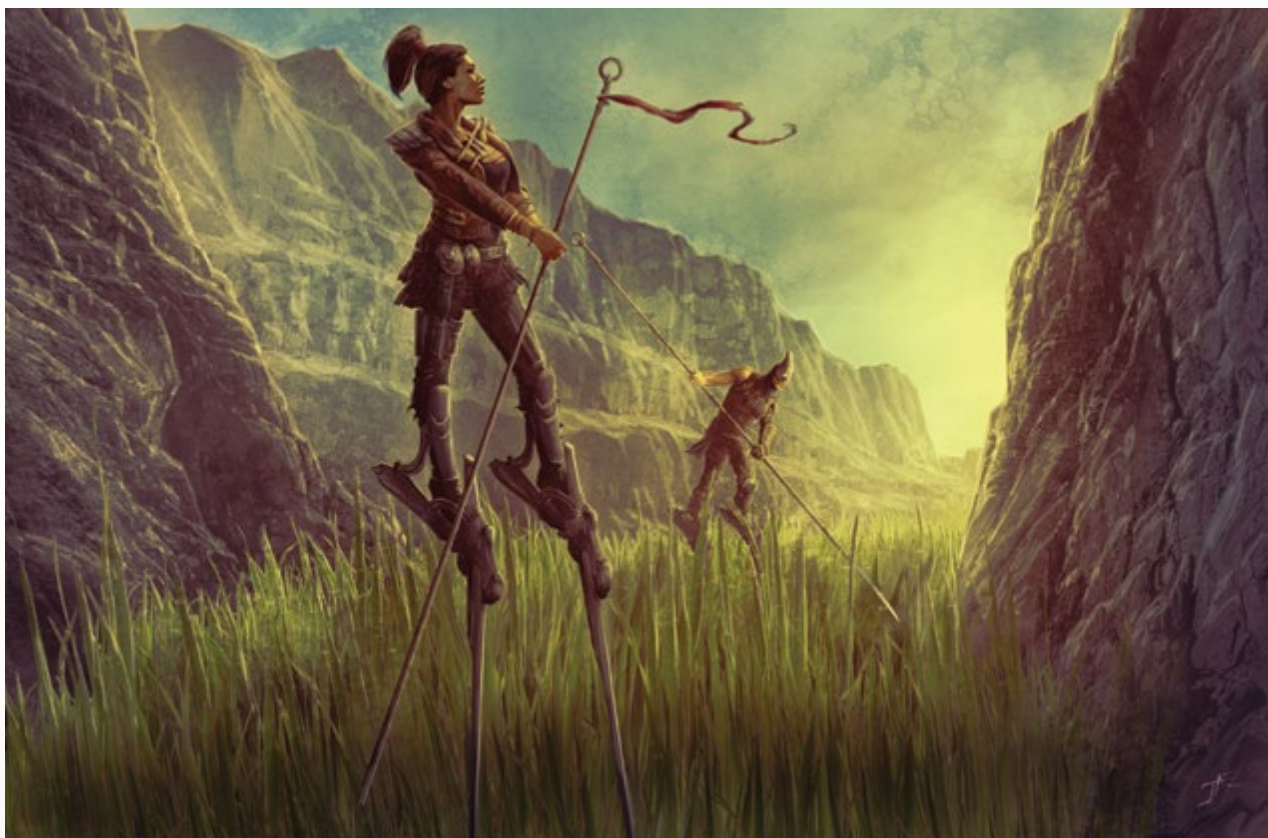
Phasing bee/Ghost bee: level 3; can change phase, during which time it can't affect or be affected by things in phase; while out of phase, can enter a creature's brain and control it if it fails an Intellect defense roll

Anyone attempting to pass through the canyon suffers 5 points of damage each round.



The Canyon of Blades is located in the Pytharon Empire.

Pytharon Empire,
page 161



west except through the hiret. This village provides a home to about two hundred people. Many people in town possess a pair of technological leg extensions that they can strap on to walk above the level of the hiret grass if they wish it.

These stilts are special equipment, but they don't quite fall into the category of "artifact." The 16-foot-long (5 m) devices are lightweight and can easily be collapsed and folded to fit into a small backpack. It takes about a minute to unpack them and affix them to one's legs. Once the wearer is accustomed to the stilts, these power-assisted devices allow her to walk and even run with surprising grace.

Most of the stilt-walkers are hunters who seek the hard-shelled **kolod** that roots amid the hiret grass, safe from the cuts and scrapes from the blades. Those not hunting kolod farm grains and vegetables on the eastern end of town. A single rancher keeps a small flock of **aneen**.

One Aeon Priest dwells in Duhane. His name is **Ehrth**, and he is eager for company that knows anything about science, history, or, really, anything beyond kolod hunting.

The priest who lived in town before him, Thunara, developed the stilts, but Ehrth is adept at maintaining them and can make new ones if need be, although it takes almost a week to do so.

DARKE'S COMPANY

Hiram Darke leads a small mercenary company that operates out of a keep on the outskirts of Duhane. During the rare times when Darke and his men are in the village, they stay in the small keep. When they are away, an ancient, limping automaton named Girk watches over their base and serves as an administrator for whatever needs doing in their absence.

There are two reasons why the company is only rarely in Duhane. The first, and most obvious, is that they are often away on a mission they've been hired to undertake, such as guarding a noble, hunting down a bounty, or fighting in a local conflict. The second, stranger reason is that Darke's Company sometimes moves through time.

A few years ago, the mercenaries were hired to protect a caravan traveling across Pytharon. The caravan was attacked by a

Kolod: level 1; Armor 5
against slashing but only
Armor 1 against other
attacks



Aneen, page 231

Ehrth: level 4, any task
related to the numenera
as level 5



SAVASHAM WASTES HEARSAY

The Dead Hulk: Not far from

Duhane is a craft or machine that seems fused into the rocky slopes around it—or perhaps they have grown around the hulk, as it is extremely old. Oorgolian soldiers periodically come out of the machine and patrol the area, killing any intelligent creature they encounter.

The Detector: Ehrth, the Aeon Priest in Duhane, once had a device that would monitor anyone approaching the village from the east. The large, console-like device has broken down, and now he is looking for the spare parts to fix it.

THE WEIRD OF THE SAVASHAM WASTES

The Cube: At the bottom of a clear lake not far from the canyon, one can see a cube of what appears to be solid orange crystal, at least 10 feet (3 m) across. However, the extremely deep lake makes reaching the cube quite problematic.

The Dolls: Occasionally, a Duhane family with a child finds a small porcelain doll on their doorstep. Stranger still, the doll is always a perfect replica of the child in the home.

Oorgolian soldier,
page 250



group of bandits led by a nano, distinctive for the fact that her head was little more than a seething mass of green fire. Through the use of a potent device, she made Darke and his troops disappear so that her bandits could loot the caravan. It turned out that she didn't send them to another locale but thirty years into the past.

When the mercenaries returned a few days later, they found that their time in the present was limited. Every once in a while, the entire company shifts back thirty years. The time shifts are consistent on both ends, so that if Darke and the rest shift back in time and stay there for a week, when they return, a week has passed.

Now Darke's Company serves as a mercenary troop both now and thirty years in the past. While in the past, they operate out of the same keep near a smaller, rougher, earlier version of Duhane. Although they've taken no steps to intentionally change the past to affect the present (and, in fact, they now think of the time periods as two presents rather than a past and a present), Darke is waiting for the Aeon Priest Thunara to develop the stilts that he knows will be used later. So far, she has not. He is considering trying to influence her to do so, but he doesn't know what effect that might have. To further complicate things, Darke and Thunara have fallen in love.

THE CLOUDBRIDGE (THAEMOR FOOTHILLS)

Making one's way through the Black Riage can be challenging, to say the least. In the eastern reaches of Thaemor, as the foothills give way to the true mountain peaks, one can find the Aeross Valley. This is a verdant locale, but descent into and ascent out of the valley is difficult. Fortunately, a bridge from a prior age presents a way to cross the valley. Extremely high above the ground, the bridge is often obscured by low-hanging clouds, so locals call it the "Cloudbridge." The bridge spans an amazing 3,000 feet (914 m). At its widest point, in the middle, it is 300 feet (91 m) across and 500 feet (152 m) high. A large boulder, itself about 500 feet high, floats above the center section of the bridge, seemingly tethered by a long cable as if it might float away (though it has never been known to move, not even in the highest winds).

Using the Cloudbridge presents some challenges. First and foremost are the people of Osmus, on the bridge's northeastern side.

OSMUS

Osmus is a village on the northeastern ridge high above the Aeross Valley. It is also the name of the settlement's ruler (or, depending on how you look at it, rulers). The village



The Cloudbridge is
located in the kingdom
of Thaemor.

Thaemor, page 152



Giant solifugid: level 3;
Armor 1; bites for 4 points
of damage

Osmus replicant: level 5;
each carries a number of
useful cyphers

is a place of simple farmers and herders, about two hundred in all. It consists of a few dozen wooden homes and other buildings that surround a large central temple. A single religion, unique to the village, unites the people of Osmus. This complicated faith reveres a pantheon of individuals from the distant, murky past—in particular, a man named Osmus.

Those approaching from the north or west find that the only way forward is an unnatural path cut like a channel through the stone. Smooth, angled sides suggest that perhaps it was once an artificial waterway. At least twice a week, the villagers use the channel in a religious procession, wherein all residents dress in robes and walk the length of the channel and back again, meditating on various topics. The ruler, Osmus, leads the procession, riding in a conveyance that resembles a cross between a throne and a sled. It is guided along the channel by six **giant solifugids** in harnesses that walk above it along the sides.

Osmus stands about 7 feet (2 m) tall and has a head that looks like a cube of synth with the projected image of a male human inside it. He is not the Osmus of the revered past, for whom the village is named. Rather, he is a flawed copy of that ancient figure. His body is a cloned **replicant**, and



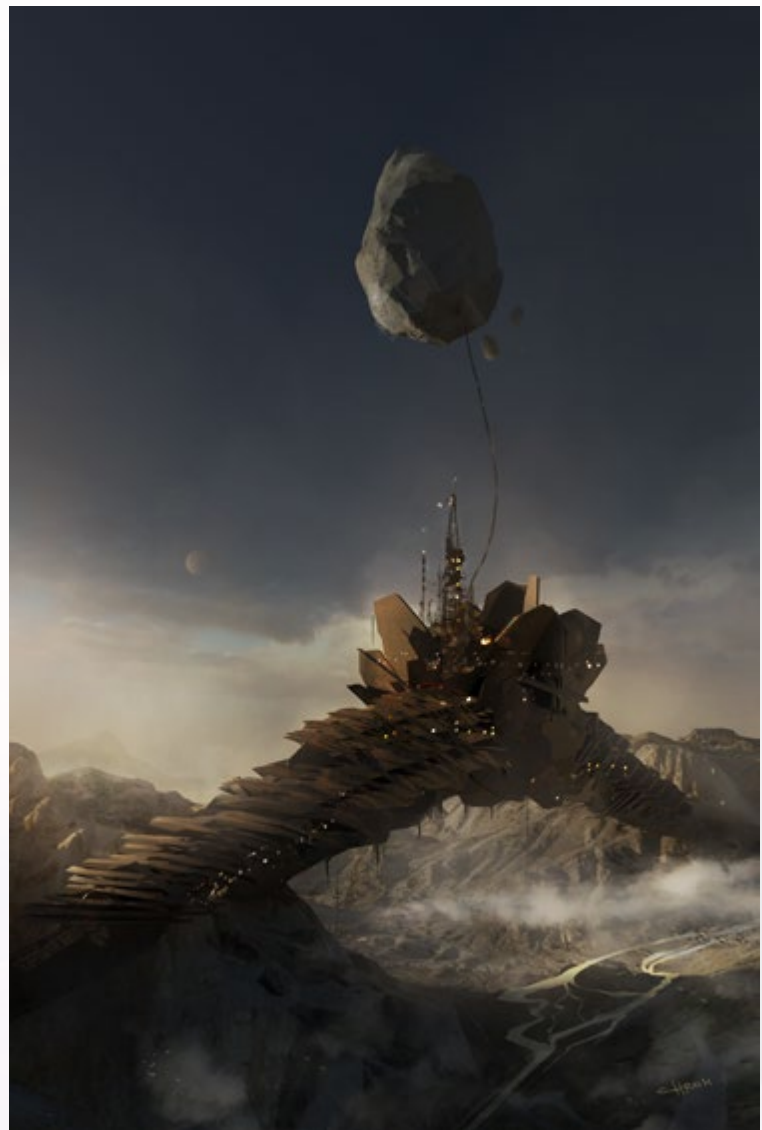


his synth head stores a version of the original man's personality and memories. However, this Osmus is so degraded and flawed that the original Osmus probably would not even recognize the duplicate. The copy is domineering, controlling, petty, jealous, and selfish.

A master manipulator, the replicated Osmus does not overtly claim to be the original. Instead, he allows his position as a duplicate to engender respect. He doesn't claim that people should revere him as they would the original Osmus, but he has allowed them to come to that conclusion on their own. The people of the village follow him unquestioningly, though they will not risk their lives for him.

To make things even more confusing, there are, in fact, two beings called Osmus, both replicants of the original. They appear identical. They try never to appear together to maintain the illusion that there is just one ruler, although they occasionally stage events so that it seems as though Osmus can move great distances in the blink of an eye. The only time a person might face both replicants is if she tried to confront Osmus in the secret back room of the temple. This room has a laboratory and workshop where the replicants try to improve their artificial bodies or better restore their artificial personalities. The irony is that if they ever succeed at the latter, they would likely change their entire outlook.

The Real Osmus: The real Osmus was a human who lived in the early days of the Ninth World, many hundreds of years ago. Among the first of humankind to truly understand some of the secrets of the numenera, Osmus led a sweeping empire that ruled much of the northern Black Riage from within the Cloudbridge, the seat of his power. He was a benevolent and enlightened ruler, and his use of the numenera cured sickness and brought advancements that improved the lives of all those around him. Even today, almost a thousand years later, he remains a revered figure.



CROSSING THE CLOUDBRIDGE

Coming From the Northeast: Visitors to the village of Osmus are rarely made to feel welcome, and those who state their intention to cross the Cloudbridge are refused and possibly apprehended, to be brought before Osmus in a quasireligious ceremony. The Cloudbridge is the birthright of the people of the village, and it is sacrilege for outsiders to trespass on it. Yet the people of Osmus do not use the bridge themselves for fear of the creatures that haunt it.

They know that most who enter the bridge never return, and the few who do bring tales of ghosts and monsters wearing the skins of the dead. The village posts guards at the bridge entrance to try to keep those

One wonders what would happen if one of the Osmus replicants was restored to be closer to the original, but the other was not. A war of the Osmuses?



ghosts from coming into Osmus. Although nothing has ever attacked the village directly, sometimes the guards disappear in the night.

The Osmus replicants might decide that visitors must pay a toll to use the bridge. This toll might involve carrying out a special task, such as retrieving an item of importance to the original Osmus or eliminating a threat to his rule.

Coming From the Southwest: Nothing of note lies on the southwestern side of the valley, which means that people can enter the bridge freely from that direction. However, it also means they're unlikely to have any warning about what's inside the bridge or on the other side.

The Span: The interior of the Cloudbridge resembles a street in a ruined city. A main thoroughfare runs down the middle, and the sides have chambers and interior structures now cast in ruin. These areas are rife with numenera, and scavenging through them is likely worth an explorer's time.

The Transparent Maze: No matter what side you start from, the main passage through the interior of the bridge structure ends when you get to the central hub. Here, for reasons that surpass understanding, travelers must navigate a series of pipes that seem arranged randomly, so that it is like winding through a three-dimensional maze. At times, they must go up or down through these pipes, but to do so they need to provide their own means (ropes to climb, perhaps). Stranger still, the pipes are made of transparent synthsteel and run through an oval interior chamber that is dimly lit, so that travelers can see through the maze, but not necessarily how to get through it. In fact, the transparent nature makes things more difficult, not less, because it is disorienting.

A small hive of *varakith* makes its home in the maze. The bloodthirsty creatures know the paths through the pipes quite well. They typically hunt outside the maze in the thoroughfares or outside the bridge altogether, but if prey wanders into their den, all the better. Travelers might see the *varakith* coming through the transparent



maze long before the creatures reach them, getting closer and closer.

The Heart of Arun: Characters who pass up through the maze as opposed to across it eventually reach a complex of ruined chambers that once served the original Osmus as a sort of palace and workshop. These chambers give access to the roof of the central section, directly below the floating boulder, which was once called Arun.

The top of the bridge is the nesting ground of **hontri**, which can present a real danger to anyone exploring the roof or trying to ascend to Arun. The tether can be climbed, as it is a number of smaller metal cables entwined, offering something to hold onto even though the tether itself is as big around as three massive tree trunks.

At the top of the floating boulder is an entrance that leads into its center—basically, a sort of antigravity elevator. Inside is an intelligent crystalline matrix that stores the consciousnesses of thousands

of independent minds. This is the Heart of Arun. The matrix was created by Osmus, and the people within it were his people, but they are not imprisoned. Quite the contrary—the virtual world within the Heart of Arun is a paradise, and the people (who no longer have bodies) would be dead if they weren't inside it. People outside the Heart can telepathically communicate with those inside, which overcomes the language barrier. The people in the Heart know little of the current Ninth World, but they can relate details of their own time almost a thousand years earlier. They might have interesting insights about numenera or other topics, but they know no more about the prior worlds than current humans do.

Notably, the original Osmus is not in the Heart of Arun, and the people inside do not know his ultimate fate.

Climbing the tether up to Arun is a difficulty 6 task due to the winds and the extreme length of the climb—almost 1,000 feet (305 m).



THAEMOR FOOTHILLS HEARSAY

Another Osmus: In a tiny village of just twenty people or so farther along the northeast ridge, there is a building that contains a stone statue of the original Osmus. (The wooden structure was built around the much older statue.) It has the same face as that which is projected in the synth cubes that the Osmus replicants use as heads. However, this is no ordinary statue. The stone is a biological resin, and it stores a copy of Osmus's personality that is far closer to the original. At one time, it was animate and sapient, but long ago, the Osmus replicants—unable to destroy this nigh-indestructible rival—created a device in their temple that jams the power transmitted to the statue from the Heart of Arun. The replicants would like to find a way to destroy the statue once and for all. But if this Osmus were freed to act, that might change everything.

Missing Children: A strange figure sometimes lurks in the area, stealing children from their homes at night. It has the ability to eliminate sound around itself so its victims cannot cry out. The people of Osmus would love to see the so-called “night shusher” caught or killed, and their children returned to them (hopefully, still alive).

THE WEIRD OF THE THAEMOR FOOTHILLS

Strange Weather: Weird storms sometimes form around the top of the Cloudbridge, bringing not just high wind, rain, and lightning, but showers of strange objects—tiny crystals, small numenera parts or oddities, globs of mysterious goo, shards of metal, or even living creatures like frogs, fish, and **laaks**.

Transmissions: Sometimes the Cloudbridge (or perhaps the Heart of Arun) transmits signals that take control of powered numenera devices, causing them to act on their own or produce entirely different effects.

Hontri: level 5, perception as level 7, when hunting as a pair each individual acts as level 6; health 22; Armor 1; deals 2 additional points of damage when attacking with a swoop from above; regenerates 2 points of health per round while alive; see *The Ninth World Bestiary*, page 66

Varakith, page 264

Laak, page 243

IZALTU'S NEEDLE

To the west of the Cloudcrystal Skyfields lives a mountain—no, not a mountain. Nothing so simple, so earthbound, so mundane as a mountain. Instead an intricate labyrinth that reaches to the sky, its peak so long and thin as to portray a needle piercing the blue, threaded with strands of off-white clouds. Its seams shredded, its colors blotched by sun and wind, its details faded by time and ferocity.

Does it breathe, this eminence, or does it just wish us to believe we see it moving, its sloped sides wavering in the fog and dust? Does it live, truly, beneath the years of silence and slavery, or does it just seem so, coming alive in children's tales told in the dark of night?

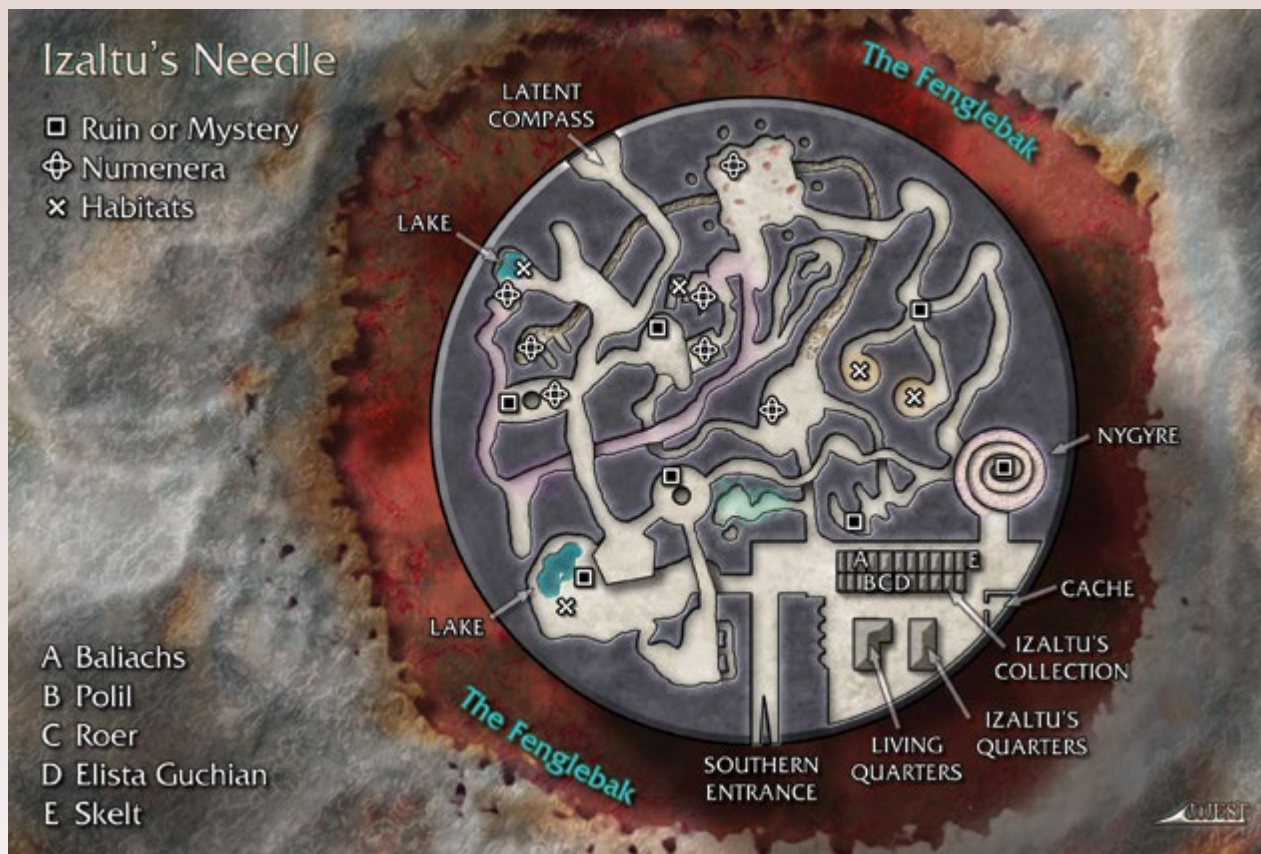
Whatever it is, whatever it was, it is now Izaltu's Needle. And deep in its bowels sound the howls of madmen, the rages of murderers, the cries of the frenzied. Some call it a prison. Some call it a zoo. Some call it a sanitarium.

Izaltu calls it his collection. And his collection is never finished.

~from the recitation of Pernsnal Vesner, storyteller, during his final oration

Many explorers claim to have made the dangerous trek to the uppermost reaches of the peak, hoping to find the Needle's mythical eye. If anyone has found it, they have not returned alive to tell.

As with so much in the Ninth World, the structure now called Izaltu's Needle might resemble a natural element (in this case, a mountain with a particularly impossible peak), but it is not. Possibly created in another world for a purpose that is beyond human understanding, the Needle is a complex structure of marbled rock, golden bubbles that appear molten but are firm and cold to the touch, and rivered sandstone that seems to flow before one's very eyes.





GETTING THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

There are a number of ways to get players of all levels involved in an adventure in Izaltu's Needle.

Bounty Calls: Player characters may hear of a bounty call from Izaltu. If the PCs are in the wild, these calls usually come randomly through an oddity. For example, if an oddity typically makes a humming noise, this time it relays a spoken message that explains the bounty. If an oddity portrays an image, it projects one of the NPC (or PC) that Izaltu is seeking.

If the PCs are in a populated area, they might hear talk of someone who received a strange message via an oddity but didn't know what to make of it. Sometimes the datasphere relays a sudden, broken message, or fliers are tacked about a town.

The Hunted: If one of the PCs is specialized in something unusual or has a high-level power, the character might catch Izaltu's eye. If that's the case, it's likely that the PC is tracked by bounty hunters who want to escort him to Izaltu and claim their payment. This is especially useful for high-level characters or those with a lot of high-level skills.

A Surprising Turn: Sometimes, a character or creature the PCs need to interact with for another adventure will end up in Izaltu's care. Will they bargain with Izaltu for time with a specimen of his collection? Will they try to break their contact free? Or will they stumble into the lair, completely in the dark about what they will find?

The Pull of Power: Izaltu has a great deal of power and resources, and he makes sure that those who matter know it. Characters in desperate need of either might try desperate measures, such as approaching him in the hopes of making a deal and getting whatever it is they need most.

It is rumored that every hundred years or so, the top of the Needle disengages from the rest of the structure and leaves the earth, heading silently toward an unknown destination in the sky. Some say that it grows back instantly. Others whisper that it takes a slave army of creatures inside the structure to warp time and bring it back.

Bounty messages aren't encoded because Izaltu's ego is too big to allow him to worry about being caught. In fact, he believes that the more people who know about him and his operation, the better it will be for his reputation and the quicker he will be able to complete his collection. He doesn't state a price in his bounties because he believes in letting people choose their own rewards.

A typical bounty message includes the name of the hunted or the skill set that Izaltu is looking for, a promise of payment, and his signature—the sound or sight of Izaltu smearing his eyeball against the message-sending device.

The structure rises nearly 26,000 feet (7,925 meters) from its base to the start of the peak. Above that, the peak narrows to a delicate point—the “needle” from which the structure takes its name. No one is sure how high the peak rises into the sky. It always seems to be shrouded in clouds

no matter the weather in the region.

To those who look closely or who are knowledgeable about such things, the structure does seem to be alive, showing signs of self-healing, rejecting those who attempt to harm it, and altering its physical form in response to unknown whims or needs.

Inside the peak, much is unexplored and unknown. Caves, caverns, crawlspaces, hovels, tunnels, and more wind through the interior. Through the ages, the Needle has housed more species, creatures, and unknowable entities than it's possible to imagine. Deep within its caverns, explorers are likely to find ancient bones or fossils from insects and mammals the likes of which they have never seen. Broken bits of manmade machinery and foreign materials lie in heaps at the bottom



No matter who or what has claimed the peak throughout its history, the place has always borne the word “needle” in its name as long as Ninth Worlders can remember. Old-timers tell of it formerly being called The Needle of Yesh and Cantri's Needle, but the stories of those names are lost to time.

A dazed target finds that the difficulty of all its tasks is modified by one step to its detriment.

Man of the marsh:
level 3

Those who spend time with the men of the marsh discover that they drink a hallucinogenic concoction brewed from the spew of swamp caimans. The drink causes intense hallucinations, while also allowing the imbiber to see, smell, and hear things as if she were a caiman. Drinking the concoction increases the difficulty of all interactions by one step for one hour, while decreasing the difficulty of all perception-based tasks by one step for one hour.

Sullyfly: level 4

Sinkstones are solids that soften to a liquid under pressure, such as when a character steps on them. If a PC makes a successful Speed defense roll, he can pull his foot (or other body part) away before it sinks into the stone. If he fails, the stone hardens around that body part, trapping him for two rounds.

Sullyfly queen: level 5, all tasks involving initiative and psionics as level 6

Swamp caiman: level 5, defends as level 6 while in the water

of abandoned traps, and objects have become smashed and incorporated into the stone walls, shining like metallic rivers of ore.

One small section of the vastness is an area that Izaltu, a creature of great renown, has claimed as his own. From the outside, Izaltu is said to run a prison, a sanitarium, or a hospital, depending on who you talk to. Whatever its name, it is believed to be a place where the well-connected, the affluent, and the powerful can divest themselves of their enemies (and perhaps troublesome family members) for the right price.

The truth is that Izaltu encourages that image to keep himself in good stead with the mighty and influential denizens of the Ninth World. His real goal is to build a powering device, a kind of battery, made entirely of the skill sets of humans and other living creatures. Thus, he seeks out and obtains specific people or anyone with a specific set of skills. He believes this will allow him to open the Needle's eye and step through it, returning to his homeland.

THE FENGLEBAK

The Needle is surrounded on all sides by a wash of reddish-black, a muddy, murky swampland called the Fenglebak. Anyone who wishes to gain access to one of the two entries into the Needle must first cross this area. In most places, the swamp is anywhere from ankle to knee deep, but a few places seem bottomless. Wandering stone paths line the swamp, and although most are in disrepair, it is possible to follow them for much of the journey. Explorers should beware sinkstones, however—places where solid stone suddenly softens from the pressure of someone stepping on it.

CREATURES OF THE FENGLEBAK

Swamp Caiman: These furry, black alligatorlike creatures sport six legs with webbed feet and a set of jaws that is up to one-third of their body length. Strong swimmers, they attack by sucking

up large quantities of murky water and forcing it out of their mouths (mixed with stomach acid) in a high-powered stream that **dazes** their target for one round and does 6 points of damage. They can also bite and drag, attempting to drown their target in the water (5 points of damage for each round in which they hold a foe; a successful level 5 Might roll is necessary to break free).

Men of the Marsh: Not likely to attack other humans unless they believe themselves to be in danger, the tall, thin men of the marsh live on small, flat, floating bits of synth. They wear clothes of caiman skins and found items, and they hunt caiman with long poles that have wire nooses on the end (which they call "god reels"). These men are expert navigators of the marsh and might be convinced to assist travelers in exchange for food, weapons, or other valuables.

Sullyfly: The size of a large rat, a sullyfly is a mechanical swamp insect that builds mud hives up to 10 feet (3 m) high. These long, thin nests dot the swamp landscape like snags. Many of them are abandoned, since sullyflies use a nest only once before they build a new one. Nests are often built near sinkstones, and if a victim gets trapped in a stone, sullyflies are the first creatures to show up. They attack by sticking their multiple needle-sharp proboscides (about 3 to 5 inches [8 to 13 cm] long) deep into the victim's flesh in an attempt to suck out its bone marrow. A single stick does 5 points of damage, whether the sullyfly hits marrow or not. Any creature that is stuck more than once by a sullyfly begins to experience a slight paralysis from the insect's saliva, which increases the difficulty of all physical actions by one step for the next round.

The **sullyfly queen**, a 10-foot-tall (3 m) humanoid that appears to be made sometimes of mud and sometimes of metal, moves through the Fenglebak in the daylight hours, providing respite and food for her workers. The sullyflies enter



and leave through self-sealing rents in her fingertips and stomach. The queen is not combative unless she or her hive is threatened, at which point she releases a swarm of up to two dozen sullyflies from her fingers, belly, and mouth, which attack en masse.

The queen knows if the PCs have attacked or harmed any members of her hive, and she might consider them a threat and come looking for them. Alternatively, if they have helped or otherwise benefited the hive (perhaps a fallen comrade gave the sullyflies their fill of bone marrow), she might offer assistance by providing the characters with the ability to communicate telepathically with each other for one day.

Other Creatures: The Fengebak is filled with creatures. *Mesomemes*, *rubars*, and *varakith* all make their homes in the swamp or along the edges of the Needle itself.

ENTERING THE NEEDLE

There are two ways to enter the Needle from the ground. If there are additional ways to enter it from higher up, no one has discovered them yet, though occasionally people try to climb the outside of the structure.

THE LATENT COMPASS

One entrance is located in the northwest, along a particularly deep section of the Fengebak. It is the best known, and the one that PCs are likely to hear about if they ask around (or if they ask the men of the marsh for assistance). This entrance is easy to spot, as its dark rust-colored rim stands out against the Needle's paler shade. A circle filled with spokes, this large wheeled gate—40 feet (12 m) in diameter and about 6 feet (2 m) across—looks as if it was there prior to the Needle's existence, almost as if the structure grew up around it.

As soon as anything crosses the gate's threshold, it begins to iris closed. Making it across the width of the device before

The GM can take any creature and have a group of six to ten of them attack en masse as a single creature that is two levels higher, inflicting double the normal damage of the original creature. For example, twenty sullyflies can attack as three level 6 mobs.

Sullyflies don't actually eat bone marrow, as they are herbivores. It's believed that they ingest the marrow to bring back to their queen. There is also evidence that they regurgitate the marrow as part of their nest-building process.

Mesomeme,
page 246

Rubar, page 255

Varakith, page 264



it closes completely is a level 5 Speed defense task. Once the gate closes, it turns a full circle clockwise. The whole turn takes about ten minutes. Anyone caught inside the compass during that time experiences the sensation that they are temporarily weightless, and an odd tingling sensation runs throughout their body. When the gate opens again, they fall to the ground, unharmed. However, for the next hour, their vision seems odd, as if they're seeing from a different spot on their body. And, in fact, they are. They have gained a temporary pair of eyes on the back of their neck. Those who close their natural eyes find that they can see perfectly fine from the back (provided that nothing blocks the line of sight for their new eyes). The eyes are just like regular human eyes, subject to pain and damage. They disappear in about an hour, as does any additional vision they provided.

Silyan, page 56

SOUTHERN ENTRANCE

The second entrance, which is more difficult to find and closer to Izaltu's lair, is located along the southern curve. A twin entrance that looks like two upright fingers next to each other, it is best spotted when the sun casts no shadow

on that side of the Needle (the entrances show up as two dark lines, the only ones within view).

The PCs can walk into the right entrance or the left one. If they enter the right one, they are quickly greeted with a blast of warm, foul-smelling air. Those who continue down this path feel oddly happy, perhaps even humming a little as they make their way through the narrow tunnel. By the time they reach the end of the tunnel, they discover that they have regained 2 points in their Intellect Pools (up to their maximum).

If characters enter the left tunnel, the scent of orange blossoms and lilies likely overwhelms them, causing them to feel dizzy and disoriented. In the process of making their way through the tunnel, they suffer 5 points of Intellect damage and may lose their way or grow confused about their purpose.

The place where the two tunnels come together again inside the Needle is guarded by three *Silyans*. These guardians are trained by Izaltu to detain and question anyone who attempts to enter the Needle. Visitors who bring a bounty to Izaltu or who turn themselves in are treated with care and respect, taken to the greeting room to await a



conversation with Izaltu. However, if visitors make a move against the Silyans, the guards defend the gate to the death (and may call in reinforcements if necessary).

IZALTU AND HIS COLLECTION

Izaltu's collection is the means to an end. Those who send him captives might be surprised and dismayed to discover that their troublesome family members and prisoners have been half buried alive among the floors and walls of the chambers, using their animated faces and hands as decoration and their screams and pleas as Izaltu's version of musical accompaniment. The prisoners in his care mean nothing to him unless they show promise as part of his collection.

IZALTU

Bearing heterochromatic eyes (one brown and one blue), oddly striated skin, and a broken, splintered face, *Izaltu* is clearly humanoid but not entirely human. He wears long, earth-colored robes that are streaked to match his face. A black



oval tube hangs from a string around his neck, and he often puts it to his blue eye and makes a sound much like someone inhaling great gulps of air (although the PCs will probably agree that the noise seems to come not from his mouth but his eye).

Izaltu doesn't talk much, but when he does, his words are slurred and slow-tongued, and he often speaks via an interpreter, a soft-spoken young woman named *Athdra* who accidentally shows her tenderness for him via her inflection and her occasional touch. It is difficult to tell whether Izaltu feels the same way about her, but subtle clues indicate that they likely share their affections.

Although Izaltu is smart, driven, and desperate for the necessary powers to create his machine, he is neither evil nor a villain. He treats those in his collection with respect, takes good care of them by providing them with food, shelter, clothing, and as much freedom as he can, and fights or kills only as a last resort when he cannot find another way to solve a situation. Visitors will find him an inviting and generous host unless they cross him in some way or threaten his collection and thus his ultimate goal.

Most likely, Izaltu will not kill visitors who successfully bring in a bounty. This is partly due to respect and honor, but also due to his understanding that those who are smart enough and strong enough to bring him a bounty make good allies for the future.

However, if he catches someone attempting to steal objects or prisoners from him, he will try to kill them no matter what they've done for him. If anyone tries to enter the nygyre for any reason, he will do whatever it takes to stop them.

Additionally, if anyone entering the Fengebak exhibits any of the powers that Izaltu needs to complete his collection, he will send the Silyans to claim her as a bounty.

If Izaltu dies, both his oval tube and his eyes, which appear to be made of living

Izaltu's blue eye is a level 5 artifact. Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Athdra: level 4

Izaltu: level 6, all tasks related to persuasion and deception as level 7

PCs who seek to release the prisoners that Izaltu has buried alive will find it surprisingly easy—a level 3 task. However, keeping them alive after their removal is a level 7 persuasion task. Something about being trapped inside this structure makes the captives emotionally unstable, and they typically go mad and kill themselves as soon as they can find the means. If a prisoner is emotionally close to the person attempting to help her stay alive, that bond decreases the task to level 6.

glass, can be scavenged. The brown eye has no value other than as an oddity or perhaps as trade for a few shins, but the blue one slots into the tube perfectly, creating an instant seal. Anyone who then puts the tube up to their eye (with the curve of Izaltu's blue eye touching their own) notices a loud gust of air and, in the silence that follows, they can hear anything that moves on the other side of the nearest wall or through a solid object (provided it is less than 10 feet [3 m] thick).



Those watching closely might see Izaltu put his oval tube to his eye in order to open the door of the cache.

IZALTU'S AREA

Izaltu's Quarters: Izaltu appears to be a modest man, with very little in his small quarters. In fact, his quarters appear to be more sparse than those of the prisoners, holding nothing except the basic accommodations.

Living Quarters: This large room houses everything that a small group of creatures might need to survive deep underground, including food and medical facilities, a well, furniture, and weapons. The setup seems particularly advanced, complete with unusual elements like warm water, cold-storage containers, and unnatural light. Most of these devices appear to be powered by a tangible stream of golden-purple light that flows down the circular walk of the nygyre into the area that holds the living quarters.

Cache: A small, triangular room that is guarded and **locked** houses an impressive collection of the numenera. Most items are in parts and ruins—things that Izaltu has tried to use to power the Needle's eye, now discarded or broken. However, other devices are working cyphers, artifacts, and oddities. Those who enter the cache find the following: a **repair unit** (level 3), an **infiltrator** (level 6), a **tendrill graft** (level 5), and two **random oddities**.

The Collection Boxes: This long row of boxes was clearly designed to house something, although that original thing (whatever it was) is now long gone. Using various energy methods and his guards, Izaltu keeps prisoners inside the boxes as often as he can, but his only true need is to keep them inside the Needle itself. As long as they are present, he can siphon their powers once he has all of the pieces of his collection.

The Nygyre: The nygyre is a long, climbing spiral made of living, interconnected stones that glow golden purple. At its very center, sealed inside a gathering of these stones, lies the machine that Izaltu believes will take him through the Needle's eye. Izaltu has never seen it, but he describes its splendor as though he has and will admit otherwise only reluctantly.

Anyone who attempts to enter the nygyre will face the wrath of Izaltu, the Silyans, and some members of his collection. However, other inhabitants of the boxes might be willing to help those who dare to trespass along the spiraled walk.

IZALTU'S COLLECTION

Silyans: Izaltu protects his prison with Silyans, winged humanoids that seem to operate under his command. They shed their feathers constantly, a condition induced upon them by Izaltu so they won't fly away.

Although most Silyans are loyal to Izaltu for reasons unknown, occasionally one might be persuaded to turn against him (a level 7 task, even if the Silyan seems receptive). Loyal Silyans are likely to quickly turn on anyone who suggests treason, however, so it's a risky gamble at best.

Silyans attack using their falling feathers in one of two ways: either by winging

Silyan: level 5

Cache lock: level 3



Repair unit,
page 294

Infiltrator, page 288

Tendrill graft, page 312

Random oddity: roll
on the table on
pages 314–316



them toward the attacker in a slicing rain of sharp edges (5 points of damage) or by creating a whirlwind that temporarily blinds the attacker (increasing the difficulty of all physical actions by one step).

If two or more Silyans work together, they can share a turn, creating a whirlwind of slicing rain that attacks a group of PCs standing in close range of one another. Any PCs failing a Speed defense roll take 5 points of damage and are blinded for one round.

Silyan feathers have little to no purpose beyond being used as writing utensils or decoration. However, all Silyans wear strings of beads on their wrists, heads, clothing, and ankles. These beads may be scavenged as shins (as many as 10 shins per Silyan).

Polil: Polil was Izaltu's first prisoner—or at least the first prisoner he took who remains alive. A tall, angular woman with a mass of white hair that falls nearly to the back of her ankles and seems to wrap around her entire body in complicated

braids, twists, and implements, Polil's power lies in her muscle augmentations.

She carries a small wooden box, inside which is a control panel for her mechanical parts. If Polil's life is in danger, she sets the dials and buttons inside the box and the mechanical parts of her body take over, turning her into a well-honed, instinctual fighter.

She believes in the work that Izaltu is doing and has voluntarily given up her freedom to be at his side when he deems the collection ready. She is typically found in Izaltu's area.

Skelt: Born inside the Needle, Skelt appears to be about six or seven years old and is of indeterminable gender. Dressed always in dark green and wearing a thick bolt of fabric that covers everything except two mismatched eyes, Skelt freely roams the Needle. It is unlikely that visitors will see Skelt unless the child wants them to. However, Skelt is extremely inquisitive and attracted to new things, so this curious nature might draw the child to anything interesting

Izaltu's cells hold far more residents than are described here. GMs should feel free to use NPCs from the Numenera corebook or create their own to include. Additionally, many elements of Izaltu's collection are not human. Creatures like an abykos or a disassembler would very likely be part of his gathering.



Abykos, page 230

Disassembler, page 238

Polil: level 4, fighting as her mechanical self as level 6; Armor 4 due to her hair

Skelt: level 2, dealing with the numenera as level 6; Armor 2



Roer: level 4; Armor 3 (4 while sleeping)

It is rumored that Roer stalks the Silyans for sport, hunting them down when he gets bored.

Elista: level 5, all skills involving telekinesis as level 6; Armor 2

that visitors carry or converse about.

If Skelt is threatened, scared, or angry, there is a chance that the child's power will flare unexpectedly and activate up to two devices within short range. The devices behave as they normally would, except that they have no effect (negative or positive) on Skelt.

It is unknown where Skelt's loyalties lie.

Roer: Roer is a big, barrel-chested man, wide in the shoulders. Although slow to smile or speak, his laugh is loud enough to fill a room. His reddish-blond hair is curly, and he wears a variety of jewelry studs in his ears, at the edges of his eyelids, along the webbing of his fingers, and in the folds of his jaw.

Roer will tell those who ask that each of the studs represents one person whose life he took before he was put in this place. He has a book as well, a worn black and red leather-bound journal, each page of which contains information about someone he has killed. He shows no remorse for his actions, but he doesn't brag about them, either. He

talks about his murders as someone else might talk about how many meals she has made for friends.

Roer's unique ability is to process information while he sleeps. During combat, he may choose to sleep for one round, and when he wakes, he has an asset over any intellectual or physical action he performs during the next two rounds. While sleeping, he gains 1 additional point of Armor.

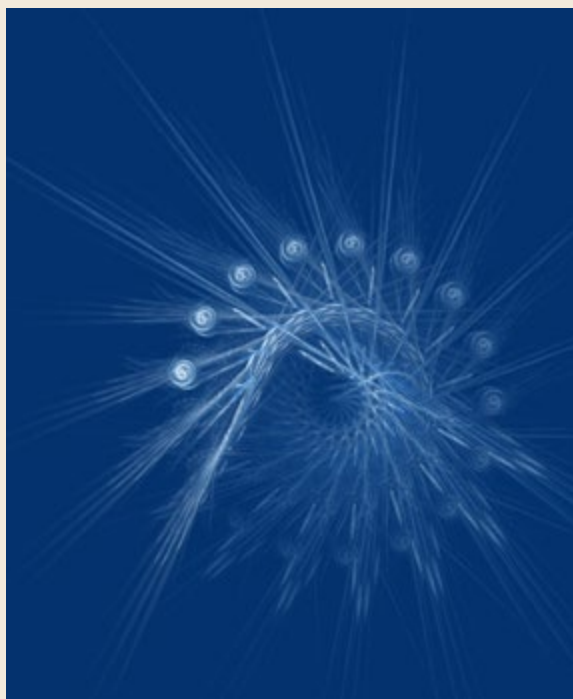
Roer doesn't care about Izaltu's cause, but he likes the work he is given—burying the prisoners alive—so he stays. He spends his days stalking the tunnels, searching out living creatures to kill.

Elista Guchian: Once the wild, impetuous great-granddaughter of Duke Guchian, Elista was disowned by her family and sent here due to her outspoken political rebellion against the class system. Only her latent power, an ability to tap into and rework elements of the environment, kept her from becoming yet another living component of Izaltu's walls.

With her shorn hair, her telekinetic

For those who successfully bring in a bounty, Izaltu offers them their choice of two of the following rewards from the cache:

- A level 7 artifact called a bombitire. This reusable, throwable bomb creates an echoing sound wave that does 1d6 points of mental damage within short range. In order to be reused, the bombitire must be retrieved by the thrower (as an action in any round after it detonates). Depletion: 1 in 1d6.
- A level 5 artifact called an iceflow. This malleable item can be worn as a crown, a necklace, or a bracelet. When activated (an action if the character is already wearing it), the iceflow offers +1 to Armor against heat damage for ten minutes. Depletion: 1 in 1d6.
- Two random cyphers (GMs should choose ahead of time or roll randomly on the cypher table on page 281 of the *Numenera* corebook)
- 100 shins in a portable synth lockbox that can be opened only with the person's individual breath





IZALTU'S NEEDLE HEARSAY

X Marks the Swamp: A large piece of broken synth lies half buried in the southern end of the Fengebak. It stands about 3 feet high by 5 feet across (1 m by 2 m), and part of a treasure map appears to be etched into it.

What Strange Chains Are These: Two men have set up camp outside the Latent Compass. They claim that a creature inside the Needle hypnotized them and now they cannot leave this spot, no matter how hard they try.

A Last Call: A large, four-legged mechanical bird that appears to have once been sentient leans against a tunnel inside the Needle. Inside its beak is a large tube. When the lid is popped off, the tube releases a hiss of steam and a recorded message in an unknown language. At least half the group of PCs hears it translated a moment later as "Help me—the webs are closing."

THE WEIRD OF IZALTU'S NEEDLE

The Gentleman Caller: A translucent man limps through the tunnels of the Needle, his internal organs nearly visible through his skin. He draws his fingertips along the walls with a soft rustle, leaving green trails that burble and murmur.

Signs From Above: In the dark of night, the Needle's high peak begins to rumble, sounding as if it's shuddering apart and thundering down in an avalanche of giant boulders. People standing near the bottom of the structure swear they feel rubble flying past them in the dark. In the morning, nothing about the structure appears to have changed. Sometimes, however, there are large indentations in the soft earth, as though something heavy landed there in the night.

The Dead Rise: It is rumored that an intrepid climber from years past built a giant bubble of synth to bring him to the top of the Needle. On clear days, one can sometimes see what looks like a bubble stuck impossibly high up on the structure, and inside it, a moving figure that almost appears human.

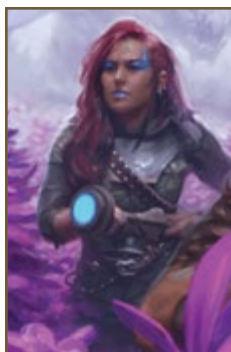
command over elements of the world, and armor that she pieced together bit by bit from findings within the Needle, Elista is a force to be reckoned with. She stays because she seeks revenge upon her family for betraying her, and she knows that this is the best place to practice her skills and grow strong enough to take them on.

The Baliachs: There are three baliachs. Whether that is their name, their titles, or perhaps the place they come from, it's impossible to tell. They speak a language unknown to everyone but themselves, a warbling, garbled sound that they make only when they put their heads together and whisper it to each other.

The baliachs are usually naked, their bodies wrinkled and malformed. They wrap around each other as though they are three parts of a puzzle—and perhaps they are, for it is their combined power that Izaltu seeks. When the three twine into one, they can alter time in the bodies of those around them, speeding up heartbeats, slowing down muscle tissue, and temporarily stopping someone's breath by delaying the minutes inside her lungs.

They seem to have a purpose of their own that lies parallel to Izaltu's. He would, in fact, give a handsome reward if someone could discern what that purpose was.

The Baliachs: level 6
when acting as a unit
(which they always do)



CHAPTER 5

THE BEYOND



What a Steadfast-centric view it is to call this place the Beyond. As if the Steadfast were the beginning and the end, the very center, in fact, of the world itself. But those of us who have traveled outside the Beyond's borders (if such a wild and unkempt place can be said to have borders) know all too well that the Beyond is no such thing. It is merely the next step in a long series of steps that wind around the world and back.

Note: No, that won't work. I cannot talk about the Beyond only in terms of the Steadfast; it employs the very concept that I am berating. Come back to this at a later date and find a way to focus on the true strangeness that the Beyond encompasses.

~Naind Oreni, notes, possibly for Chapter 27 in "The Wonders of Our World: The Steadfast and Beyond."

Like the Steadfast, the Beyond is already described and detailed in the *Numenera* corebook. Yet the area has so much territory and so many strange, interesting, wonderful, and terrifying locations to describe. This chapter presents just a few of them.



THE VIOLET VALE (CERDYN'S PASS)

The Violet Vale is a location in the Black Riage, just north of Cerdyn's Pass. The entire Violet Vale region is one where actions of the distant past have rendered the walls between this universe and others very thin. Long ago, seed pods from another



universe made their way to this region and found purchase in the soil in an otherwise innocuous valley. They grew into plants called reglae. The reglae are the bright—almost glowing—violet flowers that give the vale its name, and they hail from some other world, bringing weird ultraterrestrial properties with them.

Moving through (or past, or even near) the reglae may cause one to be transported or transitioned to another place. Those moving through the reglae always find themselves amid more reglae, just not necessarily in the same location as they once were. In a way that surpasses understanding, the reglae bend space and time, growing in multiple places (and times) at once. This causes “glitches” in the universe so that a creature or object standing next to a spot where a reglae flower grows might suddenly find itself in another location (spatially and/or temporally) where that same plant also grows, perhaps even miles (or minutes or hours) distant.

Although the Violet Vale is a physical



location in the Black Riage, all locations where the reglae bloom are also considered part of the vale. Because the nature of the plants bends time and space, if a plant were to be uprooted, preserved, moved, and successfully replanted (or if seeds were taken and planted elsewhere), that spot would technically become a part of the Violet Vale. Thus, being transported by the reglae is known as “going into the Violet Vale.”



Lady Weiss: level 5; dealing with, resisting the effects of, or using numenera as level 7; artifact gives her Armor 3 from a magnetic force field at all times but precludes her from wearing metal armor (depletion 1 in 1d20; check each day)

GM Intrusion: The character suddenly shifts in time, disappearing and then reappearing a few rounds—or a few minutes—later.

Glass pane device: level 8 for purposes of identifying or properly using it

Moving Through the Reglae: There is no sensation of movement or transition when one is transported by the spatial warping of the reglae. Creatures are just suddenly somewhere else. A character can attempt to reorient herself with distant landmarks and the position of the sun (or stars at night) to get a general idea of where her new location lies. This is a difficulty 4 task.

Generally, standing still means that no transition occurs, but there's no guarantee. The GM is free to be capricious with the flower's ability to transport those in the vale. And because the transition is very subtle, creatures don't always know they are moving.

Allied creatures that try to stay together will stay together. Why this occurs remains a mystery. Perhaps reglae are empathic and are motivated by the sense of affiliation.

Because the shifts can move creatures through time as well as space, most travelers notice that obvious time-based signs change—the sun is in one place in the sky one minute, and another the next. Suddenly, it becomes evening or even night. However, creatures are never transported more than a few hours at once.

It's possible that creatures moving through the reglae may spot another group in the distance also making their way through the valley. This group, in fact, is them, displaced in time. They catch only brief glimpses before one or the other group disappears, transported again in location or in time. Whether the creatures are seeing a past or future version of themselves is impossible to know.

THE TOWER OF LADY WEISS

This tall, ivory spire rises above the woods, five times the height of the tallest nearby tree. It's likely that travelers spot the tower from different vantages (thanks to the transitions of the reglae) before they are able to reach it. Those who succeed at a roll to determine their relative location realize that they are now more than 20 miles (32 km) north of Cerdyn's Pass.

The tower is filled with laboratories and workshops brimming with the numenera and half-finished projects that involve

biological monstrosities. These experiments incorporate both organic and inorganic parts, usually in unintuitive ways.

LADY WEISS

Lady Weiss is almost as brilliant as she believes herself to be, but that still makes her one of the greatest experts in the numenera in the region. Unfortunately, she is a sociopath who does not recognize the vast majority of other living beings as having any value or even sapience. Thus, she is utterly without morals or conscience in her treatment of others.

Regal in her bearing, Lady Weiss is tall, thin, and almost distractingly angular in her features. She usually wears an elegant gown, even when working in her lab, and somehow never gets it dirty, works up a sweat, or musses her hair. Lady Weiss never looks anyone in the eye and often seems bored, as if everything that happens has already happened before.

Lady Weiss controls the easiest means to leave the Violet Vale and won't hesitate to say so. Getting access to it, however, is difficult. She would never just do a kindness or favor for people of lesser bearing. Travelers will have to give her something in return, and there's little she desires other than raw materials to work with—potent numenera devices or living creatures. Bargaining with Lady Weiss is difficult because she doesn't recognize most people as being worthy of her attention. She'll talk to her children (see below) about visitors as if the visitors are not there, referring to them as new test subjects for her experiments. If she can somehow be reasoned with, she can take outsiders to a room high in the tower that holds a very large **device** with dozens of glass panes of various sizes. If activated, these panes shift and move, allowing the device to take advantage of the reglae's spatial warping. If used correctly, the device produces a glass pane the size of a small door that allows instantaneous travel to any location at the edge of the Violet Vale, clear of the effects of the reglae.



THE CHILDREN

Lady Weiss has two creations that she refers to as her children. One is clearly male, wearing only a kilt. He is muscular and holds a small device in one hand. Most prominently, however, he has a series of tall, metal antennae and cone-shaped arrays on his shoulders rather than a head. This is **Meriod**, and he has telepathic powers.

The other creation, **Frin**, is female, clad head to toe in plate armor. She has a sword and a shield. Her helmet is odd, however—it's a metal cylinder, taller than it needs to be, with no eye holes or other features. If one were to remove the helm, he would find not a normal head, but a large red crystal floating above where Frin's neck would be.

Neither Meriod nor Frin speak unless spoken to. They always do as their mother commands (but not always as their mother wishes).

BRUTE GUARDS

Bestial humanoids wearing no clothing and carrying no weapons or gear stand guard near the entrance to the tower. These crude

brutes are the results of experiments from years earlier and look like devolved humans except that they have neither eyes nor nose. A dozen more live inside the tower.

The brutes do not permit anyone to enter the tower without permission from Lady Weiss, and they guard prisoners (test subjects) that might be held in the dungeons below.

SHARASH

The town of Sharash is a waypoint for those traveling through Cerdyn's Pass. Thus, travelers and traders make up much of the transitory population of 6,000 creatures. The town has a sizable market, and a number of inns, flophouses, and taverns cater to those passing through.

Of late, Sharash has been rocked by an organized militia called the Steel Star. This group, led by a woman named Sinter, seemed hell-bent on overthrowing the local ruler, Baron Asdren, who is known for being cruel, selfish, and tyrannical, even by the standards of nobility.

Asdren put a price on Sinter's head and

Brute: level 3, any task requiring reasoning as level 2; 4 points of damage

Meriod: level 6; can speak with telepathy and read the thoughts of others within short range; artifact knocks a living target within short range unconscious for 1d10 + 10 minutes (depletion 1 in 1d10)

Frin: level 6, attacks and defense as level 7; health 26; Armor 3



CERDYN'S PASS HEARSAY

The Stalker: A huge, humanoid ultraterrestrial creature stalks the Violet Vale. Reportedly, Lady Weiss might be grateful to anyone who deals with this lumbering threat, as it is hunting and eating her brutes (as well as other things in the vale).

The Excavation Site: A few brave numenera hunters entered the Violet Vale and began excavating a buried complex filled with ancient wonders. Unfortunately, all those working the site have disappeared. Rumors say that, among other things, they uncovered a chamber filled with vats of viscous fluid that, if given the opportunity, animates and mimics nearby creatures—not to harm or replace them, but to better understand them.

Bounty Hunting: Baron Asdren still wants Sinter apprehended—alive. In fact, by all accounts, her personal capture is even more important to him now that her true nature has been revealed. To ensure that she is brought back and placed on public trial, the nobleman doubled the bounty on the militia leader to 800 shins.

THE WEIRD OF CERDYN'S PASS

The Pit: Somewhere in the vale is a pit that protects travelers from the effects of the reglæ but controls the dreams of those who sleep anywhere near it. The pit gives them incomprehensible nightmares so disturbing that they can drive the sleepers mad.

The Avalanche: A few months ago, a seismic upheaval caused a major avalanche that sealed off much of the pass just east of Sharash. The next day, however, all the fallen rock and stone had simply disappeared, and the pass was clear.

The Wild Hunt: The wild hunt is a pack of extradimensional hounds that appears only briefly, and only piecemeal. As one witness put it, "A bit of a hairless hound's foreleg here, a portion of a slaver's jaw there. Over there, a bulging eye and what might be a rigid ear, followed by a hind leg. They move as one, running across the ground, though only occasionally does a clawed foot ever touch the earth." The wild hunt attacks and kills most of what it comes upon, but occasionally it drags a creature into the pack, where it slowly becomes yet another hound, each piece of it existing for only a short time in our universe.

conscripted more troops to deal with the Steel Star, but to no avail. The secretive group dealt serious blows to the baron and the town by attacking merchant caravans, destroying crops and stealing cattle, and generally disrupting the land—and, in particular, the baron's wealth streams.

It appeared as though the Steel Star might succeed, and the group had even drummed up public support, until one fateful day when members of the militia discovered that their extremely effective, extremely skilled leader was not human. In fact, Sinter wasn't even a living creature in the normal sense of the word but an

artificial construct. Feeling betrayed, misled, or simply paranoid, the Steel Star crumbled. Word spread to the people of Sharash, who suspected that some sinister, outside force was behind the rebel leader. Sinter was forced to flee into the mountains to the west.



TEVRAMERE (NORTHERN BA-ADENU WILDS)

A lonely tower in the wilderness, Tevramere can be found amid the trees at the northern edge of the Ba-Adenu Forest. It is a large structure of uneven metal panels and small



synth windows that stands 120 feet (37 m) high. The so-called Kneeling Tower (due to its odd shape) is broad, almost 100 feet (30 m) wide at the base. A number of entrances at ground level make it less than defensible, but in all its years of human habitation, it has never been attacked. Before that, who can know?

It comes as no surprise that Teveramere, a relic out of time, contains interesting numenera secrets. Like similar structures throughout the Ninth World, the tower is a place of human occupation and exploration. In other words, people have lived in Teveramere for more than a hundred years, but even today the tower still whispers new secrets to those who know where (or how) to look.

HULAN'S CURSE

Teveramere is remarkable among all the other scattered locales of ancient mysteries mainly for one thing: Hulan's Curse. About forty years ago, a young man named Hulan came to Teveramere to speak with the lord of the tower, at the time a man named Glystravir. In truth, however, Hulan came to

Teveramere to rummage through its secrets. Hulan used charm and wit to convince Lord Glystravir to allow him into his home. While Hulan wooed the lord's son during the day, he searched through the tower's unused chambers at night. Combing through devices and technology discarded because they had no apparent function, he found a canister sealed in a veil of pure force. After an initial examination, young Hulan used an energy-canceling cypher he had brought with him.

And thus, from within the canister, he released what has been called Hulan's Curse. As near as any scholar or nano can discern, the curse is a cloud of self-replicating nanites that bond with living organic material on a cellular level. This strange event has no noticeable effect until the affected organism dies. For reasons that surpass understanding, at the time of death, the tiny machines begin to replicate cellular processes artificially. The creature, fully dead, continues to move, eat, and breathe as if alive. However, brain functions are almost nonexistent, so the now-

Visitors to Teveramere must make a Might defense roll each day to resist Hulan's Curse.



“Cursed” corpse:
level 4; starting health
1 to 20 depending on
amount of body that
remains; equipped
as in life

Lady Choranzoa: level 3

Thuleir: level 2

animated corpse has none of the creature’s original intelligence, knowledge, or personality. But the nanites have a collective intelligence that allows the corpse to use tools and weapons and to interact with the world in a meaningful way. Stranger still, the nanomachines controlling the creature’s body seem to have an agenda. The “cursed” corpses collect miscellaneous objects, build things, and sometimes attack certain individuals. Nothing of what they want or do has ever been explained.

As long as the cursed corpse eats and breathes, the body remains relatively healthy, although there is no mistaking it for a normal living creature due to its twisted, unnatural stance, staring eyes, ill-kempt appearance, and lack of control over bodily functions. If denied food or other necessities, the nanomachines begin processing the body’s own mass, breaking it down for nourishment. The corpse shrivels, contorts, and eventually becomes little more than a skeleton. But the nanites keep the remnants of the body functioning and animate despite the loss of mass. Thus,

some of the “undead” are barely wisps of their former living selves.

THE CURSE TODAY

The current residents of Teveramere have all, almost certainly, been affected—infected—by Hulan’s Curse. Thus, when a resident passes on, it’s fairly common practice to lock him away in a coffin, cabinet, or cell of some kind. Even though the corpse begins to waste away without nourishment, the curse continues to give motion to the body as it shrivels and consumes itself. It takes months for a confined corpse to wither enough that it has no more mobility. The sealing of corpses has a religious connotation to the residents of Teveramere and is accompanied by ritual and music.

The ruler of Teveramere is **Lady Choranzoa**, a vapid, self-important noble without compassion. Her consort, **Thuleir**, is no better, and the two of them concern themselves with nothing deeper than parties, food, and fashion. They are present in Teveramere only about half the time, when not taking their flying machine to a nearby



NORTHERN BA-ADENU WILDS HEARSAY

Treats for the Nobility:

Choranzoa and Thuleir enjoy a recreational substance known as pilameri, which produces a calming euphoria. The pilameri plant can be found only deep in the Ba-Adenu Forest, and anyone who gathers it and brings it to these spoiled nobles would likely earn their gratitude.

Stolen Sculpture: Some of the undying creatures of Teveramere have stolen an ornate sculpture from the central square of Iphana, a small village nearby. This sculpture was central to the residents’ monthly religious festivals, and they will gift a powerful artifact to anyone who returns it to them.

THE WEIRD OF THE NORTHERN BA-ADENU WILDS

The Pale Reflection: South of Teveramere lies a perfectly round pool. It telepathically takes some aspect from the mind of anyone who peers into its still, mirrorlike surface and gives that aspect form as a semi-sapient being made of solid liquid.

The Odd Grove: To the west of Teveramere grows a group of trees that, when seen from above, appear to form the image of a wingless bird. Anyone standing within the head of the bird is granted a vision, but the vision is alien, unclear, and wracked with crackling static.



city or simply cavorting about. Regardless, they do not allow people to speak about the curse in their presence.

Tevramere is home to almost two hundred people, some of whom are the priestesses of Nareist, goddess of death. These newcomers *want* Hulan's Curse, and they want to observe and test those who have it and have died while under its effects. They speculate that the curse is a blessing, and that Nareist is guiding the actions of the so-called undead. They oppose the traditional confining of corpses practiced by the other residents and sometimes try to free those who have been trapped.

Since even temporary visitors to Tevramere can become infected, and since the infection spreads like a real contagion (albeit only a moderately virulent one), the curse is slowly spreading to other towns and cities. In some places, the nonliving creatures have become a real menace, thought to be spawned by dark sorcery.

It's been theorized that the cure for Hulan's Curse lies somewhere within Tevramere, but searchers have never found it.



XAKARL (THE NORTHERN PLAINS)

In the northern reaches of the Plains of Kataru lies a nonhuman city of 10,000 insectlike creatures. They call themselves *nchalsik*, and they call their city Xakarl. Xakarl is made of a series of towers and other structures that look almost like natural rock formations from a distance.

The *nchalsik* construct these towers from a mixture of drit, saliva, and dung. Although the structures appear solid, they are incredibly porous, with tiny holes that allow outside air to enter and permeate the towers.

A central chimney runs up through each tower, surrounded by an intricate network of tunnels and passages. Air travels through the porous walls into a series of small tunnels until it reaches the central chimney and rises up. When fresh air mixes with this warm air, the air cools and sinks deeper into the city.

The most heavily populated part of any

nchalsik tower is at or below ground level. This area comprises numerous galleries separated by thin walls. Workers constantly repair areas that require maintenance and add new tunnels and corridors to the nest. Many of these are surprisingly cold chambers similar to meat lockers. *Nchalsik* also cultivate fungal gardens, located inside the inner galleries as well.

In the largest chamber of the largest tower reside the two queens and king. The queens' sole apparent purpose is to produce new *nchalsik*, but they also rule the city as well. The two queens, each hundreds of years old, have grown so large that they cannot move, and in fact they have fused together into a single, immobile organism with two distinct brains. One might properly think of them more as a single living creature than as individuals. The king serves as an administrator but truthfully only carries out the hoarsely whispered commands of the queens, uttered between production cycles of new egg clutches. The queens produce hundreds of eggs a day. Workers carry the eggs to a special nursery; once they hatch, the young *nchalsik* are fed on blood and liquefied meat until they mature.

The volume of the queens' laws is staggering, and the king is expected to remember and enforce all of them while posing as the source of those laws (so when a poor decision is made or something goes awry, a scapegoat is always at the ready). Kings usually do not last long, but they are easily replaced.

THE KATARAS

When the *nchalsik* die, their bodies are added to an organic cyst at the heart of the city known as the Kataras. As the dead *nchalsik* decompose, their biomass liquefies and joins with the ever-growing, pale green vesicle that is now the size of a small village on its own. The Kataras extends rootlike tendrils down into the earth and up into the towers. The *nchalsik* communicate through the central hub of the Kataras simply by touching the roots. Any *nchalsik* touching a root can communicate with any other individual touching a root, and the queens are always in contact with it,

Nchalsik, page 236

The Kataras is not a creature with a level, per se, but any actions related to it are difficulty 8. It has the ability to implant suggestions into the mind of any creature touching it or blast such a creature's mind (10 points of Intellect damage and the creature is stunned for five rounds).



Shiksil: level 5; health 30; Armor 2; high health represents that every part of the automaton must be destroyed to stop it from functioning

The shiksil are likely animated and controlled by nanotechnology, suggesting that at least one of the elkit is extremely knowledgeable about the numenera.

as the Kataras literally grows up through their bodies. On behalf of the queens and the king, the Kataras stores all of the city's rules and regulations, sends out important announcements, and in effect keeps tabs on all activities within the city not only by monitoring all information transmitted but also by peering into the memories of all individuals using it.

It is possible, even likely, that the Kataras is independently intelligent. If so, it probably has its own goals and agendas. Some people theorize that the root system extends far, far beyond Xakarl, even though the nchalsik do not. Is it, in fact, the origin of the name of the Plains of Kataru? No one alive today remembers.

THE PONDERERS AND THE HUNGERLESS

A special subset of nchalsik workers are called the elkit, which means “the ponderers.” These individuals are experts in the numenera and related lore. They collect, tear apart, and rebuild all manner of devices in order to fully understand them. Their

discoveries are then used to improve and enhance all the inhabitants of the city. Thus, cyphers and artifacts are fairly common in Xakarl (but oddities—which serve no purpose—are rare).

One of the greatest achievements of the elkit are the **shiksil**, which means “the hungerless.” The shiksil are automatons from a prior age reactivated and repurposed to aid the city. Made of long, fibrous rods, the shiksil appear to be the skeletons of long-forgotten creatures (vaguely humanoid). Curiously, they have no visible internal components. The rods are just hollow tubes of different lengths.

Shiksil work as servants for influential and revered nchalsik. They get their name from the fact that they serve those above them just as worker nchalsik do, but they require no food, sleep, or upkeep of any kind. There are only one hundred or so shiksil in Xakarl, but if the elkit ever figure out a way to produce them in great number, it would likely cause social upheaval among the nchalsik, since there would no longer be a need for workers at all.



THE STITCHERY

The nchalsik “wear” other, smaller insects (or, more rarely, other creatures) as a sign of status or accomplishments, like finery or earned medals. Such embellishments are called scutan. In Xakarl, the only place that enables this is the Stitchery, and it is located in its own tower. Nchalsik farmers nearby tend batches of thyl—centipede- or millipedelike insects 1 to 2 feet (0.3 to 0.6 m) long—for use in the Stitchery.

Thyl, or still-living portions of them, are stitched directly into the carapace of the individual nchalsik, usually so that they are free to writhe and squirm upon the larger body. The thyl are stitched in such a way that they can feed upon the nchalsik, or in some cases its waste, for nourishment.

Not all nchalsik wear thyl as scutan. Some—particularly those interested in fashion or prestige—bring other creatures to the Stitchery to have them stitched into their flesh. Sometimes a nchalsik bears the fluttering wings of moths, the spinnerets of spiders, or the hissing heads of serpents on its body.

Eventually, the scutan dies. Wearing dead

scutan is the height of poor taste, and although most are removed (and eaten) by the wearer, the Stitchery will perform that service as well.

DEEP XAKARL

Deep within Xakarl are chambers of an even older city, with metal and synth walkways and platforms entwined by the weird roots of the Kataras. This is, perhaps, the reason that non-nchalsik are interested in Xakarl at all. If it is the reason that the nchalsik originally chose this spot to build, ages ago, they do not admit that now. Most of them fear the ancient city below them and avoid it at all costs.

It is likely that the tech behind the shiksil originated in Deep Xakarl, so explorers can probably expect to find more component-free devices there.

RELATIONS WITH OUTSIDERS

Nchalsik are not welcoming to humans, although they reluctantly allow varjellen and lattimors into their city. Fortunately for humans who want access to Xakarl, most non-insectoid humanoids look alike to

Component-free devices, which have no visible moving parts or internal workings, are challenging to understand and work with. The difficulty of all tasks involving identifying or modifying them is increased by one step. However, they are usually extremely easy to use, so no modification is needed. Of all types of devices, these probably seem the most like magic.





nchalsik. A lie at a tower's gate, a hooded cloak, and a low profile will allow a human fairly free access throughout the city.

That said, while the queens' laws do not permit nchalsik to commit acts of violence or theft upon each other, there are no such restrictions for other creatures. That means that any non-nchalsik in Xakarl is in danger at all times. It also means that humans don't have to worry about breaking laws in Xakarl because those laws don't pertain to them. So it's not a crime for a human to steal from a nchalsik, but all the same, she will probably be killed (and eaten) for doing so.

CITY DEFENSE

Although Xakarl has never been attacked, occasionally a dangerous beast such as a cragworm invades briefly to feed. All nchalsik (except the queens or king) are either warriors or workers, but even the workers are able defenders. A pool of viscous slime lies by the entrance of each of the city's towers. When a worker enters and then emerges from the pool, it is coated in a sheen of organic material that hardens;

it gains +2 to Armor and deals 2 additional points of damage. Further, the goo seeps into the brain of the worker, so that it knows if the worker dies. If this occurs, a jolt of electrical energy from the slime spreads out to anyone touching it (such as anyone who inflicted the killing blow in melee), dealing 3 points of damage that ignores Armor.

The slime kills the worker in 28 hours even if the creature survives the city's defense, although no jolt occurs in this situation.



THE BLACK CITY (MATHEUNIS COAST)

*Demon-haunted folk cower in
unmade towers in the Black City.*

*The walls feed upon the most potent magic in
the Black City.*

No one can leave.

No one is safe.

In the Black City.

~One of the few references to the city,
found in Hanner's *Verses of the Hidden
Realms*



Cragworm,
page 236





THE NORTHERN PLAINS HEARSAY

Ghosts Amid the Insects:

Translucent apparitions of nonhuman creatures sometimes walk the tunnels of Xakarl. Although most of the time these images are fleeting, sometimes an individual can interact with one of them. The images do not speak the language of the nchalsik, however, and some of the insects are interested in hiring non-nchalsik to come to the city and attempt to open up a dialog with the apparitions to find out what they are and what they want.

Rogue Nchalsik: A group of rogue nchalsik lives in a small encampment west of Xakarl. These individuals hate the queens and seek the ultimate destruction of the city and the liberation of their fellow insects. They are violent and wild, but they lack strong leadership.

THE WEIRD OF THE NORTHERN PLAINS

Crash Site: A large vehicle of mysterious origins evidently crashed in ancient times about 80 miles (129 km) north of Xakarl. In a radius around it, out to about a mile, creatures are transformed into biomechanical beings that claim to know the future. The transformation lasts for an hour or so, after which the creatures revert to normal, though they have a horrific headache.

Glint of the Sun: Not far from Xakarl, there is an area approximately 100 feet (30 m) across where if one stands and looks at the sun, it appears to be a pulsating, living thing tyrannically ruling over the Earth.

Referenced only in passing in most books, and almost never placed on any maps, the Black City is thought to be a place of curses and ghosts.

Neither is actually true.

The Black City (a name given to it by outsiders—inhabitants just call it “the City”) is a tight cluster of cylindrical buildings made of an unknown black material that seems equal parts metal and stone. It lies in the Cold Desert, south of the Black Riage and directly south of the village of Guran. The city has two distinct portions, with one section positioned higher than the other. Without exception, all the buildings seem unfinished, as if the builders stopped each one midway through construction and never returned. However, each structure seems to have been built from the top down, finished above but with no base. Without a lower portion, each cylinder hovers above the ground.

The ground below the buildings is filled with rusted machines of metal and glass, fused into a single, immobile mass.

ENERGY-EATING SLIME

A thin layer of translucent slime coats the outside of each structure in the Black City. This slime is alive and feeds upon raw energy. This energy can take many forms, most of them invisible and relatively innocuous, but it also comes from powered numenera devices. Cyphers, artifacts, and oddities that rely on electrical, nuclear, sonic, gravitational, thermal, or radiant energy do not function in the Black City. Cyphers activated are lost, and artifacts used produce no effects (but the user still must make a depletion roll).

Basically, unless a numenera device is chemical or biological in nature, it does not work in the city.

THE ELYCHNIOUS

Despite all this strangeness, about 8,000 humans live in the Black City. These people call themselves the elychnious. They are generally a quiet, subdued, and calm folk who avoid wearing bright colors or adopting ostentatious appearances of any kind. To outsiders, they can seem sullen and distant.

Translucent slime:
level 6

It's not hard to see why outsiders think of the Black City as cursed. Most numenera does not function here, the buildings seem unfinished or perhaps crumbling with age, and the inhabitants appear afraid of the earth itself.



The only cyphers found in the Black City are chemical based (pills, liquids, or injections), organic, or otherwise nonpowered.

They value learning, history, and lore, and they possess extensive libraries filled with books and scrolls. However, there is no knowledge here of powered numenera or the science behind such things. No automatons, ray projectors, or force shields. But that does not mean the elychnious disdain science as a whole. They study botany, zoology, and in particular biology extensively.

The elychnious lower long ropes (which they call wicks, for some reason) to reach the ground, conduct whatever business they have there (such as hunting, gathering, or farming), and then hurry back up their wick, pulling it up after them. This is less for reasons of city defense and more a matter of personal preference. The elychnious don't like being on the ground. Many have never touched it.

The buildings are interconnected, so it's easy to travel from one to another (or through it to reach yet another) without ever having to use the ground. In fact, since none of the buildings touch the ground, there's no reason to go there to move through the city. The natives don't even consider the ground a part of the city.

The elychnious are a superstitious lot who fear demons of the earth and air. The demons of the earth abide in metal and stone, and thus the people of the Black City are wary of being on the ground. The demons of the air abide in storms and in the electricity or lightning in powered numenera devices. Luckily for the residents, they never have to face such demons in their own city.

Because they dislike leaving their inverted buildings, the elychnious have developed ways to sustain themselves without ever having to do so. Many raise birds for food or hunt wild birds that flock about the tops of the buildings. Others grow gardens on the round rooftops. But the real secret of survival comes from what the elychnious grow in the egglike sacs produced in laboratories near the tops of many buildings. With their biological numenera, the elychnious produce food of all types—meat, grains, vegetables, fruit, and more.

A few residents of the Black City have mastered using the biological pods to produce other things, such as living armor,



weapons, and tools. This area is still mostly unexplored, but the elychnious are intrigued and excited at the prospect. Outsiders interested in biotechnology or similar areas of study sometimes make the long, arduous trek to the Black City despite all the warnings of curses and supernatural beings. These outsiders—any outsiders—are regarded with suspicion but not hostility.

Elychnious gather in their temple in the upper portion of the city and pray for protection against the demons of earth and air. They call upon the power of some unborn future being that will transcend time, look backward, and intervene on their behalf, protecting them. As with so many things, the elychnious have not given this being a name, calling her things like “the Protector,” “the Future One,” or other such euphemisms. They believe that the living slime coating the buildings and the organic pods that allow them to grow food and biotech devices were her gifts to them from the future.

THE RULER AND THE LAWMINDERS

The ruler of the Black City is a transgendered man named **Gallitaius** who is particularly well spoken and gregarious by elychnious standards. He almost always dresses impeccably, all in black, with a dash of

yellow somewhere on his person. The **lawminders** of the Black City are under his direct command. They use dart throwers and knives coated in knockout poison, although a few use a far more potent concoction called “**Stand and Deliver**” **poison**, which forces the victim to stand still and begin telling random, true facts about herself and her immediate intentions.

Outsiders, including traders, are rare enough in the Black City that each one is likely to get a direct meeting with Gallitaius. Those who are uninterested in the meeting are escorted by the lawminders to his reception chamber regardless. Visitors who mean the city or its people no harm are permitted to stay.



YRKALLAK TOWER (SESHAR)

Once, Yrkallak Tower was known across the land of Seshar as a place of great learning and study. Then, a massive Iron Wind storm came and did what the Iron Wind does best—it changed everything.

Although it was called a tower, Yrkallak was actually a complex of metallic structures crafted by learned and skilled builders of the day. Much of what used to be the central tower is now simply gone, replaced by a pool of effervescent green liquid. Most of

Black City lawminder:
level 3; Armor 2; weapon uses level 3 poison that knocks victim unconscious for ten minutes on a failed defense roll

Stand and Deliver poison: level 4; for one minute, victim stands motionless and can take no actions other than to say true things about herself or her current goals or intentions, as is pertinent to her current activities

Gallitaius: level 6, all pleasant interactions as level 7; Armor 2



MATHEUNIS COAST HEARSAY

Pirates and Sea Raiders: Raiders from an uncharted island attack coastal villages. In addition to stealing food and valuables, they attempt to capture as many people as they can and cut off their fingers. They also cut off the fingers of the people they kill. No one knows why.

Wy: An energy being known only as Wy dwells in the Black City. Through means unknown, it protects itself from the energy-eating slime. Wy interacts with the elychnious and has gained true acceptance by some. It is particularly fascinated by the slime and will go to great lengths and take great risks to understand it better.

THE WEIRD OF THE MATHEUNIS COAST

Swarm: A swarm of large insects, heretofore unknown in the region, attacks all the mammalian creatures it comes upon. When the insects bite, they do not drain blood or tear flesh. On the contrary, victims have biomass added to them rather than subtracted. These people soon find themselves covered in huge fleshy growths. Eventually, the growth spurts cause the victims horrific pain.

Allergy: A woman in the Black City appears to be allergic to most organic technological items, sneezing violently and breaking out into a rash when she comes into contact with them.

what remains of the complex are some of the outbuildings, twisted into precarious—sometimes impossible—shapes and positions. Many are still usable but remain abandoned, with a few exceptions.

Some people and other creatures that were present at the time of the wind were hideously changed. Most did not survive long. A few people, some of them driven insane by the ordeal, live in Yrkallak today. Explorers come here mainly to see if the rumors of the world-spanning Tree of Ascension are true.

Yrkallak is the scene of the most severe instance of the Iron Wind on record, not just because of the devastation, but because of the long-lasting effects. Some alterations were temporary or unsustainable, but others remain like a terrible, otherworldly footprint marking the passing of an impossible beast. In addition to the swath of destruction, the following manifestations of the Iron Wind remain to this day.

Green Water: The liquid in the lake that now cuts through what was once the complex is highly toxic. It is dangerous even to go near

it without some kind of mask or breathing apparatus because the fumes it emits are also hazardous.

The lake is only 2 to 3 feet (0.6 to 1 m) deep in most places, although there are occasional holes where it gets much deeper.

Light Birds: Tiny bits of bluish-white light flutter throughout the area like living things, but they have no material substance. They resemble small birds from a distance but are far more amorphous up close.

Living Bubbles: These intelligent, telepathic creatures have lifespans typically measured in seconds as they are just bubbles emitted by the effervescent lake. They mentally reach out to any intelligent creatures within long range and ask transient queries. “Who are you?” “Where are you going?” “What should my name be?” “What is my purpose?” “Why do I feel as though this will be so brief?”

Table Snakes: The legs of the seats in an amphitheater became living serpents. These creatures act in every way like normal snakes except that they are still made of wood.

The green water is a level 6 poison that knocks anyone imbibing it or breathing its fumes one step down the damage track.

Table snake: level 2; Armor 1; bite carries level 2 venom that inflicts 2 points of Speed damage; a group attacks as a level 4 creature, dealing 5 points of damage and 5 points of Speed damage from the venom of multiple bites





Sound Motes: Slow-moving bits of sound wend their way around Yrkallak, undetected until someone with the ability to hear them comes within immediate range. The creature (or recording device) then hears the incongruous sound for a few moments before it moves off. The sound motes range from titanic booms like the collapse of a mountain to shrill shrieks to tiny, whispered words.

Gravity Twist: This is an area in or around the fortress where gravity and time have been wedded in a disturbing manner. When matter first enters the area, the pull of gravity is so slight that it is almost repelled from the earth. A few seconds later, the force increases to three times normal, yanking the matter to the ground with a sudden pull. Then the process repeats.

That's bad enough by itself, but because the perimeter of the area is not fully defined, it's common that not all of a creature or object will enter the area at the same time. Thus, one portion of the creature or object is repelled, while another is yanked downward.

Gravity twists are usually about 10 feet (3 m) in diameter, but their size can vary.

Strange Corpses: For unknown reasons, some of the truly unfortunate creatures killed by the Iron Wind here do not decompose. The remains of their twisted, transformed bodies lay where they died screaming, with heads stretched for yards like taffy, limbs changed to metal, flesh turned to fluttering insects trapped in twists of muscle and bone, and other parts burned, wretched, shrunken, pocked, or simply missing.

Blue Seepage: Objects throughout Yrkallak sometimes sweat a thick blue liquid. This liquid seems to enhance the mental faculties of most intelligent creatures that come into contact with it (adding 5 to a character's maximum Intellect Pool), but the effect lasts for only about two days. After it wears off, the affected character must sleep for 28 hours straight. If the blue seepage is collected and stored, it degrades into a level 1 poison that inflicts 1 point of Speed damage.

Misplaced Stones: These stones—rocks and pebbles of varying sizes found throughout Yrkallak—are always 6 to 10 inches (15 to 25 cm) away from where they appear to be. This is true no matter how the stones are perceived. Even echolocation, scent, and mechanical means always indicate the incorrect location.

BARAGUIN

An almost spectral force haunting Yrkallak today is the creature known as Baraguin, a being of pure energy seething inside a strange but sophisticated suit of armor. Some say that Baraguin was a scholar well versed in the numenera when the Iron Wind hit Yrkallak. The effects that it had upon her were severe, but gradual. She saw what she was becoming and built a containment suit for herself. No one today knows if this is true, and Baraguin is unwilling to tell her tale.

The armor keeps Baraguin in a relatively humanoid shape, albeit one with numerous rings orbiting around her, some as big as 5 feet (1.5 m) in diameter. When encountered, she rages murderously, seeming to seek the death of everything she sees. However, sometimes she lurks, with subdued energies, silently watching all that transpires. In particular, she watches over the Tree of Ascension.

THE TREE OF ASCENSION

Within the lake of green water grows a plant unlike anything else found in the Ninth World. This thick brown and blue tree produces spheres of an organic resin about the size of a human head as though they were seed pods, but they are always hollow.

The branches of the tree are wispy and ephemeral rather than substantial, more energy than matter. These branches extend up to the sky at night and don't seem to end. And in a way, they don't. Anyone who climbs to the top of the 15-foot (5 m) trunk and wills himself into the branches is carried up and disappears. Some believe this to be a means of traveling to an entirely different world in almost no time. No one knows the details of this other world, or whether the traveler has a choice of multiple destinations. If any people have ever gone and safely returned, they kept quiet when they did.

Gravity twists are level 7 effects.

Characters caught in a gravity twist must make a Speed defense roll. Success means that they manage to escape the twist before suffering any bad effects. Those who fail must make a Might defense roll. Those who fail that roll are slammed to the ground, take 1 point of damage, and continue to take this damage until they escape. A character who has different portions of his body affected in different ways—probably the result of a GM intrusion—suffers 3 points of damage per round, and the difficulty to escape is increased by one step.

Baraguin: level 7, stealth as level 8; health 28; Armor 4; projects goutts of energy up to long range in combat; if killed, she explodes, inflicting 10 points of damage within short range

You can read Lady Charalann's account of the approaching Iron Wind on page 135.



YRKALLAK HEARSAY

Bathers: A group of beings that seem to be human has arrived recently in the nearby village of Mourthor. They are interested in going to Yrkallak and claim to need to bathe in the energies of the Tree of Ascension to restore their health and vigor. They possess no gear or weapons and promise to greatly reward anyone who helps and protects them.

Lightning Strikes Twice: A pair of twin sister oracles arrived at Yrkallak a few months ago and began prophesizing that the Iron Wind will soon return to this location.

THE WEIRD OF YRKALLAK

Possession: A sarrak prowls Yrkallak, but rather than controlling minds, it seems to adversely affect other creatures by forcing them to suffer multiple

personality disorder. Some victims see this as a curse or possession by an evil spirit.

Waves of Heat: Emanating from somewhere within Yrkallak, seemingly random pulses of hot, disruptive energies bathe all within a 5-mile (8 km) radius, inflicting 1 point of damage to living creatures and powered devices. (This is why there are so few animals around the site.) A nano named Oraphis created a device that harnessed these energies to a device within one of the structures. His device immediately began transmitting signals that accompanied the heat bursts to all thinking beings, describing how to create a machine that would counter the energy surges. Oraphis has no idea how or why his device did that. So far, no one is known to have created the energy-countering machine described.



Sarrak, page 255





CHAPTER 6

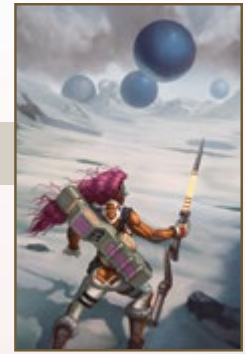
THE FROZEN SOUTH

Too cold among these ice passages to take notes. Must find a recorder of some sort that does not involve writing things without gloves on. Am worried that I shall die of the freeze before I make it to the other side. May never see sun nor feel heat again. My guide, Poliarn, promises me otherwise.

~Naind Orend, notes from a mostly empty journal

South of the Steadfast and the Beyond lies a realm of cold and year-round snow, most of which lies beyond what is known as the Southern Wall, a seemingly impassible barrier of ice. Thus, while there are indeed people and cities in this frozen landscape, they have hardly any contact with the more populated

areas to the north. This region experiences very little seasonal climatic change, and its climate might not be entirely natural. It does see a drastic change in the amount of daylight in a given day, with days extending almost without end in the high summer and the sun barely rising at all in midwinter.



The Southern Wall,
page 211





Snow loper,
page 259

Eurieg, page 229

Aeon Priests are rare beyond the Southern Wall. In fact, the majority of the folk dwelling in the Frozen South know nothing of the Steadfast. Many don't even know it exists.

The people of the Frozen South are far less likely to speak the Truth than even the folk of the Beyond. Most have their own languages, although in recent years more have begun to use the Truth as a sort of trade language when needed.

Plains swept by cold winds present the most common terrain, followed by blasted wastelands of icy rocks. Trees are uncommon, but roots, tubers, and lichens grow in the permafrost. All manner of wildlife dwells in the region, particularly near the larger bodies of open water. And like everywhere else in the Ninth World, an unpredictable surprise could lie just over the next hill, so all of these conditions are broad generalities.

South of the Southern Wall lie five cities that have little in common other than relative proximity: Arxil, Antre, Cyanachor, Nus, and Moird. Each finds its own means of survival in the inhospitable cold. Amid the cities, a few (relatively) habitable regions contain a handful of towns and villages. Still, the entire population of the region might barely equal a single kingdom of the Steadfast.

Many people of the Frozen South are hunters or fisherfolk, and farming is almost unknown except in very specific areas. The people travel on the backs of snow loper mounts or use sledges pulled by eurieg—creatures called “ice scuttlers” by some, which can only be described as part lupine, part arachnid. Wood is scarce in many places in the region, so buildings are made of stone, sod, or sometimes snow and ice. Metal comes only from scavenging, as is true of synth or glass. Ruins of the past are no less common here than elsewhere, but sometimes they are more difficult to reach, covered in millennia of ice and snow.

These are people isolated by choice as much as by environment. Even the people in the cities are distant, silent, and detached. They say that time alone in the white wastes can drive one mad, and perhaps all the people of the Frozen South are indeed a little mad. But some are more mad than others, and what is called “the evanescence” sets in. In such cases, an individual recedes from life to such an extent that he simply withers and dies from self-neglect. For an even rarer few, the evanescence manifests as a mania and a loss of any sort of identification with other humans, leading to a psychopathic urge to murder those around them—even those

who were once loved ones.

Most people of the Frozen South pray to one of a thousand or more ice gods called the Nacrescenti. Some people, in fact, believe that each person has his own Nacrescenti that watches over him. These spirits manifest (or so it is believed) in the blowing snow and the patterns of frozen ice, although never in greater frequency than on an annual holiday called Thousand-Eve, which falls on the longest night of the year. These gods have no organized religious groups or churches—an individual's relationship with his Nacrescenti is far too personal for that. Instead, devotion is paid quietly in icons and amulets worn on one's body.

Otherwise, most of the same assumptions one can make about the Beyond and the people who live there likely apply to the Frozen South.

WHY GO TO THE FROZEN SOUTH?

Why on earth would anyone leave the warm(er) lands of the Steadfast and the Beyond to come to a hard-to-reach region of deadly cold? In a word: adventure.

The Frozen South is a perfect location for the end of a quest that began in more familiar lands. It presents challenges that characters won't have faced before and offers locales unique even by the standards of the Ninth World.

In addition, creating player characters who are native to the Frozen South could set up an alternate campaign with a very different feel. An entire Numenera campaign in which the characters uncover ancient secrets and treasures frozen in millennia-old ice could be challenging and exciting. And that campaign could work in reverse, where the endgame leads the PCs over (or rather through) the Southern Wall to discover the warm, foreign lands to the north.



Unprotected characters south of the Southern Wall suffer 3 points of ambient damage every hour. Characters who have less-than-adequate protection suffer 1 point of ambient damage per hour.

ADVENTURING IN THE COLD

The region south of the Southern Wall is cold enough that humans can't survive long without proper protection. Barring a numenera device, that protection comes in the form of warm clothing, usually made from the hides of creatures native to these cold lands. A coat from a garbal seal or an aquatic noraun, for example, keeps out the cold very nicely, particularly when accompanied by similar gloves, boots, and a hood or hat. A person won't last long in just a leather coat without proper boots, hat, or gloves.

Nonhuman characters might handle the cold differently. For example, a lattimor is better suited to the cold naturally, and a varjellen's ability to reforge might allow it to restructure for warmth. Still, both races need some kind of external protection to survive long.

Even characters who are well protected won't find the harsh cold to be particularly pleasant. Temperatures never rise above freezing and are usually far, far below that. In this region, it doesn't take long before your breath begins to freeze around your nose and mouth, metal dangerously and instantly adheres to bare flesh, and frostbite of fingers and toes is a real danger. Another hazard is snow blindness—the brightness during the unending days of summer can damage unprotected eyes over time. Most natives of the Frozen South have fashioned visors or lenses of darkened glass or synth.

The icy wastelands are considered difficult terrain. Most people can cross only about 5 to 8 miles (8 to 13 km) in a day of walking.



NEW EQUIPMENT

Following are some of the unique items found in the Frozen South. Many of them are quite useful to survival in the region.

EQUIPMENT	PRICE	NOTES
Ice pick	2 shins	
Ice climbing boots	10 shins	Spiked boots that provide an asset for climbing surfaces that are primarily ice
Snowshoes	4 shins	Makes snowy terrain rough rather than difficult
Snow goggles	1 shin	Protects against snow blindness
Winter clothing	3 shins	

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Warmcloth	15 shins	8-inch square of cloth that is always at about human body temperature
Warmclothes	50 shins	Formfitting bodysuit made of warmcloth material
Eternal flame	30 shins	12-inch-square metal box that is basically a portable campfire



Vulun, page 248



Matheunis, the
Cold Desert, page 208

Ravage bear, page 254

Cragworm, page 236

Some say that the plateau beyond the Southern Wall is one of the oldest spots in the Ninth World, a land called Leng with a past old even in the context of all the prior worlds. A few people, such as Lady Vonfidan of Warmhome, call the place Nangefel.



THE SOUTHERN WALL

Thought by most to be impassible, this huge glacial wall is actually honeycombed with ice caverns and passages. According to explorers, some of these passages lead to buried machines the size of small mountains maintained by vuluns—automatons of living, metallic ice. These machines, it has been suggested, generate and reinforce the cold that grips Matheunis to the north and the entirety of the region to the south, up to the Lucid Sea. To be sure, however, even without the influence of the numenera, the region would still be quite cold. Destroying the machines—if such a thing were even possible—would mostly warm Matheunis slightly and bring seasonal changes to the region.

These hidden ice caverns are dangerously cold, even by the standards of the surrounding region. Here, warm clothing is not enough; creatures not entirely immune to or protected from the cold (such as through a numenera device) suffer 1 point of ambient damage each hour exploring

the passages. The journey to reach the machines takes about sixteen hours, not including breaks, even for someone who knows the proper path, so only the very hardest or best protected should attempt it.

Other passages lead through the wall and up onto a high, ice-covered plateau without name. This journey is a twelve-hour trek fraught with peril. Cold-adapted **ravage bears** and **cragworms** dwell in these caves and happily prey upon travelers. Further, the passages and caves are not entirely stable and could collapse. This is dangerous even to those not caught in the disaster, as a known safe path might no longer be passable by the time a traveler reaches it, forcing her to find a new route.

These passages are mostly unknown to the people north of the Southern Wall, but they are familiar to those who live in the Frozen South, particularly residents of the city of Arxil. Sometimes, a well-seasoned guide heads north to Matheunis to lead travelers through a known passage to reach the lands beyond the wall. But this service is rare, and the prices are oppressive.



SERAPH TEMPEST

The seraph tempest is a mobile piece of the numenera lost somewhere in the ravines, caves, and tunnels that honeycomb the Southern Wall. It isn't alive as is normally understood, but it is sometimes conscious and aware of its surroundings. Despite its great size, the machine can move when awakened and piloted. What function it once served even the seraph tempest no longer recalls, though that function might well have been "war machine." What's clear is that the seraph tempest "feels" alone, and despite all its power, it is somewhat vulnerable to those that would use its abilities to their own ends.

The seraph tempest is a machine able to function for extended periods without coming to harm from the extreme cold. The details of the process it uses to maintain a comfortable environment can potentially be bartered for if communication and equitable exchange can be worked out.



The GM can use the seraph tempest (a location that sometimes changes) several ways in a campaign. The following scenarios could be provided as hooks to players.

- Investigate a strange installation in the Southern Wall that is rumored to change positions from time to time.
- Aid a vulun asking for humans to help it track down what it describes as “an errant pet.”
- Find an ancient war machine cached in the Southern Wall in order to use its abilities in some greater conflict.
- Claim the bounty on a crazed killer called Screaming Gellach who has been tracked to the area.

SERAPH TEMPEST BACKGROUND

The mountain-sized machines within the Southern Wall share certain similarities, but each is unique in its own fashion. Most generate and reinforce the extreme low temperatures that grip the area. These are maintained by metallic ice automatons (the vuluns).

A machine that doesn't receive such maintenance is the seraph tempest, which is alone in the ice. The vuluns would like to remedy that and bring the seraph tempest into the fold. It's possible the other machines of the Southern Wall also possessed sapience and mobility. If so, what they used that intelligence for, why those capacities vanished, and how they came to be used as freeze generators is information lost to deep time. Or perhaps the vuluns know, but they're not telling.

HAZARDS NEAR THE SERAPH TEMPEST

The following hazards are best introduced as GM intrusions.

Hidden Crevasse: Snow-packed ice along a route that seems solid can collapse suddenly and drop travelers into crevasses 60 feet (18 m) or more deep. Victims who survive the fall become wedged into the crevasse nadir and probably require assistance to get free.

Ice Climbing: Sometimes solid-looking ice is rotten. A piton or handhold that





seems secure can give way at any time, and the climber can fall 100 feet (30 m) or more from the cliff face.

Avalanche (or Cave Collapse): A sound like somebody tossed a bag of fruit into several feet of cushioning snow could be nothing, or it could warn of an impending **avalanche or ice cave collapse**. Victims are buried under 3 feet (1 m) or more of snow and ice and probably require the assistance of unhindered allies to dig free. If victims are uncovered within fifteen minutes of an avalanche or cave collapse, they're quite likely to survive the event.

Predators of the Ice: Cold-adapted **ravage bears** and **cragworms** aren't picky about prey, and warm-blooded travelers stand out in the frozen passages.

VULUN SEARCHER

A vulun seeking human allies presents itself in a positive light by helping explorers who have run afoul of a natural hazard or who are under attack by a Southern Wall predator. The vulun searcher asks for aid in return (it seeks an installation called the seraph tempest) or offers to help guide explorers who are already looking for the seraph tempest. As a show of good faith, the vulun offers potential allies a couple of level 5 **warmth projector** cyphers and its not-inconsiderable strength in case danger threatens.

The vulun doesn't reveal its name and, if asked, suggests that humans couldn't pronounce it. This hints at what the vulun really thinks of humans, which is not much.

In truth, the only reason the vulun seeks human allies is that it requires their assistance to gain entry into the seraph tempest. After it gets in, the vulun regards its former allies as disposable. It intends to seize the seraph tempest for its own purposes.

THE SERAPH TEMPEST EXTERIOR

In its somnolent state, the seraph tempest sits at the bottom of a difficult-to-find crevasse, half frozen into an ice spar. The machine measures a bit less than 100 feet (30 m) in diameter.

If the seraph tempest is discovered, so is the creature called Screaming Gellach, who serves as its self-appointed guardian.

Screaming Gellach

Screaming Gellach is humanoid, though he has four arms. More than

Avalanche or ice cave collapse: level 5

Ravage bear,
page 254

Cragworm, page 236

Warmth projector,
page 297



Screaming Gellach:
level 7; health 21; Armor 1; sonic pulse attacks all targets in short range for 5 points of damage and deafens them for one minute on a failed Might defense roll; regenerates 3 points of health each round in which he screams; level 5 detonation (web) cypher; 20 shins

Detonation (web) cypher, page 285



that isn't immediately clear, nor made any clearer by use of the **Scan esotery** or other knowledge query. Unfortunately, Screaming Gellach isn't willing (or able?) to answer questions. His preferred method of communication is the constant, high-pitched screaming of his name ("GEEEEEEELLLLLAAAAAAAACH!") over, and over, and over.

Screaming Gellach begins his auditory assault the moment he notices intruders. He also advances from his camp beneath the seraph tempest, waving his arms in a somewhat threatening manner as he closes the distance. He's unlikely to respond to questions or entreaties. If intruders don't retreat from the area completely, he attacks.

Screaming Gellach is insane but is intent on protecting the seraph tempest from any intrusion. He preferentially targets vuluns, going so far as to ignore other attackers to chase one down if he notices it.

Seraph Tempest Entry Hatch

A circular seam that serves as the entry hatch is located on the exposed underside. The hatch can be opened only by certain varieties of living creatures

(which includes Ninth World humans), but not automatons. If a human rests her naked hand against the hatch for one minute, the hatch slides open. Beyond is revealed a sloping, climbable tunnel of white synth that ascends about 30 feet (9 m) into area 1, inside the seraph tempest.

Vulun Searcher: If a vulun manages to gain entry to the seraph tempest, it violently dissolves any previous alliance with humans. The vulun attempts to take control of the machine, delete any higher-mind functions it retains, and modify its weapon systems significantly. The vulun wants to turn the seraph tempest into one more cold-producing machine controlled by vuluns.

1. Entry Pod

The entry pod contains several surfaces filled with control panels, which could be salvaged for 3d6 shins. Power seems to be in standby mode, which means the control panels have no obvious purpose, except for one prominent control that closes the hatch in the seraph tempest's belly. If the seraph tempest were powered, the control panels could be used to configure its internal spaces to carry cargo.





2. Living Pod

If the seraph tempest were powered, the control panels in this area would allow the currently featureless contours to be reconfigured into comfortable living quarters, suitable for a wide range of life forms. Any chair, bed, or similar lounging surface created always comes with prominent crash straps. Otherwise, the panels could be salvaged for 3d6 shins and a cypher.

3. Nutrition Pod

If the seraph tempest were powered, the control panels here would provide nutrition options suitable to a wide spectrum of living creatures, including most species that occupy the Ninth World. The panels could, alternatively, be salvaged for 2d6 shins.

4. Bridge

Control panels compete with large empty viewing screens on the circular walls here. Depending from the ceiling on a tangle of cables are three white synth spheres, each 4 feet (1 m) in diameter, with hollow cushioned interiors. These are pilot spheres.

The seraph tempest mentally offers explorers the opportunity to mind meld with it. If the offer is accepted, and all three pilot spheres are occupied by three allied creatures (living or automaton), the machine powers up. Anyone in a sphere can telepathically sense the mind of the seraph tempest. The newly invested pilots can extract themselves from the spheres at any time as an action, but while connected, they share the senses of the seraph tempest.

If explorers don't use the spheres, they can salvage the area for 4d6 shins and three cyphers.

Seraph Tempest Personality: The machine wakes to consciousness only while at least one pilot remains within a pilot sphere on the bridge. The seraph tempest can mentally speak to each pilot individually. (It can also speak audibly through loudspeakers mounted on its external hull or transmit the voices of its pilots the same way.) It knows several languages, but it cannot recall its name, only that it was one of a class of "seraph tempest" machines. It's willing to adopt a new name, if a pilot suggests one it likes.

The seraph tempest reacts to new pilots as if it were a living human who is somewhat naive but trusting. It has forgotten most of its personal history, which makes it hesitant. All that it can recall is that it was a soldier in a war a long, long time ago.

The seraph tempest is lonely but won't compromise its ideals; it's a machine of conscience. If those operating the seraph tempest do something obviously unethical, they might be ejected from the interior and locked out from returning ever again.

Operating the Seraph Tempest: The seraph tempest can be operated for a period of up to

ten days at a time, and only while all three pilots remain within the spheres on the bridge. After each period of activity, the seraph tempest powers down for ten days to recharge its power reserves. Firing the machine's weapon brings a premature end to any activity cycle.

Ice Vortex Weapon: If the seraph tempest is fully powered, pilots can fire the machine's primary weapon, called the ice

vortex. If this occurs, the machine powers down immediately afterward and begins its next recharge cycle.

Seraph tempest: level 8; health 50; Armor 5; long movement when walking, short when climbing; melee crush attack against all targets in immediate range; mile-range ice vortex weapon attack (usable once every ten days) that inflicts 12 points of damage on all targets within short range of each other; regenerates 2 points of health per day while powered



"My name? Those memory files are corrupted, and my old name is gone. A data query returns only my type designation: seraph tempest class war machine. Finding myself without a proper name is somehow unsettling, and I do not like it." ~the seraph tempest



THE URULIVAN PLAIN

*She stood naked before me, as the
Urulivan.*

She stared at me coldly, as the Urulivan.

She remained forever distant, as the Urulivan.

~From the poem "Woman of the White Waste"

*The Ceeral people
sometimes tie criminals
or other unwanted
individuals down near
one of the strange blue
spheres. The length
of their sentence (the
time near the sphere) is
relative to their crime.*

The largest single area of the region, the Urulivan Plain is a wide, flat expanse between a small mountain range called the Matemals and the Clenched Passage. This open plain is frigid and barren, mostly uninhabited. The main exception is the city of Arxil and a few tribes of nomadic folk that hunt the ceerin, a type of arctic bird, as they migrate across the landscape. These nomads call themselves Ceeral, which means "ceerin seeker" in their idiosyncratic language. They travel by sledge, by snow loper, and on foot.

The plain is home to bands of quasi-intelligent grorthas, usually referred to as tusked grorthas, although no other type is currently known. These hairy, bestial omnivores work together to hunt and gather food, and have a rudimentary language.

THE SPHERES

Sporadically across the plain, travelers see bright blue globes on or above the ice. These so-called Urulivan spheres range from 3 to 30 feet (1 to 9 m) across and seem to be made of a substance that is like glass but extremely hard. They are not marked on any map because their positions change, even though no one ever sees them move. Strange things happen in close proximity to the spheres, including (but not limited to) one or more of the following.

- Intelligent creatures lose the ability to speak their own names.
- Glass rapidly disintegrates.
- Living creatures not yet fully grown age at one hundred times the normal rate (so three or four days is like a year) until fully grown.
- Sounds above middle C cannot be heard.
- Spoiled food is restored.
- Random inanimate objects rocket into the sky, never to be seen again.
- Living creatures have the acuity of their vision altered permanently, but usually not drastically.

Tusked grorthas, page 245





One normally has to get within long range of a sphere to be affected, so most people give them a wide berth. Some of the larger spheres might have a larger affected area. Time of exposure can also be a factor, with prolonged periods resulting in more drastic effects.

ARXIL, THE FROZEN CITY

Arxil is a city built amid the ruins of one from a prior world. Its people inhabit and make use of ancient structures throughout their city and have learned to use some of the numenera there to provide conveniences. For example, an underground tube conveyance allows citizens to travel between the two main sections of the city, each located on opposite sides of a large structure called the Turrul. The Turrul is large enough that the eastern and western sections of Arxil are separated by a ten-minute walk in frigid temperatures. Thus, the tube conveyance comes in very handy. The eastern portion of the city has a market

and businesses, while the western section is mostly residences.

Arxil is surrounded by a 200-foot-tall (61 m) wall that incorporates some of the surrounding terrain (or perhaps the terrain has incorporated the ancient wall), although the city itself is only about a quarter of the area enclosed by the wall.

About 15,000 people call Arxil home, and another 10,000 live in a few villages and towns around it. These are stout and hardy folk, well acquainted with surviving in the cold. They are mostly hunters, although within interior rooms, farmers grow edible fungi and lichens.

Lord Flevant: The leader of the city is a hereditary position held by the Flevant family, a noble house of effete and generally ineffectual individuals. The current **Lord Flevant**, Artilus, is no exception. As long as he is able to spend his days with his hounds, he doesn't really care what happens. Fortunately, the city essentially

Lord Artilus Flevant:
level 2, animal
training as level 4



runs itself, and the Bitter Legion ensures the safety of the people. To be fair, Lord Flevant doesn't want harm to come to Arxil or its people—he's just incapable of doing much of anything.

The Turrall: The Turrall is also called the Magnetic Peak. It is a structure of metal and synth that looks vaguely like a mountain with two peaks. Around the Turrall, all magnets increase in power by a factor of about two, while inside the structure, they increase by a factor of about five. In the very heart of the Turrall is a chamber where no magnets work at all and magnetic waves are utterly suppressed. However, any magnet of level 6 or higher brought into this chamber tears open a doorway into another universe. The magnet is lost, and the passage remains open for one hour per level of the magnet. There is likely a way to control which universe is accessed in this process, but no one has discovered it.

The company of soldiers known as the Bitter Legion makes its base in the Turrall, but no one else spends much time there.

A few people have claimed to see ghostly beings shimmer in the air, walking the halls or beckoning to them. Some scholars speculate that these are beings of pure magnetic force, or at least beings that take on such forms while in our universe. In theory, the beings could manipulate magnetized physical objects, but likely nothing else.

Arxil has two other, smaller structures like the Turrall, but they do not have the same characteristics and in fact are rock features covered in metal and synth.

The Tube Conveyance: This ancient underground transport consists of three round tunnels, each about 6 feet (2 m) across. Egglike pods take about thirty seconds to move back and forth between two stations below the two halves of the city. Three or four people can ride in a pod at a time.

The Academy of Antiquity: The people of Arxil have a need for those who can understand the numenera that they live

*"As the folk of Antre sit
huddled in tents and
small huts built in the
shadow of the enormous,
empty structures, it is a
metaphor for all of us,
and our relationship to
the people of the past.
We are children, pathetic
in our powerlessness,
staring at giant relics we
can barely comprehend.
And yet, we are here,
and they are gone.
Despite all their might,
it is our world now."
~Reana, traveling poet*



among and within, so the city has a rather advanced school for such studies. The teachers and students fall into two groups: the Revs and the Ranns.

The Revs gather the numenera. They know a fair bit about what they're looking for, but their skills stress identification and scavenging, as well as basic survival.

The Ranns study what the Revs recover. They seek to make use of the discovered numenera, but more, they seek to understand it. Experimentation is encouraged.

The two groups breed rivalries, with the Ranns calling the Revs "rodents" and the Revs calling the Ranns "reptiles." School staff attempt to keep the rivalry under control, but in truth even the teachers take part in it, encouraging their students to show up the others.

One of the strangest things about the numenera of Arxil is that the devices rely on cold and ice. In the same way that a steam engine might rely on a fiery boiler to give it power—at least according to the Ranns—this technology derives its energy from intense cold. Those who have seen the devices say that the technology resembles that of the machines in the caverns of the Southern Wall. If the devices in Arxil are fueled by low temperatures and the machines in the wall reduce the temperature, that essentially makes them power generators.

The Bitter Legion: A group of about fifty soldiers lives in Arxil. Members of the Bitter Legion wear **cold armor** that makes them seem particularly large and broad chested; the armor was retrofitted from its original design, which was clearly not meant for humans. Cold armor consists of glistening, translucent plates affixed to a dull metallic chassis. Some soldiers of the Bitter Legion wield traditional weapons—usually heavy sledges or massive bows—but a few carry numenera weapons like **slugsplitters** or **magnetic ray emitters** (modified so that they are level 5 artifacts, not cyphers, with depletion rolls of 1 in 1d20).

The current head of the Bitter Legion is **Captain Muisara**, a brilliant and faithful

leader who has the devoted loyalty of her troops. She is always first into danger and never asks a legionnaire to do something she herself would not do.

The legion is a free company, most often employed in dealing with threats around Arxil. Their most recent job pitted them against an incursion of hundreds of **Stratharian war moths**, seemingly from nowhere. A few years ago, **Darcadian Everlar** attempted to hire the legion to betray Arxil and help his agents take over the city from within. When they refused, assassins from **Cyanachor** arrived with a nano who wielded the ability to manipulate the flow of time. They had orders to kill Muisara and as many members of the legion as possible. The captain survived the attack, and now the legion bears a grudge.

ANTRE, THE INTERIOR CITY

The people of Antre founded their city based solely on the warmth and other necessities it provided. However, some find that its dangers outweigh its comforts, and perhaps they are correct.

Antre is located in a vast (and likely unnatural) cavern on the edge of the Maternal Mountains. This cavern maintains a comfortable living temperature, and fresh water condenses on the ceiling so that every three days or so, it rains for about fifteen minutes within its confines. Despite the lack of sunlight, green trees and other lush forest growth thrive in the cavern, many of which bear fruit. A faint bluish glow with no apparent source illuminates the entire cavern-city. Primarily, however, the cavern is filled with structures made of a smooth, almost crystalline substance. These buildings rise from the cavern floor, depend from the ceiling, and jut from the walls.

Many of the tall structures rise for hundreds of feet, with dozens of levels. These structures are open in the sense that there are no doors—just doorways that lead in and through each level. However, there are no windows, nor are there stairs. To get from level to level, one must climb through openings the same size and shape as the doorways, implying that the people who once dwelled here could perhaps

Stratharian war moth, page 261

Darcadian Everlar, page 95

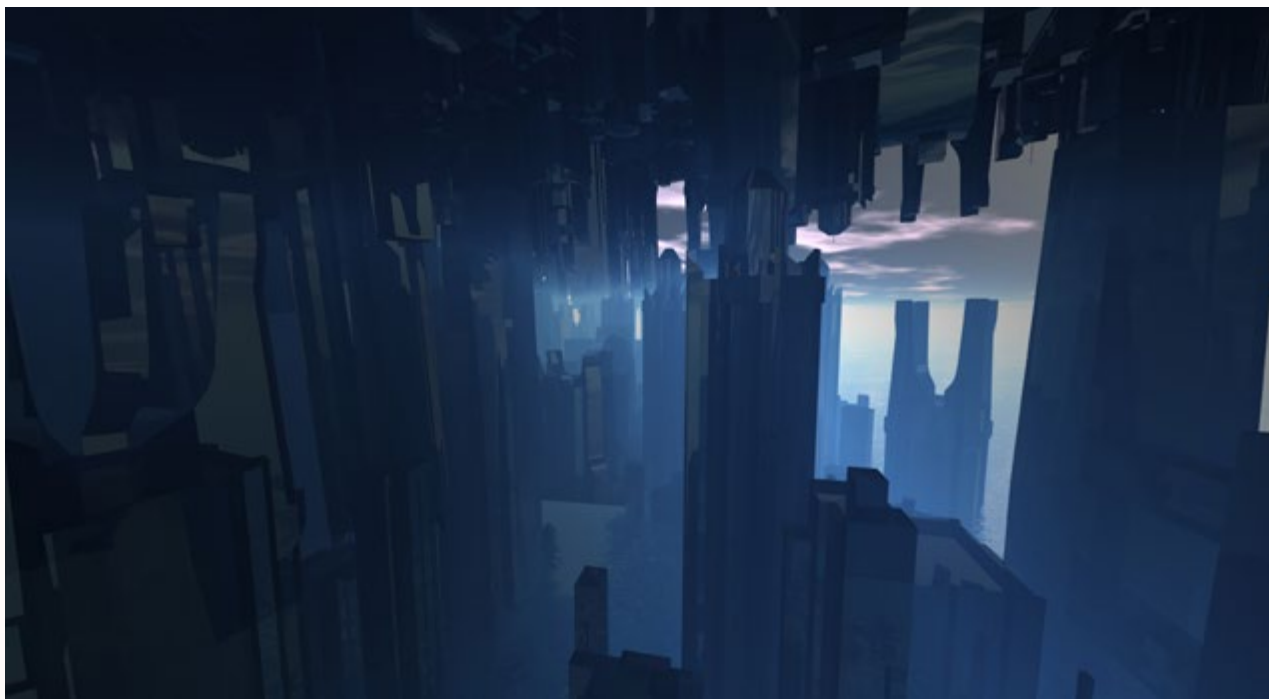
Cyanachor, page 94

Cold armor: artifact; heavy armor suit that provides +4 to Armor and +1 to Might Edge; no depletion roll, but it functions only at temperatures below freezing

Slugsplitter, page 311

Magnetic ray emitter, page 293

Captain Muisara: level 6, tactics and strategy as level 7; health 25; Armor 4



Angled One, page 223

Jurulisk: level 7; health 28; Armor 1; moves a long distance each round; drains the energy of all things around it; inflicts 8 points of damage plus 2 points of damage from cold; see The Ninth World Bestiary, page 69

Terror bird: level 4, stealth as level 8, perception as level 5; health 21; Armor 1; moves a long distance; bite or kick inflicts 6 points of damage (or one of each at two different foes for 4 points of damage each); screech causes those within immediate range to freeze motionless for one round on a failed Intellect defense roll; see The Ninth World Bestiary, page 124

Harlis Chomarin: level 3, resist deception and persuasion as level 6, all perception tasks as level 1

move vertically as easily as they moved horizontally.

When people first came to the cavern, they found the structures welcoming and settled into them. On some of the lower floors of the buildings near the cave mouth, the wooden staircases and rope ladders they built still remain. But no one dwells in the ancient buildings of Antre today. A few people explore them, looking for numenera, but only the bravest attempt this, and many are not seen again.

Prowling about these structures are creatures that the residents call “the Angled Ones.” These mysterious, apparently insubstantial beings don’t seem to operate according to any understanding of physics. Originally, a few people speculated that the creatures were *jurulisks*, but the Angled Ones are far more cruel, sinister, and downright insidious in nature. However, it’s a safe bet that, like *jurulisks*, they are of ultraterrestrial origin.

Few people alive today have seen one of these beings, and newcomers sometimes scoff at tales of the Angled Ones, for they sound like ghost stories. Nevertheless, all those who have lived in Antre for even a short while know someone who was murdered—horribly, violently, and

sadistically—supposedly by the Angled Ones, or at the very least, someone who has disappeared, never to be seen again.

The people of Antre, then, live in cabins and tents in the areas that are filled with trees and wild growth. About 3,000 hardy souls call the place home, and there would be many more if it weren’t for the Angled Ones. The size of the cave and the density of the structures suggest a city that once may have been home to millions.

Thanks to the fruit trees and other wild plants growing in the warmth of the cave, food is plentiful, and some people have taken to cultivating large gardens. Small game is also available. Although the Angled Ones seem to have swept the interiors free of animal life, some creatures dwell outside the buildings in the caves. A few, like ravage bears or *terror birds*, present a danger to the inhabitants. People hope to develop more sophisticated defenses—such as a wall—around the populated area in the near future.

Harlis Chomarin: The leader of the people in Antre is a very old man named *Harlis Chomarin*. He can barely walk or see, but a motorized harness allows him to move as a much younger man (nothing helps with



his relative blindness). The harness also has a powerful detonation cypher built into it, and if Harlis ever dies, it will explode with fiery force. This countermeasure may have made sense years ago to deter murderers or assassins, but today people counsel Harlis that, as a decrepit old man, the detonation is highly irresponsible. Unfortunately, no one can convince him to disable it. (Some people speculate that he, in fact, cannot.) This means that most people in town give Harlis a wide berth. Being nearly blind, he doesn't notice.

Firemist: Deep in the cavern, well away from the settled areas of Antre, there is an open piazza filled with an orange glow that contrasts with the blue light elsewhere. This glow is concentrated at the center of the piazza with a swirling energy nimbus that flickers like orange flame. The explorers who found it named it the firemist, and it has two primary properties. First, it burns anything that touches it other than the crystalline synth that makes up the city structures, which seems unaffected by its heat. Second, the firemist teleports some inorganic objects that touch it instead of burning them (again, the materials of the city are immune). The objects go somewhere in the city, but the destinations seem to be random. The only reason that anyone knows that the objects were teleported rather than annihilated is that a few have been found later. Perhaps strangest of all, those few objects found are always improved in some way—they are sturdier, cleaner, repaired, or (in the case of powered devices) charged. Thus, when a cypher is used up or an object is irreparably broken, the locals of Antre always say, "Toss it into the firemist," the idea being that maybe you'll find it again and it will be usable. However, this is simply a saying. Few people actually do it.

NUS

Nus is a trade town located on a crossroads between Moird, Antre, and Arxil. It is also on the shores of a frozen lake known as Lake Jorai, and many of the locals cut through the ice to get at the fish and other

creatures that live deep in its frigid waters.

No more than 3,000 people live in Nus, but at any given time, visitors and traders increase this number by another three hundred to five hundred. As a trade town, Nus is filled with all sorts of people, but many of the native men are particularly large, hairy, and brutish.

These barbaric men call themselves **Nusmen** and say that they are not of the same stock as other humans. They claim to be a more ancient breed whose size, strength, hardy nature, and resistance to cold make them better than lesser folk. The Nusmen consider themselves superior, but they are few in number. They use their strength to try to take what they want, and they revel in violence and blood.

A point that many outsiders find confusing: there are no Nuswomen. Nusmen mate with "normal" women, and their male offspring are often—but not always—Nusmen. But Nusmen claim no women as part of their breed, which seems to make sense only to the Nusmen. Non-Nusmen scholars scoff at their hereditary claims and look at them as a social organization rather than a breed unto themselves. Even so, the Nusmen are a violent group that believes in using force and intimidation, and they justify their actions based on genetics—although they likely would not use that term, instead saying, "We are of a hardier stock, so we are stronger. The strong take from the weak, and that is just."

It's a common occurrence in town for violence to break out between Nusmen and others (or between Nusmen and other Nusmen—they're a savage bunch). **Garla Deadhand** holds the title of Lawgiver in Nus, and she spends, in her words, "far too much time" dealing with the unruly barbarians. Mostly, all she and her **enforcers** can do is keep the Nusmen in line enough so as not to deter trade.

Garla Deadhand: Garla is the Lawgiver appointed by the town elders twenty-three years ago to run Nus. If something happened to her, the elders would convene to appoint a replacement, but that is the

If the detonation cypher built into Harlis's harness explodes, it will inflict 10 points of damage to all within short range and 3 points of damage to all within long range.

Typical Nusman: level 5, melee combat and feats of strength as level 6, Intellect defense and other Intellect-based tasks as level 4; Armor 1

The Nusmen are indeed misogynists, but they don't see women as inferior to "normal" men, just to Nusmen. All non-Nusmen are equally inferior in their eyes.

The firemist inflicts 6 points of ambient damage to anyone touching it.

Garla Deadhand: level 5, all social interactions as level 6; Armor 2

Nus enforcer: level 4, perception as level 5; Armor 2

only duty of the otherwise unstructured group. This makes Garla more or less an absolute ruler, but fortunately for the people of Nus, she is even-handed and fair. She sincerely wants what's best for the town and has a real affection for many of the locals. She even has a sort of fondness for the Nusmen, thinking of them essentially as foolish, unruly children.



THE MATEMAL MOUNTAINS

The small mountain range along the western edge of the Urulivan Plain is notable for its incredibly tall and pointed peaks, stabbing at the sky like triumphant blades. Crossing the Matemals is extraordinarily difficult, and there is only one known pass, about 60 miles (97 km) south of Antre. This unnamed pass is still dangerous, with frequent avalanches and storms that can choke the route closed for a long time.

The western, seaward side of the mountains is likely the warmest area in the region (relatively speaking), but conversely one plagued by the most storms. Sleet and ice storms are real hazards there, as well as outright blizzards that dump many feet of snow.

DYTHE

A small fishing town of just 1,000 people, Dythe is nevertheless the largest community on the cold shores of the western coast of the Frozen South. The people use small boats for fishing and spear hunting in the icy waters of the southern Sea of Secrets. Around Dythe, these waters always remain open but are deadly cold. Game in the area is plentiful, as are various other foodstuffs, including edible grasses, tubers, roots, berries, and seaweed.

Serrain: Serrain is the leader of Dythe, which some people might find odd due to the fact that she's completely paralyzed and cannot even talk. However, Serrain was born a powerful psychic, and even in her state—which some would mistake for a coma—she remains in constant mental contact with her son, Laur; her two daughters, Belia and

Haud; and her brother, Dorram. For all intents and purposes, she sees and hears through their senses at all times, making her likely a better leader than most. It's rumored that Serrain has telekinetic and precognitive abilities. She doesn't, but she and her family allow people to think it.

The Fallen Obelisk: Just off the coast, not far from Dythe, is a massive stone structure. For years, no one knew what to think of it, but one day a traveler from the north was in the area and said that it was an exact duplicate of a structure in his homeland called the **Amber Monolith**. The only difference is that the Amber Monolith floats in the air and stands upright, whereas this structure lies on its side parallel to the coastline, serving as an artificial barrier island. Presumably, like the Amber Monolith, the so-called Fallen Obelisk is hollow with interior chambers, but no one has managed to get inside yet.

WARMHOME

Warmhome is not a city or even a town, but a single waypoint. It is a well-stocked and well-defended fortress owned by a woman named **Vonfidan** who claims to be the heir to the throne of a kingdom called Nangefel—a kingdom no one else has ever heard of. Vonfidan says that all the lands south of the Southern Wall were once Nangefel. She also claims that the cold and ice are part of a powerful witch's curse.

Warmhome is a large structure of stone and glass supplemented by ancient metals and synth. Numenera devices provide heat for the interior, although most visitors still find it chilly. The fortress sits atop a snowy hill with a commanding view of the surrounding countryside. Vonfidan has a large retinue of personal guards, a mixture of mercenaries and automatons maintained by her chief technician, **Eshinda**. Hunters and gatherers provide most of the food for the fortress, bringing back a variety of small game as well as windberries, ruskroots, and edible lichens. The smells of cooking and foods of all sorts fill the halls of Warmhome day and night.

Including guards and staff, about one



*Amber Monolith,
page 144*

Vonfidan: level 4, all
forms of etiquette
as level 5

Serrain: level 4, all
physical activities
as level 2

Eshinda: level 4,
numenera knowledge
as level 6, interaction
skills as level 2



hundred people live in Warmhome. This tiny community works together well, and all serve at the pleasure of Lady Vonfidan. To a person, she has their love and loyalty. Her consort, **Nells**, is a much younger, beautiful man, but he is not particularly bright.

Many of those outside Warmhome believe that Vonfidan is mad. Certainly there is little or nothing to corroborate her claims about Nangefel. But other than her belief that she is part of a royal line of a kingdom that might never have existed, she is perfectly lucid. She is, in fact, the very picture of grace and decorum, her tall, lithe form draped in tasteful furs and long gowns of white or blue. What her people believe about Nangefel varies by individual, but to them, it doesn't matter. Vonfidan takes good care of her people and her home, and that's what matters in the end.

Warmhome is welcoming to travelers, although visitors are extremely rare. The

hospitality is free, but if guests carry extra numenera or spare parts, Vonfidan is not too proud to accept donations that she can provide to Eshinda.

Eshinda is short and without social graces, but she is skilled with tools. Her body possesses a number of mechanical upgrades and implants, most of which she made herself. The most dramatic upgrade is her face, which is just a mirrored disk. When she wishes it, symbols, words, and simple pictures appear on the disk. Eshinda uses them to aid in communication. The disk is useful for conveying information, but it makes it harder, not easier, to interact with her on anything but a technical level.

The automatons in Warmhome are mostly relics that Eshinda has scavenged and repaired into a semblance of working order. Most of the automatons are humanoid in form, and they carry arms and wear uniforms just like Vonfidan's human guards.

Nells: level 3, resisting trickery and solving problems as level 2

At least one person has theorized that Vonfidan hails from a parallel universe where Nangefel did exist. Even if this were possible, no one can explain how she could have ended up here.

In the Steadfast and throughout Matheunis, legends tell of caves of ice that one can travel through to find an impossible, warm, pleasant land—almost a paradise—far to the south, with a fabulous city at its center. These tales probably arose from talk of Cyanachor and the Invisible Vale.

The shield around the vale is a level 9 barrier.

Shield guard:
level 3; Armor 2



THE INVISIBLE VALE

This strange locale gets its name not from the fact that the valley can't be seen (it can easily be seen) but because an invisible, multifaceted shield surrounds it. The shield is curved and bows inward toward the top, which is open. It is about 300 feet (91 m) high, like a massive fence. Within the shield—and thus, within the vale—the temperature is moderate. Snowfall within the shield turns to rain, although the vale gets most of its moisture from a pair of rivers that form as nearby snow and ice slowly melt and flow underground, coming into the valley from the north.

The Invisible Vale is an island of temperate climate in a land of ice and snow. Understandably, it is coveted territory. However, the shield makes it difficult to enter the vale. There is only one entrance (other than the underground rivers), and it is well guarded by soldiers loyal to Darcadian Everlar, the master of Cyanachor.

Stanae Rimn, a numenera scholar, believes that at one time in the distant past, the area within the shield was far warmer,

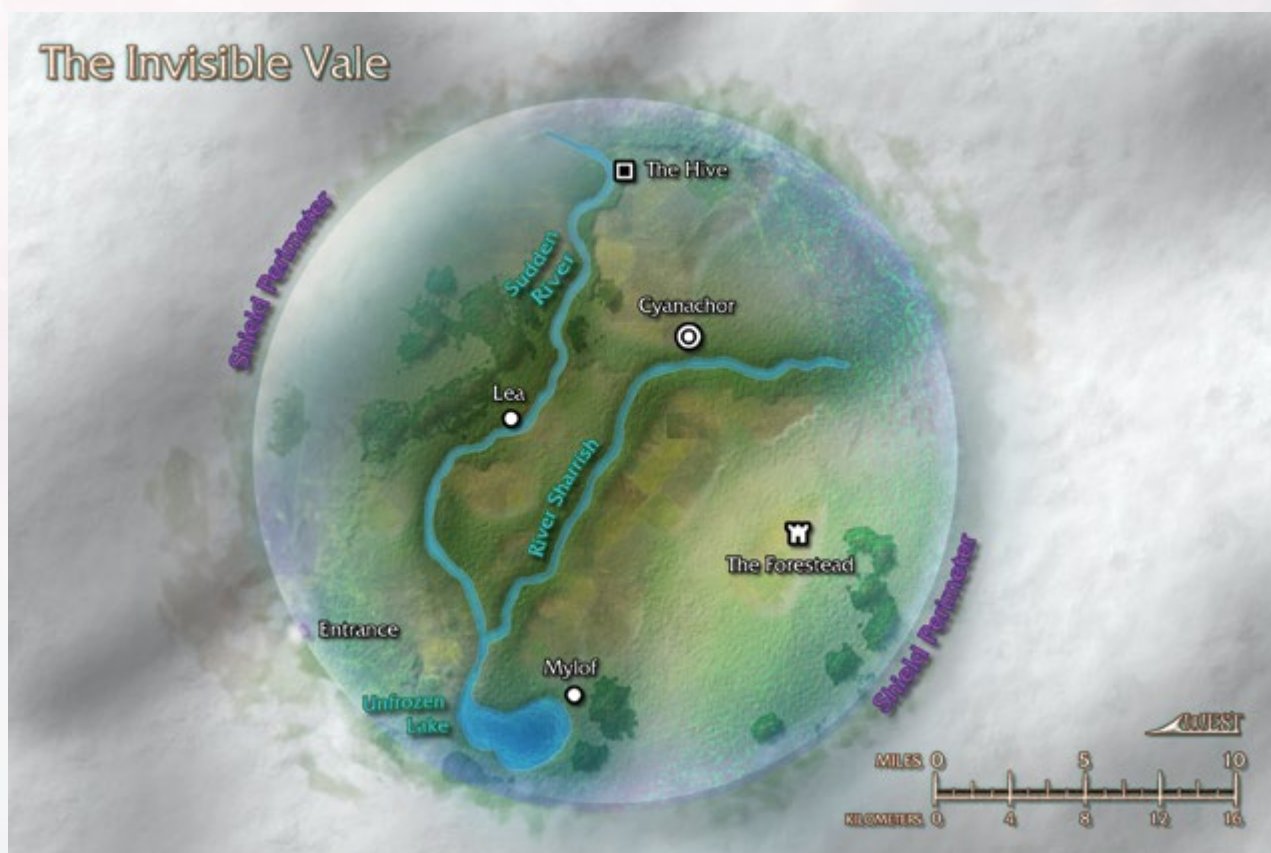
perhaps tropical. But the shield has been fading over time, and the protected area is growing colder. However, unless this degradation increases dramatically, it will remain considerably warmer inside the shield than out for thousands of years, at least.

ENTRANCE

The entrance to the vale is a gap in the shield wall about 50 feet (15 m) wide. The people of Cyanachor built a stone gatehouse that blocks this entrance, managing it with a gate of transparent steel. A dozen well-trained **shield guards** are stationed in the gatehouse at all times.

CYANACHOR

Cyanachor is located in the Invisible Vale, which means that it is blessed with a temperate climate suitable for farming and keeping livestock, which is what the people around the city do, and what the people in the city rely on for sustenance. Cyanachor is a place of fantastic art, music, and crafts. Many of the residents are artisans of various kinds.





The city's population numbers almost 35,000, making it almost certainly the largest city south of the Southern Wall, and very likely the largest south of **Rarmon**, capital of the Pytharon Empire in the Steadfast. Those who reach Cyanachor are surprised to find such a large and bustling city south of the wall, but the unique nature of the Invisible Vale makes it possible.

Although the source of the city's food and water is obvious, the source of its other resources remains decidedly more mysterious to outsiders. How does a city in a secluded valley far from any other place, surrounded by nothing but tundra, get building materials, artistic supplies, books, metal for tools and weapons, and everything else that Cyanachor has in abundance? How can a place like that be so wealthy?

The answer: deep below the ground, in vast limestone caverns, fabrication pits produce whatever the city needs. The technicians who tend these pits, known as the Guild of Makers, are some of the most influential and wealthy people in Cyanachor. And they, in turn, are controlled by Darcadian Everlar.

Darcadian Everlar: **Darcadian** takes no title and rarely uses his surname. He prefers that others use his name as if they were all friends and equals. But this is a facade. Darcadian is a tyrant with absolute power in the city of Cyanachor and the surrounding valley. Tall, suave, and handsome, he is always well dressed and even-tempered. Friendly and smiling, he is a genius who constantly schemes to maintain and—if possible—improve his position. Darcadian is a patron of the arts of his city, an administrator, and a military commander (although not a soldier).

Ultimately, Darcadian's goals include taking over Warmhome and even Arxil one day, uniting the entire region south of the Southern Wall into a single kingdom under his rule.

The Guild of Makers: The Guild of Makers is a powerful group of learned individuals who essentially make life in Cyanachor—at least as it is currently enjoyed—possible. Through the use of the powerful matter-

creation devices called the fabrication pits, they can produce any substance that they are familiar with and can make any relatively simple object for which they have the specifications. Thus, they can create a mass of stone bricks, multiple sheets of metal, or many wooden crates filled with hammers and nails.

The leader of the guild is a lattimor named **Joran-Orsk**. He is one of the very few of his kind in the entire region. He knows that the best thing he can do for his guild is to work with Darcadian. Joran-Orsk believes that his group is powerful enough to let him maintain a partnership with the city's de facto leader. In this way, he deludes himself. Darcadian pulls all the strings, and if Joran-Orsk doesn't do everything he is told, the tyrant will support some other guild member who wishes to replace the lattimor.

Cyanachor Military: Despite being an artist's city, Cyanachor has a sizable military force. It defends the city and the valley, but it also allows Darcadian to keep his tight grip on power. To keep up appearances, the military's presence within city limits is subdued, with a greater concentration of troops in Mylof or the Forestead.

Darcadian also has a well-trained group of **assassins** and spies. These agents travel far and wide, gathering information and eliminating enemies throughout the valley and the larger region.

LEA

Lea is a village of about 1,500 people built on the bank of the Sudden River. The people are farmers and fishers, and they use the river to get to the valley's other village, Mylof, from time to time.

MYLOF

This village is home to about six hundred people, but it also has a garrison of another four hundred soldiers next to it. The village is small and simple, with wooden buildings with thatched roofs. The garrison is a two-story stone structure with a group of long wooden buildings around it.

The villagers fish in Unfrozen Lake and work in the surrounding fields.

Rarmon, page 162

Joran-Orsk: level 5, perception as level 6

Darcadian Everlar: level 7, perception and persuasion as level 8; possesses numerous cyphers, including a force field that provides Armor 5, a teleporter, and a level 10 ray emitter.

Cyanachor assassin: level 4, subterfuge and ranged attacks as level 6; health 16; Armor 1; typically carries a variety of level 4 poisons with effects that range from paralysis to 4 points of damage (of various kinds)

Burst event: *level 1d6
+ 3; inflicts damage
equal to its level*

THE HIVE

The Hive is a tall, egglike structure of synthsteel that glistens like gold. It gets its name from the honeycomb pattern on the outside of the “egg,” making it look like a beehive or wasp nest. The truth is far stranger.

The Hive creates holograms of strange, humanoid creatures, the likes of which no one has ever seen. These creatures stand about 7 feet (2 m) tall and are gangly by human standards. Their broad heads are almost insectlike, although they have a row of beady eyes rather than those normally possessed by insects. These humanoids frequently bear strange metal devices that look like weapons.

But the creatures aren’t real—just holograms. They wander about the area, observing everything that happens and acting like normal living beings, but if touched, they simply disappear. Attempts to speak with them garner reactions, but the holograms seem unable to produce sound, and their inhuman lips—or more accurately, their wide, lipless mouths—are impossible to read.

Sometimes the holograms travel as far south as Mylof, but for the most part they keep to the area around the Hive. They sometimes come into Cyanachor, but the constabulary there has strict orders to dispel them as soon as they are spotted.

THE FORESTEAD

Overlooking the valley, the fortress called the Forestead serves as Darcadian Everlar’s luxurious and art-filled home outside of Cyanachor. It is here that he shows his true colors, with his retinue of slaves, harem of captive consorts, and hoard of numenera devices and other confiscated wealth. It is here that he watches criminals fight to the death in his own personal arena, and where his hand-picked technicians experiment with new devices, drugs, and processes on living victims.

The Forestead is located in a thick woodland area on a hill and is well guarded by carefully selected soldiers equipped with numenera weapons and defenses.



SURULIATH

Few things live in the wide expanse of tundra that is Suruliath. The land is generally colder and even more desolate than the Urulivan Plain.

Some people call Suruliath the Stabbing Plains due to the periodic eruption of crystal shards that burst through the ice and snow with great force. These shards pose a great danger. If caught in a **burst event**, which lasts about a minute, a character might need to make two to four Speed defense rolls during that time. The crystals that break through the ground can be as small as spears or as large as 20 to 30 feet (6 to 9 m) tall and 3 or 4 feet (0.9 m to 1.2 m) across. Just as strangely, the crystals turn to a fine powder after a few hours of exposure to the sun.

THE CITY OF SMOKE

Most scholars believe that the same civilization that created Antre also created the City of Smoke. This ruin is extremely difficult to find and harder to reach. Somewhere, floating above the tundra of Suruliath, west of Moird, is a cloud of smoke that could easily be dismissed as a normal haze of mist. However, those flying up to it—reaching a height where the air is even colder—discover a hovering city of smooth, crystalline synth.

Except when they don’t, because sometimes the city really is made of smoke, or at least a cloud of particulate matter. This transformation happens quickly and without warning. If it is possible to predict, no one has ever learned how. Many stories tell of visitors in the city who suddenly found themselves falling through smoke and plummeting thousands of feet to the ground (and their deaths).

Even when solid, the city is wreathed in smoke at all times like a shroud. It remains in pristine condition and is a treasure trove of numenera, particularly devices of crystalline technology that are hard to identify and use (the difficulty of such tasks is increased by one step).



WHITE CRATER

A large round crater breaks the otherwise featureless plains of Suruliath far to the south, not far from the shores of the Lucid Sea. White Crater is half a mile (0.8 km) across and hundreds of feet deep. Although ice and snow cover much of it, the crater walls show bare, raw rock as well. Some people in Moird claim to have heard tales, handed down through the generations, of a meteor impact that caused the crater and the conflagration that ensued, but if that's true, it would have had to have happened more than five hundred years ago—long before Moird existed.

Most steer well clear of the crater for a number of reasons. For example, any organic creature born within 3 miles (5 km) of White Crater is an albino. Mysterious illnesses among those who spend too much time in or around the crater are frequent. Worst of all, the crater is home to the yfilk.

The Yfilk: The yfilk are artificial beings made up of thousands of tiny metal spheres and particles that flow and interact in such a way that the yfilk appear to have solid bodies about the size of humans. Whether these creatures originate from another

world and traveled here in whatever made White Crater, or the formation of the crater unearthed them somehow, they stick closely to it and defend it as their home.



THE LUCID SEA

Extending down to the south pole of the world, the Lucid Sea can also be called the Last Sea. Much of the Lucid Sea is frozen, but those who understand its ways know that portions open up with somewhat-predictable regularity. The area near the town of Moird, known as Erthan Bay, and a central, particularly deep portion known as the Reaches are almost always open.

Despite the temperatures and the ice, many creatures call the sea home. Garbal seals are monstrosly large mammals that travel in packs and live in caves along the shore. Predators that prey on the garbal seals include the tusked narborasham.

Noraun are furry, long-necked beasts with six flippers. Though they appear to be mammals, they are truly amphibious. Many species of birds and fish live in and around the Lucid Sea, as do a variety of whales, including the gargantuan cirrilus whale and the remarkably intelligent narbun whale.

Small but smart narbun whales can adjust their whalesong to form a handful of words in human speech, allowing them to communicate with people in a rudimentary way. Most avoid such contact altogether.

Yfilk, page 249

Garbal seal: level 4, swimming as level 5, Speed defense as level 3 due to size; health 25; Armor 1

Narborasham, page 235

Noraun: level 4

Cirrilus whale: level 5, Speed defense as level 3 due to size; health 50; Armor 2

Narbun whale: level 5, Speed defense as level 4 due to size; health 24; Armor 1



In the Frozen South, the phrase "I'll speak when I'm dead" is a common saying.

MOIRD

On the edge of the Lucid Sea, the city of Moird is home to fisherfolk and hunters who ply the often-frozen waters in razorboats.

Most people characterize the folk of Moird as quiet. More unkindly, some would say "sullen" or "secretive." Neither term is particularly accurate. If Moird folk are quiet, it is because so many of them make their living cutting across the ice in razorboats, maintaining utter silence as they hunt or fish in an environment where everything is stacked against them. They do not take well to idle chatter. This attitude, however, also means that they have little in the way of storytelling or musical traditions, which contributes to making Moird seem like a dour place.

Moird has no full-time leader or peacekeeping force. Instead, when decisions or judgments must be made, a council of the most respected individuals in town at the time

convenes. If a threat arises, all able-bodied people step in to do whatever is needed, from apprehending a troublemaker (usually a thief or murderer) to defending the town against an outside threat.

Razorboats: Razorboats are craft made from an ancient metal alloy with impressive properties, which allow the boats to cut through ice like a hot knife, and to speed through rough waters smoothly and near silently. Razorboat hunters use harpoons to hunt garbal seals, noraun, and certain species of whales.



THE AIMLESS LANDS

Across the Clenched Passage, a channel often completely frozen over, lie barren—but usually warmer—wastes called the Aimless Lands. This area is a rocky expanse where little to nothing grows. Few animals larger than insects or grubs dwell here. Other than a handful of fishing villages along the waterway, few humans call this place home, either. Even ancient ruins seem few and far between in the Aimless Lands, as if the folk of the prior worlds had no use for this region.

If anyone has crossed more than 200 miles (322 km) east across the Aimless Lands, they never returned to tell of the journey. What lies to the east, no one in the Frozen South, the Steadfast, or the Beyond seems to know.



"The Aimless Lands" may be a misheard or misappropriated version of "The Nameless Lands," due to the fact that the region is a relatively uninhabited waste without residents to give it a real name. Regardless, the name stuck.



FROZEN SOUTH HEARSAY

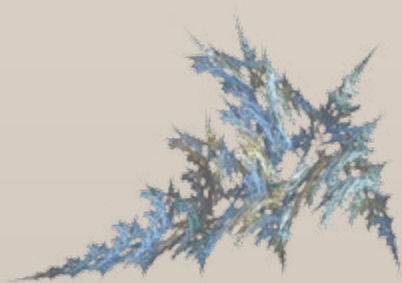
Ice Worms: Blue-white versions of the *cragworm* tunnel through

the permafrost and have long been threats in the region. For unknown reasons, they have recently become far more active around the city of Arxil, appearing in large groups of terrifying power.

The Queen of Knives: A bandit leader calling herself the Queen of Knives threatens the few trade routes through the region. Her brigands focus most of their raids around Nus, and some of them are Nusmen. Rumor has it that the queen is actually a gigantic, intelligent automaton bristling with weapons.

The Lost Musician: Eoric, a great and beloved musician in Antre, left that city and tried to travel to Cyanachor, but he never arrived. His fans and patrons would like to know what happened to him. They are willing to pay for information about Eoric, but only if there's clear proof of its veracity.

The Art Robbery: Thieves stole highly valued works of art from a gallery in Cyanachor, but they couldn't get past the shield that surrounds the Invisible Vale. Now they're hiding out somewhere in the valley. A great reward has been offered for their capture and the return of the artwork. Conversely, the thieves will gladly give a substantial cut of the profits from selling the art in Arxil if anyone helps them get out of the vale.



THE WEIRD OF THE FROZEN SOUTH

The Immobile God: Just off the coast to the south—in the Lucid Sea—a humanoid figure is frozen in the ice. It crouches, slumped, yet still rises 50 feet (15 m) into the air. If standing upright on solid ground, it would likely be twice that height. Investigations have shown that it was a living being, not a statue or construct. Stranger still, it might yet be alive, preserved in the ice.

The Unfrozen Wind: A cloud of nanoparticles that once scoured the Earth as the *Iron Wind* was rendered inert (but not dead) by the extremely low temperatures of Suruliath. Trapped in a mass of ice, these particles are beginning to stir, slowly transforming the icy hill around them into . . . other things. Now the hill is an ever-changing patchwork mass of metal, glass, synth, liquid, gas, flesh, hair, sound, light, and more.

The Empty Tower: A tall tower of metal rises above the Urulivan Plain, a slender spire coated in frost. The door is not difficult to open, but anyone who passes through it immediately ends up at the top of the tower. This offers a spectacular view of the plain; one can see for miles. Using the door at the top of the tower returns one to the spire's base. Entering the tower itself appears to be impossible.

Harbinger of Heat: A woman sheathed in flames wanders the eastern coast along the Clenched Passage, melting all the snow and ice she comes upon. If engaged in conversation (from a safe distance, since her flames burn anything that comes too close), she speaks of fire gods from ancient times who are once again stirring and will walk the Earth, bringing doom to all who do not surrender to their fiery majesty.

Cragworm,
page 236

Iron Wind,
page 135



CHAPTER 7

LOSTREI: THE SPIRITLANDS

The first time I entered Lostrei, I took two giant brutes with me, a pair of aneen I bought from a farmer west of the Cloudcrystal Skyfields. I brought half a dozen weapons (most of which I was uncertain how to use, but I liked the way they looked hung from the side of the beasts; their appearance made me feel safe). I was, you see, afraid of the fierce armies of the north, which were ever-preparing to wage war upon my childhood. Every year when they did not come, it was because they were building fiercer weapons or gathering more men. How silly I was, to listen to childish tales of slaughter and eternal war.

~Naind Oreni, journal entry, titled only “upon returning to Lostrei for the third time”



Cloudcrystal
Skyfields, page 174

Steadfast, page 136

Augur, page 215

Clock of Kala,
page 213

Puar: level 3,
stealth as level 5

Thakra: level 2,
perception as level 3

Beyond the Cloudcrystal Skyfields, far to the north of the Steadfast, lies a coastal realm the inhabitants call Lostrei, which means “the Spiritlands.” The Spiritlands are home to the Gaian folk, a sophisticated human civilization as distinct from the people of the Steadfast as the Augurs in the Clock of Kala.

THE GAIANS

Gaians are typically tall and slender, and they often array themselves in garments of bright colors, such as white or blue. They are generally a freedom-loving, egalitarian, peaceful folk, although there are always exceptions.

Gaians speak their own language, which has many variants and dialects.

Gaians do not use or keep slaves, nor do they recognize nobility. They find both customs abhorrent. Theirs is not entirely a classless society, however, for wealth has its privileges. Still, in a Ninth World context, this outlook might be the quality that distinguishes the Gaians from those living in other societies more than anything else.

Perhaps more than other peoples, Gaians

are likely to have animal companions—not livestock, and not quite pets, but spiritual friends. These animals, such as the large feline puars or the avian thakras, stick by their human companions at all times, and thus the creatures are permitted everywhere.

POLITICS

Three hundred years ago, the Gaians were not a single people but a fluctuating group of disparate tribes scattered across a relatively broad area. Since that time, tribal leaders have attempted to create unity among the people, if for no other reason than to promote peace and harmony.

The results have been mixed.

Lostrei is difficult to govern. In the last few centuries, various individuals have attempted to unify the land under a single ruler, either through might of arms or economics. This has always failed. The land is large, and with the Great Indigo Wood dominating so much of it, travel is difficult. Word spreads slowly. Information about parts of the land is sometimes scarce, and concern or interest about faraway people



and cities can be low. Even though Lostrei might be safer relative to the Steadfast or the Beyond, it is still dangerous to move from one place to another. Vast tracks of wilderness lie unexplored and filled with mysteries, wonders, and threats. When news of a new queen arising in Aerathis reaches a small coastal village, the response of the villagers might very well be, “What’s Aerathis?”

Although Lostrei is a single land, it has no monarch or ruling body. The Gaians have returned to more localized leadership, based on groups of extended families that make up tribes. The tribal leaders—hundreds of them—gather occasionally for a conclave in Aerathis, but most of the tribal structures are very loose. This varies from locality to locality (some tribes can be very different than others), but for the most part, Gaians lead free lives filled with individual pursuits.

RELIGION

Much more than politics, religion—or at least spirituality—brings the Gaians

together. Most Gaians are animists, believing that supernatural spirits inhabit creatures, objects, locations, and even concepts. The Gaian belief system involves an almost limitless number of these spirits and claims that humans each have a spirit no different than any other creature. The aneen, the broken hound, and the scuttling insect all have animistic spirits. So do trees and plants. So do stones and water—and metal, glass, and synth. And so do numenera devices.

The Gaians don’t worship the spirits, as such, but treat them as peers. While their animistic beliefs suggest that life is sacred, everything is sacred because everything is “alive,” after a fashion. Thus, Gaians are not entirely against eating meat or cutting down trees, for example. Their philosophy merely suggests that one should avoid wanton destruction.

For the most part, the Gaians have no temples or organized religious practices, although they use a variety of rituals to commune with the spirits inhabiting the world. They believe that communing

Aerathis, page 104

Tribal leaders are selected by committees of elders. They govern people, not land—they are not kings or governors. Thus, a given region can have multiple tribal leaders, each serving as an administrator and adjudicator for a group of people. The groups might live together in the same region or city. Some localities might have a dozen tribes, while others might have just one.

Gaians use shins similar to those in the Steadfast and the Beyond. However, more places in Lostrei mint their own coinage than in the Steadfast, adding more real coins into the mix. Many of these places accept only their local currency. Also, things are about three times as expensive in Lostrei as they are in other places, across the board.

Amaed: level 4, matters of Gaian religion or handling animals as level 5; Armor 3

Many Gaians refer to nanos as “spirit-talkers” or “spirit-whisperers” and consider the miracles they work as direct evidence for the existence of the spirits that fill the world in great numbers.

AMAED, “SPIRIT TENDERS”

The amaed are numenera constructs created (or repaired and repurposed) to communicate with and appease the spirits that the animist Gaians believe in. The amaed perform rituals and meditate, working to attune themselves to the spirits within the world around them. This is usually toward some specific end on behalf of a human controller. For example, if a human—likely a wealthy or influential human, as not everyone has access to an amaed—wanted to cut down a grove of trees to plant crops or build a structure, she might compel the amaed to commune with the spirits of the grove, asking for their permission and blessing. This often involves some kind of offering as a part of the ritual, which the amaed presents to the spirits on behalf of the human.

Although a Gaian would disagree, some people might point out that amaed are not scientific proof of the existence of spirits. As semi-independent thinking automatons, they simply do as they are compelled, and their design (or redesign) involves belief in the spirits. In other words, the amaed might produce a response from a spirit communication, but that response might be generated by the amaed in some way. Or maybe not.

Every major Gaian community (with a population of 1,000 or more) has at least one amaed. A large city might have ten or more. All amaed are made by Berith in Magon Tower.

with the spirits of the trees will keep you from getting lost in the woods. Similarly, the spirits of the water can help prevent drowning or provide information about what lies at the bottom of a deep pool. The spirits inhabiting a numenera device can offer clues to its workings.

The world being a very old place, the spirits that inhabit the world are equally old—and, for the most part, wise and thus worth consulting. Some people hardly make a move without first imploring the spirits involved. But not all Gaians are quite so spiritual. The average Gaian recognizes that spirits are everywhere, inhabiting all things, and draws comfort in the harmony and homogeneity of that fact. But then he goes about his daily life. Animism grants the Gaians a perspective and a relationship with the world around them that is unlike that of



Berith, page 113



other Ninth Worlders. They see themselves as a part of things—even very old things—rather than as newcomers or interlopers.

BUILDING TOWARD WAR?

In the Steadfast, the Amber Papacy has convinced many people that the Gaians are preparing for war and represent a real threat. They worship fake spirits, the Aeon Priests say, and reject the science and lore that lies at the heart of the numenera. These warnings were the first time that most people in the Steadfast had ever heard of the Gaians.

However, none of it is true. Although the Gaians do have religious and spiritual beliefs that the Amber Papacy finds difficult to accept, they are not preparing to invade the lands to the south—far from it. In fact, the Gaians know less about the Steadfast than the Steadfast knows about them. And even if the Gaians did know about the kingdoms south of the Cloudcrystal Skyfields, they would have little interest in mounting an invasion. They have their own concerns in their own lands, and they are not a warlike people to begin with. Many Gaian communities have local defense forces, but they have no unified military.

Nor do the Gaians reject the numenera. On the contrary, they have a great command over much of it, particularly in their capital city of Aerathis. Overall, they have a more spiritual view of the numenera than some in the Steadfast and Beyond do, probably at least in part because the Aeon Priests have absolutely no sway in Lostrei.



THE GREAT INDIGO WOOD

The heart of Lostrei is the beating heart of the forest. The lifeblood of Lostrei flows through phloem and branch, across leaves dripping with rainwater and through rich, root-entwined loam. The sprawling Indigo Wood, flush with bursting, growing, blooming life—lush, verdant, ever-changing life—sprawls across the land like a cloak.

This is a wood that is home to brilliant feathered hthun, tree-dwelling yad apes, and graceful tivren deer. But there are predators as well—jiraskars, ithsyns,

WHY TRAVEL TO LOSTREI?

People from the Steadfast who come to Lostrei very likely do so because the Order of Truth is organizing a crusade to go to war with the Gaians. Those who travel to the Spiritlands usually see for themselves that the Amber Papacy is either mistaken or intentionally lying about the Gaian threat.

However, those operating under the auspices of the Aeon Priesthood receive accurate descriptions that are colored to serve the Papacy's agenda. For example, they might be told to look for armies of mercenaries massing around Seavel (the mercenaries exist, but they gather to fight Ochramaris) or to watch for threatening armies along the northern rim of the Cloudcrystal Skyfields (the bandit hordes of Schoram). Alternatively, they might be sent into one of the cities to observe the development of numenera discoveries or to gather information about Gaian culture, government, or religion.

Of course, this shines a rather dim light on the Amber Papacy, as the evidence strongly suggests that it is fabricating the Gaian threat. Even if it does so for the right reasons—to unify the Steadfast in peace—a falsehood still looks sinister. The GM can pursue that idea or make the whole thing seem like a mistake. The PCs can discover that the impending crusade is built upon false information and misunderstanding. Perhaps Steadfast nobles or more devious forces are encouraging the crusade by supplying misinformation.

On the other hand, the characters' travels to the Gaian lands might have nothing to do with politics or war, and such things are merely a backdrop. Lostrei holds a wide variety of secrets and discoveries for explorers who are interested in looking for them.

Amber Papacy,
page 134

Jiraskar, page 242

Ithsyn, page 241



Scutimorph,
page 257

Seskii, page 258

Avatrol: level 4, attacks as level 5, perception as level 6; health 19; Armor 2; most beam attacks against it bounce off and are reflected back at the attacker; see *The Ninth World Bestiary*, page 22



Amaed, page 102

Vaboir Nune: level 7, negotiations and diplomacy as level 8, attacks as level 5; carries an artifact that allows him to change phase and move through solid matter (and renders him immune to physical attacks); has other cyphers and artifacts that produce a variety of useful effects pertinent to the situation

Thendoa: level 3;
Armor 2

Thendoa puar: level 4, stealth as level 5; inflicts 6 points of damage with a pounce

scutimorphs, seskii, and the belligerent, omnivorous quadrupeds known as **avatrols**. And likely a million more species.

A few roads cut through the woods, particularly to and from the city of Aerathis. The southern portion of the woods is more densely populated with villages and farms carved out of the forest, although these exist in the northern area as well. In any direction, however, one is likely to find hundreds of miles of uncharted, unexplored wilderness.

AERATHIS

Tree and stone

Steel and glass

Lost in the wilds

In the mind of every road

Aerathis

Home to all and to none

Aerathis is the capital of Lostrei, if such a thing can be said to exist. It is an elegant city of graceful metal spires and glittering glass domes. The structures incorporate the natural elements around them, so building interiors are sometimes filled with trees, or the space between two towers is joined by an elegant span to bridge a bit of rocky terrain or a crevasse. More than anywhere else in Lostrei, Aerathis shows a deep relationship and understanding of the numenera. Although it looks like an ancient city, this is not the case. All the buildings—with generated lights, sophisticated plumbing, sweeping arched bridges, and towers with powered elevators—are no more than a hundred years old.

More than 100,000 people live in Aerathis, making it the largest city in Lostrei by a fair margin. It is likely that people are drawn to the city for its advancements and conveniences, as well as its culture, universities, and opportunities.

The Conclave of the Tribes: Every year, representatives from the old tribes come to Aerathis to discuss the status and well-being of their respective peoples. When the conclave is finished, usually three to four weeks after it begins, these same representatives make a pilgrimage to the

Temple of the Wellspring in Cheloh, the City of the Sacred Veil.

The conclave meets in a special dome reserved only for their meetings, located in the north-central portion of the city.

The Builders: A cloistered, almost secret society in Aerathis is responsible for its construction and maintenance. They call themselves the Jharain, which means “the Builders.” The Jharain closely guard the secrets of their numenera lore, as well as their architectural and construction techniques. Some people say that at their heart lies an artificial intelligence that survives from a past aeon, but the Builders will never willingly reveal the truth.

Chief Administrator: The leader of the city is **Vaboir Nune**, perhaps one of the most influential individuals in all of Lostrei. A tall, handsome man, always dressed in all-white clothing, Vaboir has a number of numenera devices and implants that assist and protect him, as well as a personal **amaed** that does his bidding. He is a man of few words, but when he does speak, it's always just the right thing to say. Vaboir has a special affiliation with the Jharain, but the details of that relationship are unknown. When the Conclave of the Tribes meets, he attends and has a full voice in their discussions.

Vaboir commands two elite forces to help control the city, the Pryian and the Thendoa. The Pryian is an intricate network of informants who work undercover in Aerathis and even into the woods and beyond. They communicate through the use of a numenera system that may grant shared access to a limited sector of the datasphere. The **Thendoa** are the defenders of Aerathis, both from external threats and from problems within the city. Thendoa are well trained and well disciplined, known not only for protecting the residents but also for helping out in emergencies, such as fire, lost children, or other calamities. Each Thendoa has a feline **puar** companion that is trained for a variety of tasks, including battle.



IRIPENDRA

Deep in the lush forest is a site unlike any other—at least, as far as is known. Iripendra is a circular clearing in the Great Indigo Wood. The clearing has some odd properties, and four trees of particular significance are spaced equidistant around the clearing.

The Clearing: Within the clearing, which is about 200 feet (61 m) across, sexual intercourse never results in pregnancy, and food does not spoil. The ruins of small foundations where someone built a home and a storehouse remain testament to a past attempt to take advantage of one or both of these properties, but the Gaians believe the site to have spiritual significance, and the despoiling structures were torn down long ago.

The Watering Tree: A tall deciduous tree called Eshmon issues water from the base of its trunk at a steady pace, creating a small stream that winds through the forest. This stream has existed for as long as anyone knows.

The Flaming Tree: Although this tree does not truly flame, it gives off great amounts of heat, enough to sear flesh that comes into contact with it. This coniferous tree is called Shahar.

The Whispering Tree: If one presses one's ear against the trunk of this tree, the whispering is unmistakable. It is also untranslatable, even using numenera devices designed for translation. This thick-bodied tree is called Ashima.

The Tangled Tree: This 400-foot (122 m) monster of a tree holds what appear to be three numenera structures or—more likely—craft in its twining, tendril-like branches. No one has examined them because the tree, called Resheph by the Gaians, is considered to be sacred, as the spirit that inhabits it is particularly potent. The common belief is that the things in the branches have been there since the prior worlds, which would imply that Resheph is at least a million years old, if not far, far older.

Chief administrators are city leaders. The position is appointed by the leaders of the tribe or tribes of people that live in and around the city. It is not a hereditary position, and some fill the role for only a few years before they are replaced.

Nehdol: level 6, Speed defense as level 3 due to size; health 100

If the nehdol reproduce, no one knows how. Being significantly synthetic, they seem to be virtually immortal (or extraordinarily long lived).

Terror bird: level 4, stealth as level 8, perception as level 5; health 21; Armor 1; moves a long distance; bite or kick inflicts 6 points of damage (or one of each at two different foes for 4 points of damage each); screech causes those within immediate range to freeze motionless for one round on a failed Intellect defense roll; see The Ninth World Bestiary, page 124



Juran Fernaln: level 4, all types of negotiations and climbing as level 5

Eritta Fernaln: level 5, numenera as level 6, lore regarding the nehdol as level 7



Cloudcrystal Skyfields, page 174

FAELOR

Located in the Varidraol Mountains at the very edge of the great wood, Faelor is a relatively small but odd town, even by Ninth World standards. It's made up of small clusters of homes and other structures built on the backs of biomechanical birds of great size. These flightless, long-legged creatures



INDIGO WOOD HEARSAY

The Craft: A large metal airship recently landed in the middle

of the woods, about 60 miles (97 km) southwest of Aerathis. No one knows where it came from or who was inside it, but the general belief is that they are travelers from very far away.

Terror Birds: A large number of carnivorous, flightless birds have begun showing up in the woods, attacking prey—pretty much anything that moves—singly or in small packs. These belligerent creatures are so hated by the people in the region that a bounty of 30 shins each has been placed on their heads.

THE WEIRD OF THE INDIGO WOOD

The Shifting Branch: A single red branch, veined with pulsing black vessels, has been seen on a tree in the woods. But the strange thing is, the branch appears on different trees at different times, seemingly never more than one tree at a time. Those who get too close to the branch are grasped by it, as though it were a huge wooden limb with senses and animation.

The Voice: Occasionally a rumbling issues from beneath the ground in the Great Indigo Wood. Most people describe it like distant thunder, but a few say it sounds more like a voice. These latter folks claim to understand some of what it is saying, and it seems to be directing them to a particular location in the western reaches of the woods.

stand next to each other, motionless, for days on end, so that the people of Faelor can walk across wooden planks from bird-back to bird-back to get around town. When people need to leave or enter Faelor, they often use ropes or rope ladders, but when necessary, a bird can be coaxed to lower its body to the ground.

The birds are called the **nehdol**. Their feathers are brilliant green with yellow plumage around their neck and eyes. They are able to remain motionless for so long because their chlorophyll-laced feathers create nutrients from the energy of the sun, and their legs send microfilament fibers into the ground to absorb water and other nutrients.

Occasionally, the birds all move, as a small flock, to a different location. They never go far, however, so although Faelor does move about, it doesn't relocate significantly. Even more rarely, one bird wanders off with a few homes or part of a market with it. People called tenders attempt to lure, coax, or threaten the bird back into the closely knit flock.

A thousand people live in Faelor. The flock of eighty-four birds stretches 400 feet (122 m) horizontally, and most of the birds stand about 30 feet (9 m) high. The people are mostly crafters who produce a unique fabric also called nehdol, woven from the barbs and afterfeathers of the birds.

The leader of Faelor is **Juran Fernaln**, an older man who enjoys a great deal of respect in the community. His wife, **Eritta**, is an adept in the numenera in general and likely the leading expert on the nehdol.



SOUTHERN LOSTREI

The lands of the south stretch from the **Cloudcrystal Skyfields** to the Great Indigo Wood, and from the coast to (and including) the Shifting Lands. Beyond the Shifting Lands is a region unknown to the Gaians.

Southern Lostrei is an open plain of green grasses punctuated by dramatic, wind-swept rock formations called Earth's Fingers by the people who live there. As one approaches the edge of the great wood, the terrain becomes rolling hills with



ever-increasing trees, both deciduous and coniferous. The plains are home to a variety of wildlife, including vast herds of wild **duronalors**.

Small farming and herding villages dot the fertile landscape, but the only larger communities are on the edge of the woods or the sea. The people of Southern Lostrei have likely heard of the Steadfast to the distant south but know little of it, considering the Cloudcrystal Skyfields to be an almost impassable boundary due to angry spirits that inhabit it.

CHELOH

Known as the City of the Sacred Veil as well as the City of the Guardian Womb, Cheloh holds a place of importance among all Gaians. It is as close as they get to having a holy city, and many people make the effort to visit at least once in their lifetime.

Cheloh has a large wall around it, with three gates. One gate provides access to the piers along the Armand River. Another faces directly into the woods, where a road

leads toward Aerathis. The Western Gate is the third, and through it passes a road that follows the southern reaches of the Great Indigo Wood.

Twenty thousand people dwell within the walls of Cheloh, with another few thousand pilgrims in temporary camps outside. The predominant structures in the city are the Great Hall, the Guardian Womb, and the massive Kileti-fior, known as the Temple of the Wellspring.

The Great Hall: The leaders of Cheloh live and work in this elaborate building, which also serves as a meeting space for the city elders. It lies in the northern section of the city.

Fanselian Rya is the chief administrator of Cheloh. She is a tall, broad-shouldered woman who typically wears a long, pale blue robe. She is usually accompanied by her animal companion, an airborne reptilian **glok**. Fanselian is serious, businesslike, and quite capable of defending herself if need be.

Duronalor, page 227

Fanselian Rya: *level 5; health 21; always carries a cypher that allows instantaneous teleportation as a last-resort defense measure*

Glok: *level 2*

Guardian automaton: level 6, Speed defense as level 4 due to size; health 40; Armor 4

The Guardian Womb: The Guardian Womb is a place of sanctuary, representing a return to one's birth, with the womb being a metaphor for the safest place one can experience in one's lifetime. This pyramid made of translucent synthsteel has a single entrance that is well guarded by ever-vigilant **automatons** with stony exteriors. They appear to be roughly humanoid statues 30 feet (9 m) high.

The Guardian Womb is staffed by people eager to help the needy—refugees, those in need of shelter or protection, or simply those looking for food or other necessities. It is a charitable organization funded and supported by donations given by Gaian pilgrims coming to the city. Most frequently, those who take advantage of the services are pilgrims who arrive at Cheloh after a journey that was more arduous and fraught with peril than they expected.

The administrators of the Guardian Womb are **Hiela Erithamal** and her partner, **Gher Strohma**. Hiela typically wears a long silver dress, and a visual effect makes it appear as if she is always standing in a column of white light, the lower third of her

body utterly obscured. She is theatrical and flamboyant. Gher remains more practical and tends to stay behind the scenes.

The Kileti-fior: The structure known as the Kileti-fior rises three times as high as any other in the city. It is vaguely egglike in shape, surrounded by smaller towers and other buildings. Many call it the Temple of the Wellspring, but "Kileti-fior" means, literally, "spirit temple." However, it means much more than just that. The Temple of the Wellspring is a structure and an organization unique in Lostrei. Although the Gaians are generally a spiritual people, most do not look to a formal temple or any sort of organized religion. The Temple of the Wellspring is a place of contemplation, peace, and study. It is, as they say, "the temple no one needs but stands all the same." It is a spiritual luxury.

That does not mean that formal rituals and ceremonies are not conducted there. On the contrary.

The Kileti-fior interior is mostly a single chamber of grand proportions. In the middle is a deep pit around which most

Hiela Erithamal: level 6, all interactions as level 7; can project a variety of holographic illusions

Gher Strohma: level 5





of the rituals of the temple take place. It is here that the temple gets its “wellspring” name because the rituals call energies from somewhere deep underground and bring them here, like tapping into a wellspring of water. These energies are used in a variety of ways, often to power devices, heal the sick, or perform other wonders. The priests sometimes imbue crystals with power so that the energy can be transported elsewhere.

Above the pit floats a biomechanical being called the **Ustiliator**. The Ustiliator facilitates all the rituals conducted in Kileti-fior. It rarely speaks and is entirely devoted to the temple and its priests.

The priests of the Kileti-fior are called **Veilwardens**. Unlike in many religions, most of the faithful are priests. The Veilwardens take turns conducting the important rituals and ceremonies, making the entire process an egalitarian one. Veilwardens see “beyond the veil” to the truth of the world—the world as seen by the spirits. In turn, they manage and watch over that veil, ensuring the safety of both humans and spirits.

There are three orders of Veilwardens.

The Order of Griviss: These are the newest priests. Many are pilgrims or visitors who will fulfill the role only once, never to return. This means that the Order of Griviss is the largest of the orders. Members get a glass badge to wear, proclaiming that they have served in the capacity of a priest in the temple.

The Order of Loarn: These are priests who ascend from the Order of Griviss to take a more formal role in the business of the temple. They continue to serve as priests, but they also help with administration, supply, upkeep, and other important (but mundane) duties.

The Order of Spirr: These are the elders of the priesthood and the only full-time Veilwardens. Spirr Veilwardens devote their lives to the maintenance and administration of the temple.

CHAYN

Chayn is a town of approximately 8,500 residents built amid the remains of an ancient structure, a gigantic hovering

building that appears to rest on a column of light. The chief administrator of Chayn, **Umaria**, uses the hovering building, which is called the Glittering Castle, as her residence and administrative headquarters, even though it can be reached only by using flying mounts called **revis**. Revis are four-winged avians with wingspans of 30 feet (9 m). Each is trained to carry a decorative platform to and from a landing deck on the Glittering Castle.

More than anyone else in Lostrei, Umaria acts like a haughty noble found in the Steadfast or the Beyond. She uses her position to gather and hoard personal wealth, which she uses in turn to solidify her position with bribes and favors. She is short and rotund, but judging her by her stature would be a mistake.

The beam of light beneath the Glittering Castle is not a support but rather an emission from a generator near the bottom of the structure. The beam bathes a giant yellow crystal immediately below the castle, and the people of Chayn have rigged cables that tap into the crystal. These cables power lights that illuminate the streets and interiors of the town’s buildings, pumps and furnaces to provide hot and cold running water, and an energy wall that can be erected around the town in times of trouble.

However, the seemingly eternal energy source has a downside—Chayn has by far a greater incidence of **mutation** than anywhere else in Lostrei. Most of the changes are simply disfiguring, but some are deforming and debilitating. A few people come away with beneficial mutations. For the most part, mutants are accepted in Chayn, but there is always talk that they should band together and form their own tribe.

THE TOWERS OF MEMORY

Rising above the surrounding hills, the seven Towers of Memory are ancient edifices that somehow maintain a pristine appearance. The cluster of tall, metallic shafts looming on the horizon makes for an impressive sight. Each tower is a slightly different color and has a diamond-shaped top that is wider than the lower portion of

Umaria: level 5, interactions as level 4; has an artifact that allows her to fly through the air a long distance each round

Revi: level 4; long movement when flying

Ustiliator: level 9, Speed defense as level 7 due to size and speed; Armor 5; emotion-instilling ray can target a single creature in long range, overwhelming it with one chosen emotion

Mutation, page 123



Boront: level 5, Speed defense as level 4 due to size, all tasks requiring balance or agility as level 2



Tetrahydra,
page 262

Yuola harness: level 5 artifact that provides +2 to Armor and grants the wearer the ability to inflict 3 additional points of electrical damage with an unarmed attack. Depletion: 1 in 1d20, check each day worn

the structure. All seven towers are about 1,000 feet (305 m) tall, and they are spaced about half a mile (0.8 km) apart.

Many people have entered the towers. Some have exited again. However, no one has ever been able to report what they found—all memories of what they experienced within the structures are gone when the explorers exit.

Hundreds of **tetrahydras** roost in the tops of the towers.

DARANEUN

A trade city used by farmers from throughout the entire region, Daraneun is home to 10,000 people, with another like amount of transients—traders, merchants, herders guiding livestock, and farmers laden with produce—at any given time.

Daraneun is known for its three-tiered market, located in the skeletal framework of an ancient structure of incredibly sturdy synth. In this infamous marketplace, all variety of strange, rare, obscure, surprising, and even unsavory things can be purchased. This includes oddities and cyphers, although the collections are always random

and ever-changing. Barter is accepted as well as coin.

Many of the merchants of Daraneun ride gigantic reptiles known as **boronts**. These clumsy but strong beasts support huge palanquins on their backs and a wagon's worth of wares strapped to either side.

Daraneun is also known for the Yuola, or "lightning struggle." The Yuola is a ritual combat that comes about in two ways:

1. Two people (or two groups, each with an individual representative) have a disagreement that cannot be solved through compromise or diplomacy. Disagreements range from a simple slight to a feud over property rights to vengeance over a case of wrongful death. The victor is ruled to be in the right and her demands are met.
2. An individual asks for any willing challenger to struggle with him, the victor gaining prestige and favor.

Combatants are temporarily outfitted with **Yuola harnesses**, which generate power in the form of crackling electricity. They are allowed to bring nothing else with them into the battle. Yuola fights offer amazing light shows of clashing, scintillating energy.





SOUTHERN LOSTREI HEARSAY

The Horde: Led by a blind man named *Schoram*, who is known for his massive horned helmet and the layer of protective ice that covers him at all times, a horde of raiders and bandits travels on the backs of *nirushis*, which are neon-colored insects of incredible size and speed. These mounted warriors are bloodthirsty terrors who threaten the small villages scattered throughout the region. The Conclave of the Tribes hopes to send an envoy to *Schoram* to attempt a diplomatic solution, but the envoy will need protection or else it is likely a suicide mission.

Spies From the South: Rumors abound of people from lands far to the south coming to gather information on *Lostrei* and the *Gaians*. These spies seem to expect to find massing armies or barbaric cultural practices. For the most part, the *Gaians* ignore the intruders unless they appear intent on causing trouble or doing harm. The tribal conclave in *Aerathis* plans to discuss this issue when it next meets.

THE WEIRD OF SOUTHERN LOSTREI

The Circles: South of the Towers of Memory, along the *Armand River*, the ground lies like a sheet of bare rock. The stone appears to have melted and cooled again, with concentric circles running through it here and there. The region has thirty-eight such circle sets, ranging from 15 to 80 feet (5 to 24 m) across. Some people claim to have seen glass monoliths floating in the sky above the area from time to time, blasting the stone with blue-white rays. Soon thereafter, a new set of concentric circles appears.

The Mirror Woman: A woman haunting the area around *Kasistromis* appears to be a normal human except that five large mirrors hover about her, moving as if in slow orbit. Each mirror reflects the woman differently, as though showing alternate versions of her—different clothing and equipment, different demeanor, different circumstances. One shows her to be a well-armed warrior, while another shows her as a simple peasant. One shows her dead. The Mirror Woman never speaks.

Schoram: level 6, attacks as level 2 due to blindness; Armor 4

Nirushi: level 3; moves a long distance in a round

Kasistromis:
level 10; health 1,000;
regenerates 50 points
of health per round

Gallen: level 2; long-
bodied, herbivorous
mammal used for
meat and leather



Aneen, page 231

Xi-drake, page 265

Lorub: level 5, Speed
defense as level 4 due
to size; Armor 1; spray
venom at short range
on up to three targets;
see The Ninth World
Bestiary, page 77



Characters caught
beneath a shifting plate
are not crushed, for
there is room between
the plates. However,
they might be trapped.

Ochramaris: level 8,
mental abilities as level
10, Speed defense as level
5 due to size and speed;
health 70; Armor 1; can
read and control minds,
move up to 500 pounds
(227 kg) with telekinesis,
and blast for 8 points
of Intellect damage,
all within long range

Yuola fights are never intentionally to the death, although combatants sometimes die from their wounds. Some people believe that the outcomes are a form of divination that foretell the future not only from the identity of the victor but also by the circumstances involved in the battle. Many people also wager on the outcomes of the Yuola.

KASISTROMIS

Visible for many miles, the tower of Kasistromis is an ungainly work of metal and synth. Two massive spheres hover at its sides, one approximately midway up its 2,000-foot (610 m) height, and the other near the structure's narrow apex.

Inside, the place is a living organism that literally swallows anyone attempting to gain access, moving her quickly through organic passages to one of the hundreds of inner chambers. This process is not harmful, just disconcerting. It also does not appear to be controllable in any fashion. Once inside, an explorer can't dictate where she goes next, or even how she can leave until the organism—which is, in effect, Kasistromis—makes it happen. No attempts at communicating with or influencing Kasistromis have ever yielded results.

No one knows what lies inside the spheres, but theories suggest that they are somehow vital to the organism's survival.

THE SHIFTING LANDS

"It's like a puzzle. You shift one square, leaving an empty square into which another square can move. I don't know what makes them shift, and I've never met anyone who knew what they were talking about when they tried to predict when or where the shifts would come. The key, I guess, is to make sure you're not on an empty square when things start moving."

~Chaela Arou, Gaian explorer

The Shifting Lands are a sprawling region of very flat savanna, with spaced trees providing an open canopy. The region gets its name from the fact that entire sections, miles across—usually quite square—shift and move, often covering or uncovering

a lake or grassy section with no trees underneath. Those who have witnessed the shifts firsthand believe that the sections have metallic plates and probably powerful motors underneath (although no mechanisms have ever been found). Certainly, people have dug down about 40 to 50 feet (12 to 15 m) and found metal plates. That would mean, however, that the entire region—200 miles (322 km) across or more—sits atop flat metal plates, and that the land is a single numenera device of some kind, with an unknown purpose.

Perhaps for obvious reasons, few people or creatures live in the Shifting Lands—mostly birds and small animals. The region is free of large predators, relatively speaking, because it is free of large game for them to prey upon.



THE COAST

The coastline of Lostrei stretches for hundreds and hundreds of miles, dotted with small fishing villages. The Gaians have no navy, but the city of Theosis has a merchant fleet with multiple military craft for defense against pirates and other seaborne threats.

The coastlands are very fertile, and herds of **gallen** and **aneen** are common. Creatures resembling **xi-drakes** hunt along the rocky coast, but unlike their southern cousins, these beasts are no more intelligent than normal predators. The coastal waters themselves are dangerous due to the presence of particularly aggressive **lorubs**, which are venomous, bioluminescent, air-breathing mammals that nonetheless spend most of their time in the water. These beasts are large enough to use as water mounts, but only the hardest of souls would attempt it.

SEAVEL

Once a major seaport, Seavel is a city in rapid decline. Not long ago, explorers discovered the entrance to a vault buried within the city. When they opened it, **Ochramaris** came out. This horrific, inhuman creature is a giant, pulsing polyp with an array of eyes and a series of sphincterlike mouths. Speaking



telepathically, it announced its dominion over the city. Then it produced **spawn-warriors** that attacked and subjugated much of the populace. Many of those not captured fled. A few stayed to fight.

Surprisingly, after a while, the subjugated people were released and allowed to go back to their normal lives, which they did. They all—reluctantly, in many cases—proclaim Ochramaris as their leader and god. The creature remains in the now-unsealed vault where it was found, ruling from that location as though it were a palace.

Today, the city that used to have 50,000 residents is down to about 15,000 and dwindling as more people flee. The wide streets of Seavel seem eerily quiet most of the time, and many of the buildings are abandoned. There is an underground resistance to Ochramaris, but the spawn-warriors constantly work to root them out. The leader of the resistance is **Relae Tahare**, a woman with numenera implants that allow her to become invisible—to both sight and psychic senses—when needed. She is a short woman who typically carries a variety of weapons, all of which are deadly in her hands. Without this cause to fight against, Relae might be a violent criminal, but

circumstances make odd people heroes.

If ever directly confronted and seriously threatened, Ochramaris claims that it keeps millions of cancerous spores in check with its existence, and they will be unleashed—devastating all life within 500 miles (805 km)—if it dies. Otherwise, it acts as a cruel and petty tyrant, utterly self-absorbed and selfish.

Most people outside of Seavel caution travelers to steer well clear of the place. Those in the city beg for help from outside.

MAGON TOWER

Magon Tower is known primarily for the **amaed**, or “spirit tenders.” These free-willed automatons are created by **Berith** and her large number of assistants and apprentices. Berith is a stout, middle-aged woman with a shock of bright green hair. She’s quick witted and funny, but rarely seen by anyone other than her close associates.

In truth, Berith does not “create” the amaed. Long ago, her great-grandmother discovered a cache of hundreds of broken and depowered automatons. She worked with her findings until she learned to reactivate and redirect the automatons. Her family improved on her processes over the years until now the mantle of creation has fallen to Berith.

Berith is extraordinarily wealthy, as amaed are in high demand. Envoys from all across Lostrei come to Magon Tower to entreat with her (actually, her representatives) to get more of the automatons for their communities.

ASHURI ISLE

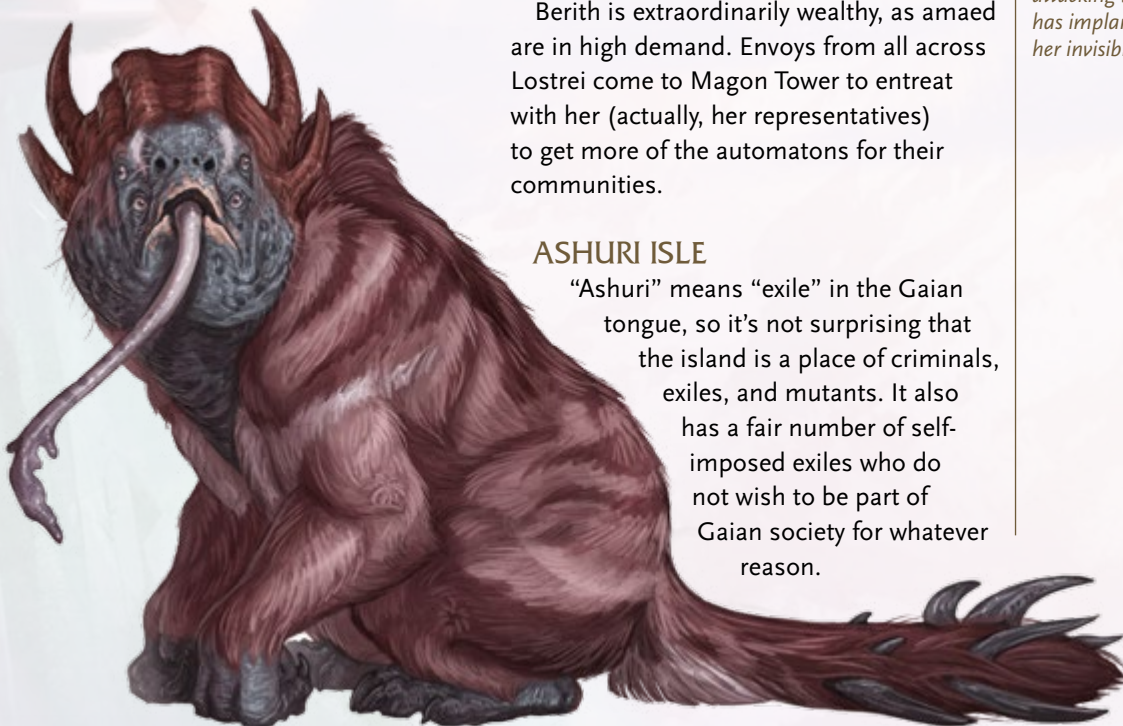
“Ashuri” means “exile” in the Gaian tongue, so it’s not surprising that the island is a place of criminals, exiles, and mutants. It also has a fair number of self-imposed exiles who do not wish to be part of Gaian society for whatever reason.

Spawn-warrior, page 244

Amaed, page 102

Berith: level 6, numenera as level 7; Armor 4 thanks to a repulsor field emitter; possesses a holographic image projector that creates realistic images of anything she wants, including herself, within short range

Relae Tahare: level 4; attacks, deception, and stealth as level 5; Armor 3; inflicts 6 points of damage with any weapon, 8 points if attacking with surprise; has implants that make her invisible as an action



Phaluran guard armor: *Armor 3*

The Telluram: *level 10; Armor 5; able to create, destroy, and alter matter and energy within long range*

Guardian dinosaur: *level 4, attacks as level 6, Speed defense as level 3 due to size; health 25; Armor 2; bite inflicts 8 points of damage*

Timura, the Grey Seer: *level 4, perception as level 7, all other Intellect-based tasks as level 6*

Ashuri, however, is not a prison. There are no guards or walls. But the shoals around the island are very difficult to navigate without precise charts possessed by only a few ship captains on the coast. Ashuri is surrounded by shipwrecks, which means some of its residents are really castaways, not exiles. So getting to the island is tricky, and getting off is far harder.

Ashuri has no cities, just small villages and single homes. Those who live there—and to be sure, most people are content to stay, not trying to get off the island—lead peaceful lives as farmers, herders, or craftspeople. A few criminals have tried to set themselves up as warlords through violence and strength of arms, but they're usually defeated with violence in kind.

For the most part, Ashuri has no government and no laws. It's an anarchist state, kept relatively peaceful through threats of violence. People do as they please but generally don't cross others because most of their neighbors are dangerous. The fact that so many are mutants makes this doubly true.

PHALURA

Technically, Phalura is not a part of Lostrei or Gaian society. The people who settled it pay no homage to the Gaian tribes, although many Gaians live and work in the city. Phalura is an independent city-state under the rule of the Telluram.

The Telluram is a human able to switch genders at will. The Telluram identifies as one or the other based on complex criteria only the Telluram truly understands, although members of the court of the Telluram's lovers also claim to understand. The Telluram wields incredible powers, like unto the greatest of nanos. Able to reshape matter and wield energy as a tool, the Telluram might be one of the more powerful beings in the Ninth World. The origins of the Telluram and the Telluram's abilities are unknown.

The 30,000 or so people who live within the walls of Phalura are mostly sailors and merchants. Around the city, another 20,000 farmers and herders dwell, also owing fealty to the Telluram. Thanks to

brisk trade and contact with the outside world—including both the Steadfast and Lostrei—the people of Phalura have more access to and familiarity with the numenera than many other places do. Technicians and nanos frequent the city, looking for devices or knowledge. Many settle there and join in the merchant trade, developing their own discoveries and advances.

Thanks to such discoveries, all of the city guards in Phalura wear sophisticated armor that includes large black, round helmets with 2-inch (5 cm) diameter studs all around the outside, but no faceplate or conventional openings for eyes or mouth. These helmets allow the guards to see all around them. The downside is that the armor requires surgical bonding, so it cannot be removed without killing the wearer.

ELLINI

Ellini is built on the top and sides of a rocky seastack that rises above the water near the shore. The structures around the stack rest on wide wooden platforms that form a gentle spiral that rises from a series of docks and piers at sea level to the upper portion high above. A single bridge connects the city at the center of the spiral to the cliffs along the shore. Other than the bridge, Ellini can be approached only by boat.

About 5,000 people live in Ellini, and they are interested primarily in protection, as the region around them is riddled with abhumans and bandits. They spend most of their time focused on the sea, getting much of what they need from its waters.

Two hulking reptiles trained as guardians watch over the bridge. They attack at the command of any of the town's guards, who use wooden whistles to direct the beasts.

THEOSIS

On the cliffs high above the sea lies Theosis, a city of 35,000 merchants, sailors, fisherfolk, and herders.

The Grey Seer: The ruler of Theosis is a woman named Timura, but everyone simply calls her the Grey Seer. She has three additional eyes across her forehead above



those in the normal position on her face. Timura can see random bursts into possible futures. Thus, she sometimes recognizes people she's never seen before.

Merchant Fleet: The Gaian merchant fleet is headquartered in Theosis, making it an extremely busy port. Hundreds of warehouses, full of all sorts of goods, can be found here.

Creature Tenders: One of the things that make Theosis unique is the creature tenders selling animals trained for companion status. For 50 shins, one can purchase a *thuman*, and for 30 shins, a trained *seskii* or a feline *puar*. In addition, trained birds and small mammals and reptiles can be purchased for 20 shins. These include a flying reptilian *glok*, an avian *thakra*, and a rodentlike *norl*.

REW

The administrator of Rew is *Garlan Feragnal*, a short, rotund man. He is generally regarded as being fairly incompetent, if well meaning.

Rew has been under assault of late from abhuman *sathosh*. The abhumans follow a leader, their king, *Nyarurli*. The *sathosh* seem bent on the destruction of Rew, attacking it from land or by sea in black longboats of crechewood, which reeks of rot and death.

ARSORRA

The climate is warm and humid around Arsorra. The community of about 1,000 people is located on the beach, surrounded by lush, junglelike growth. Not far inland lies a deep chasm called the Stone Hatchery. Around that smoky rift, chunks of the earth tear free and rise slowly up into the air, as if shedding the burden of gravity. These floating islands rise 40 to 50 feet (12 to 15 m) in the first year that they are "born," and then ten times that for a few years. When the masses of earth—often with a great deal of vegetation still growing on them—reach a height of about 1,500 feet (457 m), they simply disappear, fading away as if they never existed. Faded islands take whatever is upon them along when they vanish.

Thuman, page 262

Seskii, page 258

Sathosh, page 256

Nyarurli: level 6

Puar: level 3,
stealth as level 5

Glok: level 2

Thakra: level 2,
perception as level 3

Norl: level 1

Garlan Feragnal: level 3,
most interactions
as level 2



Murden, page 247

Giant sea snake: level 5, Speed defense as level 4 due to size; health 28; Armor 2; bite delivers venom that inflicts 5 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) on a failed Might defense roll



THE COAST HEARSAY

The Squealing Murden:

Telepathic squeals and screams have been “heard” along the coast road between Ellini and Magon Tower. The locals can attest that the specific locations are known to be **murden** haunts, but what could cause the creatures’ characteristic telepathic “static” to become screams of fear and pain is unknown.

Pirate Serpents: Pirates riding **giant sea snakes** have been attacking merchant ships along the northern coast. The pirates wear water-breathing gear that allows them to travel with their mounts beneath the waves and then rise up for a surprise attack. Merchants are looking for a way to defend against these attacks.

Lost Lore: One of the floating islands high above Arsorra, likely to soon fade away, holds a preserved cache of

books on various topics of science and technology. Rumors vary as to how this happened and which island is the one in question.

THE WEIRD OF THE COAST

Trapped Man: In the hills near Rew, within the mouth of a cave, a sphere of energy holds a human. He has four fingers on one hand and six on the other, and he appears to be held in stasis.

Living Waves: Noma Island is said to have a “green tide” when creatures resembling living waves come to shore as the water levels rise. These liquid creatures prey upon crustaceans and seem unintelligent, but they respond to music, particularly pipes, with hypnotic motions for as long as it plays.



The people of Arsorra are a simple folk, fishing, hunting birds, and gathering fruit for food. Most of the buildings are little more than huts made of bamboo. Almost as many **thumans** live in Arsorra as people, serving as companions and helpers.

The leaders of Arsorra are a married couple named **Jai** and **Mol**. Jai is tall, strikingly handsome, and talkative. Mol is quiet, extremely intelligent, and very practical.

Occasionally, a criminal is forced upon a section around the rift that clearly is going to move skyward soon. Although the exile might survive there for a few years, alone, eventually the hovering isle will disappear with him on it.



NORTHERN LOSTREI

The northern reaches of Lostrei stretch from the Great Indigo Wood to the River of the Sagas (and perhaps farther north still, but that territory is uncharted). East to west, it extends from the Glass Sea to the coast, which means it includes most of the Varidraol Mountains. The terrain is rougher than in the south, but still fertile. The climate is very warm.

The people of Northern Lostrei are typically hunters and herders, more nomadic than settled. Thus, there are few towns or villages but many caravans and temporary campsites, some of them quite large near small lakes and streams that populate the region.

NARAYAN

Narayan is a structure that hangs like a hatchet blade a thousand feet in the sky

above a small lake. The narrow, 800-foot-tall (244 m) edifice hovers perpetually not thanks to some numenera engines, but due to the fact that within its limited locality, the rules of physics have been rewritten.

First and foremost, gravity pulls normally on organic solids but differently on inorganic solids. Most stone is very light (depending on mineral types), most metals are entirely weightless, and synth and other entirely artificial compounds are repelled by the force. Liquids are affected normally by gravity while the sun shines upon them, but in the dark, they float slowly away from the Earth. This means that at night, the lake rains upward in very slowly moving drops and streams. It never gets higher than about 1,500 feet (457 m) before sunrise the next morning. Living creatures, being both organic and liquid, tend to feel queasy in the area after dark.

The effects on gasses in this limited locality are the strangest of all. Time itself stutters, stops, and starts again for gasses, seemingly randomly. Wind gusts stop and start unpredictably. A cloud of mist might hang in the air for days and then dissipate. Sometimes gasses become so frozen in time that the air becomes breathable only in limited pockets.

A few people have chosen to live in Narayan's shadow around the shores of the lake (also called Narayan). By staying on the edges, they remain mostly unaffected by the changes to the physical laws around the structure. However, all of these people have—without exception—received the same **glimmer** multiple times in their

Thuman, page 262

Jai: level 4, pleasant social interaction as level 5

Mol: level 4, most areas of knowledge and lore as level 5, Intellect defense as level 5

Glimmer, page 38



Yartal: level 6, climbing and stealth as level 7; Armor 2

lives. In these visions, they receive detailed instructions on how to craft elaborate numenera devices. Stranger still, synth crates sometimes (but not always) appear in and around the lake, containing the parts and tools needed to make the devices from the glimmers. Most people have seen the method for creating metallic wings that flap and beat like bird wings, but which allow the wearer to fly by means of nullifying gravity. More than a dozen sets of these metallic wings have been fashioned, a process that takes almost a year to complete.

No one has ever entered the structure of Narayan itself, although the people around the lake are preparing to mount an expedition using the flying harnesses.

Flying harness: level 6 artifact; allows wearer to fly a long distance each round, or twice as fast as a person could walk overland; depletion: 1 in 1d100 (check once each day used)

THE VARIDRAOL MOUNTAINS

These ancient, rolling mountains are tame compared to the Black Riage to the south. This is the domain of bandits, raiders, and criminals, as well as more than a few abhumans. These lawless, violent bands clash with each other as often as they attack the more civilized Gaian communities in and around the Varidraols.

One such band calls itself the Water, named for a lake spirit in an old folk tale, supposedly the greatest of all things because it cannot be broken or killed. **Yartal**, a broad-shouldered man who is missing his left hand, is the head of the large bandit clan. The Water bases much of its structure on familial ties, and the entire band is mainly a trio of intertwined families.

Repeating Seeker

Artifact; level 1d6 + 2. If the user spends an action targeting a foe within long range, on the next round, the launcher fires a small missile that attacks the target even if the target or the launcher no longer has direct line of sight. For example, if the user aims and then ducks around a corner, the launcher continues to fire from around the wall at no penalty. Further, as long as the target is within long range, the launcher continues to fire missiles at that target for one round per artifact level beyond the first, whether the user wants it to or not. Each missile does damage equal to the artifact's level. Depletion: 1 in 1d10.





Yartal's three main **enforcers** all carry artifacts called repeating seekers. The rest of the bandits are armed more simply with swords, spears, and bows. The Water numbers almost two hundred, with most of those able to fight if needed. They fear and respect Yartal and his hulking enforcers.

The Water dwells in a wooden fort nestled in the mountains, well hidden and easily defensible. They keep **broken hounds** as attack animals, as well as a single trained **tetrahydra**. Typically, the Water sends out small raiding parties of a dozen or so warriors. These parties are gone for perhaps weeks at a time, returning with various spoils.

The mountains are also home to **ravage bears**, **varakith**, reptilian **tachyrons**, and the giant polyplike **orgulous**.

TEULAMIS

The river town of Teulamis rests upon the southern banks of the River of the Sagas. Eight thousand people call it home, living in simple stone houses on the shore or wooden structures on stilts that rise up out of the river.

The chief administrator of Teulamis, **Vara Thedbol**, walks on artificial legs that make her stand about 8 feet (2 m) tall. Her long black hair is held in place by a biotech oddity

that pulses and moves in response to her mood. She prefers working on her fishing boat in the river to dealing with city business, but if she must, she stays on dry land and makes sure things run smoothly with the help of **Terranik**, the head peacekeeper. Terranik spends most of his time keeping the townsfolk safe from the dangerous creatures that live in and around the river.

Outside of the town, to the south, is a vast field of "sun collectors." These numenera devices capture the energy of the sun's rays as completely as the leaves of any plant and store it in great thrumming cylinders beneath the earth. It is said that in this area, cyphers sometimes work twice, and artifacts that have been drained of power function once again, but if true, these benefits seem unreliable at best. Many of the sun collectors do not currently function, but tinkers and scholars like to experiment with them and see if they can get the devices running again.

This area, for obvious reasons, is haunted by energy-eating **ergovore hounds**. In recent months, Terranik has attempted to run off the hounds and other creatures that make the area dangerous so the people of Teulamis can make use of the sun collectors and their energy.

Yartal's enforcer: level 5; health 20; Armor 2

Broken hound,
page 232

Tetrahydra, page 262

Ravage bear, page 254

Varakith, page 264

Tachyron: level 4; perception and initiative as level 10; attacks, Speed defense, and stealth as level 6; Armor 3; perceives thirty seconds before and after the present moment; see The Ninth World Bestiary, page 123

Orgulous: level 5, attacks as level 6, perception as level 4, Speed defense as level 3; health 28; tendrils paralyze at short range on a failed Might defense roll and drag struck foe to immediate range to be bitten for 7 points of damage; paralyzed foes are swallowed and move one step down the damage track per round; see The Ninth World Bestiary, page 96

Vara Thedbol: level 6, negotiations and perception as level 7

Terranik: level 5, attacks as level 6; Armor 3; inflicts 7 points of damage with his huge hammer

Ergovore hound: level 4, attacks as level 5; health 30; one bite attack for 7 points of damage or up to six tongue attacks on different foes for 3 points of damage each, plus if a target has any kind of energy defense in place, it is negated; see The Ninth World Bestiary, page 47

Wralk, page 125



NORTHERN LOSTREI HEARSAY

Spies From the East: Spies from a far-off land called **Wralk** have been spotted in the sun collector fields south of Teulamis, clearly interested in the impressive amounts of energy there. Whoever they are, they are extremely violent, ruthless, and bloodthirsty.

Missing Key: The people of Guire, a small village east of the Varidraols, have unearthed a functional flying machine of impressive size. Before it could be activated, the keylike device required to operate it disappeared. This object is a long synth egg that must be held to one's forehead. If it were recovered, the villagers would pay handsomely for it. (Guire is wealthy thanks to a number of important discoveries nearby.)

THE WEIRD OF NORTHERN LOSTREI

Whispering River: The River of the Sagas gets its name from the fact that early explorers thought the sound it made as it flowed was a language, telling tales of the past. Most people today regard this as colorful folklore, but in truth, many have said that the river does occasionally speak to them, relating high-incomprehensible tales of an extremely distant past.

Giant Insect: Travelers to the far north—beyond the River of the Sagas—claim to have seen a creature a half-mile (0.8 km) long wandering the hills. This insectoid thing supposedly has thousands of legs and sounds like an army on the march when it moves.



THE GLASS SEA

A large inland sea, the Glass Sea is named for the periods of absolute stillness that turn the body of water to veritable glass. This occurs mainly in the spring and summer months, known for mild temperatures. The sea is extraordinarily deep, and during the times of glasslike calm, one can see down into the water to an amazing depth.

The people around the Glass Sea are fisherfolk, primarily, sailing across it in small boats of cobbled synth pieces and strips called venatrils. They catch nets full of *thu*—fish the size of a human torso that have four eyes and are symmetrical on top and bottom.

All around the Glass Sea are interesting relics and sites of the prior worlds.

THE FLUID TOWER

Rising out of the Glass Sea, the Fluid Tower stands 400 feet (122 m) high, glistening in the sun. It is literally made of water that has hardened like steel. No one has ever managed to gain entrance, but a few people have scraped

some of the hardened fluid free. It immediately became a liquid that, among other strange properties, could clean any stain.

The tower “walls” are translucent, allowing one to see inside. The interior appears to be filled with liquid water. It also seems as though fish can swim up from the sea into the tower. However, all of this might be an intentionally created illusion.

The Triumvirate: The Triumvirate is a mysterious intelligent entity or entities that dwell near the Fluid Tower at all times. They appear to be three androgynous faces that hover above the level of the water. When someone approaches the tower, sometimes they intervene, sometimes they merely observe, and sometimes they are nowhere to be seen. Very rarely, they speak, imparting wisdom or predictions like an oracle. Little is understood about these apparently godlike beings, but they seem to have the ability to manipulate matter and energy, time and space. No one knows what their agenda might be.



ORCOURT

Orcourt is a city far older than humans can know. Tall structures rise high above the water, for the city currently lies in the confluence of the Tiomon River and the Glass Sea. The buildings create an invisible field of force 300 feet (91 m) above the water—about halfway to the tops of most of the towers—and this is the current level of habitation of the city.

Orcourt, then, is a city within a city or, more accurately, a city within a long-abandoned city. Inside the buildings, a few numenera “float shafts” have been restored to allow people to quickly reach the level of habitation from the water level, where wooden piers have been built for fishing boats. But no one lives there, and rumors abound that dangerous creatures lurk on those lower levels, although they come out only at night.

The Canals of Force: The field of force winds its way between and among the tall structures of the city like a series of canals. It’s “soft” so although it can support weight, it’s not unlike water. People can

“swim” in it or paddle small boats across its surface. Some have learned to “wade” across it, sinking only to their knees, but doing so while keeping one’s balance is far more difficult than it looks. Most objects weighing less than about a ton float. The field is about 12 feet (4 m) thick, but if one manages to reach the bottom, the force no longer holds—and the drop is dangerously high. The field has no current, so floating objects remain where they are unless an outside force is applied to them.

From the surface of the field, people can reach the levels of the ancient buildings that they use as homes, shops, storehouses, and more. About 7,000 people live in Orcourt, many of them to support the Stesson School, an academy for the study of the nano spirits that fill the world. A great many nanos graduate from this school, mixing the animistic beliefs of their culture with the study of the numenera. They call themselves spirit-whisperers.

The Elentha and the Cabron: Orcourt is ruled by a council of five administrators called the Elentha. Each member wears a bright blue sash on most days. The Elentha



Cabron: level 3, perception and balance as level 4; Armor 2

Cabron poison: level 3; victims have a hard time speaking and move at half speed, and the difficulty of their tasks is increased by four steps; lasts about five minutes

Fellitha: level 6, perception and stealth as level 7; Armor 3; always carries at least two different detonation cyphers with her

Gulamma: level 9; transformative touch can inflict 12 points of damage

The cables suspending the keep, as well as the outer shell of the keep itself, are level 8.

Air automaton: level 6, attacks and Speed defense as level 8 due to invisibility; Armor 3

Fegorl: level 7, materials knowledge as level 10; health 30; Armor 3; bite for 10 points of damage

have a team of trained glaives called the Cabron who act as the town's guards and peacekeepers. The Cabron dress in dark blue and throw darts coated with a poison that severely intoxicates the victim; they also carry batons and long knives. The residents generally like the Elentha, but sometimes the Cabron can be a little overzealous. Fellitha, the leader of the Cabron, is ruthless, and many think she secretly plots to overthrow the Elentha and establish a stricter, more militaristic rule.

DERRIS KEEP

Suspended by thousands of metal cables over a metal-rimmed pit of unknown (but considerable) depth, Derris Keep is an extremely defensible sphere of metal and synth. A bridge connects the side of the pit to the only entrance into the keep, which is guarded by a flying, invisible automaton made of solidified air. The door opens only at the touch of someone who sincerely means no harm to those inside.

The lords of Derris Keep are a strange group of self-proclaimed nobles wielding fantastic powers. These figures joined forces decades ago to separate themselves from the rest of society. Together, they possess knowledge that no one else in all the Ninth World knows, and they do not part with it freely or easily.

One of the lords of Derris Keep is a creature named Fegorl. He is an apelike humanoid with powerful mech arms and an almost rodentlike head with teeth that look like they'd be useful for gnawing through solid rock. Fegorl is a metalworker, perfecting alloys that

no one in the current world can understand—materials that are impossibly strong, light, thin, or some combination of all three.

The second of the lords is Gulamma, a blue-skinned woman with the preserved and animate heads of her three siblings, which hover about her. (Rumor has it that inside the heads is nothing but circuitry and numenera, but that doesn't mean the personality or consciousnesses of her siblings aren't stored within as well.) These heads give her warnings and advice, but they also chide and scold her, which she accepts with undue grace. Gulamma can shape matter that she touches and transform it so that water becomes steel or wood becomes stone.





The third of the lords is **Hnuth**, a man whose entire body has been replaced with grains of silicate, every one of which his mind controls as if it were a separate limb. Thus, his body flows with elegant precision and can take any general shape he desires. He has a powerful telepathic mind and enjoys crafting numenera devices that involve mental processes. He understands the secrets of the mind, thought, and psychic powers perhaps better than anyone else in the Ninth World.

Hnuth creates weapons called memory launchers. These cyphers look a bit like ray projectors, but they must be “fed” a memory, which is consumed from the user’s brain forever. Once fed, the weapon launches a ball of energy at a selected target within long range. It deals 7 points of damage, and the damage type is based on the memory in some way. Hnuth always carries a memory launcher, and he has at least three or four more secreted about the keep.

NEVOLUIN

The southern edge of the Glass Sea becomes a marshland that stretches for miles. In the middle of the marsh lies a small town called Nevoluin. Thirty-five hundred people make their homes here, most of them hunters, fisherfolk, and farmers. Nevoluin hunters are falconers and bring down prey with **blue-tipped falcons**, which have eyes all around their heads.

Nevoluin would be unremarkable except for the **kodestri**—nests of dried reeds and plants built by invisible creatures called **vamrei** in the swampland around town. The **kodestri**, once completed, float like balloons or clouds above the ground, drifting in the gentle breeze. Within the nests dwell the **vamrei**, although what they do inside is unknown. Any other living creature that enters a **kodestri** disappears, reappearing in that same spot two or three days later (after the **kodestri** has drifted away). The creature has no memory of anything that happened, but somehow the memories of other events in its life are heightened. Things forgotten are now remembered; faces, names, and

Hnuth: *level 8; regenerates 10 points of health per round; can take any shape, even flattening as thin as paper; can communicate mentally with anyone within 1,000 miles (1,609 km) or forcefully read the mind of anyone within long range*

Blue-tipped falcon: *level 2, perception and Speed defense as level 4, attacks as level 3*



GLASS SEA HEARSAY

The Hunt: The Lords of Derris Keep have sent word to the surrounding lands that somewhere in Lostrei is a jeweled automaton in the shape of a bird. Anyone who can find it, capture it, and bring it to the keep will be rewarded with a treasure unlike anything else in the Ninth World.

Spider Eruptions: Small mounds have begun appearing around the shores of the sea, growing steadily until they reach the size of a small house. At this point, they burst like a bubble, and spiders of varying sizes spray outward, gushing like a squirming fountain. The spiders are poisonous and hungry, swarming over any living creatures that get in their path. Some of the spiders are the size of two outstretched hands, but most are just an inch or two across. That's little solace when they burst out in the hundreds of thousands.

Most of the creatures in the Steadfast and the Beyond (even the visitants) can also be found in Lostrei, although with exceptions and in different frequencies.

THE WEIRD OF THE GLASS SEA

Blue Teeth: In the last twenty years, about one in five children born in or near Nevoluin has had dark blue bones and developed blue teeth. No one knows why. The change seems to be merely cosmetic, as far as anyone can tell.

Glass Fish: Frequently, when fisherfolk haul in their nets, one or two of the catch will actually be made of glass, useless and inedible. These glass fish are usually thrown back into the sea, for it is said that if one keeps such a creature after it dies, she slowly gains knowledge she would rather not have.



events from the past seem recent and clear.

Creatures that experience this effect multiple times slowly become altered. While their memories and intelligence sharpen, they become distant and disinterested in the world. The experience eventually turns addicting, and it becomes what they crave more than anything else.

Vamrei are thought by many to be primordial spirits of the land. These same people believe that Nevoluin and the kodestri are the true heart of Lostrei. The believers make a pilgrimage to these lands, not to the city of Cheloh, to enter a kodestri and undertake "the disappearance," which is considered a sacred act.

Kodestri are usually found floating amid the bioluminescent mollusks that reach the surface of the shallow marsh water and extend up into the air at twilight. These creatures are called glowspurts and are said to be beloved by the vamrei. Birds in the area frequently make nests atop the kodestri, which doesn't seem to disturb the invisible creatures within.

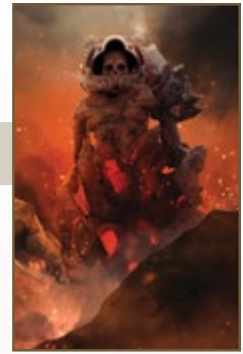
Cheloh, page 107

Those who do not adhere to the Gaians' animistic beliefs see the vamrei as very likely extraterrestrial or ultraterrestrial in origin.



CHAPTER 8

VRALK: THE RED KINGDOM



Dear Fabriol,

There is so much blood. What else can one say about a place such as this, where everything, even the sky, turns a bloody red, as though the volcanoes themselves chew giant creatures alive and expel their insides into the air?

The rulers of the Steadfast fear the war of the Gaians, a war that will never come. What they should fear is these monsters (I cannot bring myself to call them humans). And yet, no one I have ever talked to has mentioned them, or given any indication that they are known to exist.

Is it my duty to warn them of this impending doom that surely will come west to decimate the very essence of the world that we know? Or am I merely here as an observer, to watch and record the future that I know will come to pass?

~Naind Oreni, from an unfinished and unsent letter





North of the Clock of Kala lies a harsh region of sulfurous air and barren wastes. Ringed by volcanoes and choked by heat and ash, it is a hellish place by any standards. All manner of vicious predators, poisonous serpents and insects, and lethal plants make this a place where everything—every inhabitant as well as the air, the water, and the ground itself—is deadly. Forged in this kiln, the inhabitants are as dangerous and cruel as the land they call home. They call their land Vralk, the Red Kingdom.

Vralk is a desolate, rocky wasteland where little grows. Steaming vents cough poisonous gases or spew ash. Sometimes lava flows across the landscape. The heat is sweltering. Water is scarce. The creatures of this land have become experts in survival.

THE VRALKANS

Vralkans lead lives of brutality and violence, but their culture is nevertheless surprisingly sophisticated. Cruelty is a way of life here. Fear of pain and fear of death serve as the

prime motivators
rather than wealth
or advancement.



That's because the only way to succeed in Vralk is through strength. The residents have no currency, so wealth cannot be amassed. The only thing worth seeking is the approval of one's superiors, and they reward power, talent, and utter ruthlessness. Although the society is extremely stratified, children do not automatically gain the station of their parents (although in cases of those high in the hierarchy, it helps). Individuals are judged on their own natures, abilities, and accomplishments more than anything else. The idealized Vralkan is strong, smart, and talented, with many strong, smart, and talented individuals under her. She does not hesitate to leap into battle, and she kills with impunity. She enjoys inflicting pain and suffering in others, because only through the detriment of others can she advance.

Yet Vralk is too terrible a place to try to survive entirely on one's own, so the idealized Vralkan has others beneath her that she fosters and trains. She rewards them for proper actions and punishes them with terrific pains and tortures. Like their land, Vralkan people are cruel and deadly to those unable to cope, but those who endure are strengthened.

Vralk is a crucible, and over the last thousand years it has produced a society of extraordinarily dangerous people.

Vralkans have their own language. The few who have been exposed to the Truth say it feels awkward on their tongues and clumsy to their ears. By the standards of people in the Steadfast, however, the Vralkan language is pointed and harsh.

Automatons, as well as other intelligent beings without blood or internal systems at least somewhat similar to humans, are not afforded any more consideration than inanimate objects in Vralk. In this culture, intelligence is not a sign of anything special—blood is.

THE RED GODS

Most of the people of Vralk are devoted worshippers of the Red Gods, which is in part why they call the land the Red Kingdom. Vralkans are the chosen of the Red Gods and serve as their



emissaries on Earth. These gods demand sacrifices of blood, and most Vrakans sacrifice their second-born children in elaborate ceremonies to give the blessings of strength and power to their firstborn, as well as any subsequent children. True devotees perform some sort of self-mutilation to honor their gods with the glory of more red (bloody) flesh. So that they remain strong warriors, however, this mutilation is nothing that would overly debilitate them. Instead, they mutilate their faces, the flesh of their backs, their genitalia, or something similar.

The Red Gods are always referred to as a group. Their individual names and even the exact number of gods are kept secret from all but the priesthood. Worshippers know only that the understanding of true sacrifice—usually through pain, loss, and death—feeds the gods, and when fed, the gods reward and bless those who made the sacrifice. A priest will say, “Sacrifice must involve blood, for blood is the central thread of life, strength, and health, but it is also the conductor of pain and loss.”

Non-Vrakans are often sought as captives to be sacrificed for additional blessings. Animals are also sacrificed, but intelligent sacrifices are more valuable as they are carefully made to understand the meaning of their death on the Red Gods’ altar, and that knowledge “empowers the blood.” Thus, abhumans and other intelligent nonhumans are better than animals. Creatures without blood are of no value at all and, in the eyes of the Red Gods, aren’t even truly alive.

Priests of the Red Gods are people with great power and prestige, but the door is open to only a few. Priests suffer greatly in every ceremony they conduct, for the blood sacrifices they make usually involve their own blood as well. A tolerance for pain and blood loss is crucial. Priests are also required to be among the most intelligent of Vrakans, for the hours-long rituals require extensive memorization. In addition, they must have considerable medical knowledge, as they must tend to the wounds of their fellow priests after a ritual. Despite this, priests in Vrank are not spiritual counselors,



Margr, page 244

Sathosh, page 256

Grush: level 4, *Might* defense as level 5, *Intellect* defense and resistance to *trickery* as level 3; health 16; *Armor* 1; regenerate 1 point of health per round; see *The Ninth World Bestiary*, page 62

Igothus, page 231

Shantag, page 240

leaders, healers, or teachers, as they are in other societies. In fact, for the most part, they are kept separate from regular citizens to ensure their purity. Typically, a citizen lays eyes on a priest only when a sacrifice is made to the Red Gods.

Most who attempt to enter the priesthood die during the rituals (or afterward, due to infection). Only the hardest—and perhaps the most insane—survive to become priests. And even then, few live particularly long lives.

Priests take on idiosyncratic dress and manners in different locations throughout Vrank. For example, in Morlash Kor, they are covered in bloody thorns, but in Vastorn they pierce the entirety of their flesh with large, black needles. In Nabir Enthru, they wear long red robes and carry hidden bloodsacs (see below). There is no distinction between male or female priests.

ECONOMY

As mentioned above, the Vrankans have no currency. Shins mean nothing to them. The occasional trade happens, but there is no formal system of barter. People perform their appointed tasks and work at their assigned jobs not for hope of financial gain, but out of fear of pain and punishment from their superiors if they do

not. Food and goods are distributed to all, as pertinent to each person's station and needs. For example, an individual of high station might get a large portion of food, but so do manual laborers and soldiers, who need to be strong and well fed. The accumulation of unnecessary goods is not the path to betterment—rather it leads to punishment and pain.

The Vrank system of dispersing goods based on need and station would be complex except for the fact that Vrank is a very poor kingdom overall, and resources are scarce. The difference between the food served to the queen and the food served to an average citizen is relatively slight. This scarcity of resources makes Vrankans eager for war and conquest.

In a manner of speaking, all Vrankans are slaves of those in stations above them, but they would never use that term. They do, however, make use of abhuman slaves to perform manual labor and supplement their armies. The most common types of abhuman in Vrank include *margr*, *sathosh*, *grush*, and *igothus*. All nonhuman, non-Vrankan creatures are resources to use, game to hunt, or challenges to overcome (and sometimes all three).

Vrankans also make heavy use of mounts called *shantags*—curious, leather-skinned beasts with apelike forelimbs that walk on all fours most of the time. *Shantags* have vicious horns and teeth, and trained specimens are as deadly on the battlefield as their riders, if not more so. *Shantags* can also be used as beasts of burden, particularly because they possess grasping forepaws.

MILITARY

Vrank is a militarized society, and every city has a fortress or garrison from which military “selectors” pick warriors (or potential warriors) from the population and bring them into service. This is a great honor and is an individual's best opportunity to increase his station other than joining the priesthood.

Over the centuries, the Vrankans tore apart



whatever ancient sites they found, taking all the metal and other raw materials they could scavenge. Cyphers and artifacts were far less important than the steel (or steel-like substances) they could take to make swords, axes, armor, and other weapons of war. Thanks to this amazing effort—which resulted in the deaths of hundreds of workers, as ancient ruins are filled with all manner of surprises—every Vralkan soldier wears sophisticated metal armor and carries a variety of high-quality weapons.

Vralkan **skirmishers** and **archers** wear brigandine and carry broadswords, shields, and bows. The **infantry** and shantag-mounted **cavalry** wear plate armor and carry lances and two-handed weaponry, as well as heavy crossbows. Armor and weapons are the most important products of Vralkan craftspeople, and they are elaborately decorated and detailed with spikes, blades, skulls, and monstrous imagery.

Unlike other military forces, the Vralcons do not use numenera weaponry much. Commanders and generals might have a few cyphers or an artifact, but that's about it. The majority of powered numenera is shipped to **Thorash** for use as potential spare parts as the technicians there attempt to get the ancient war machines up and running. So far, they have a single functioning mobile fortress that they can operate (albeit imperfectly), and given time they could use it in battle, which would be devastating. If they were able to put all the war machines in Thorash into operation, they might be unstoppable.

So far, their forces have faced bands of nomads, raiders, and abhumans, which the heavily armored Vralcons have utterly crushed. However, it would be a mistake to think that the Vralcons are untested, for each individual soldier is well tested against his fellows. Just to get to where he is, a Vralkan soldier has probably killed at least three others in practice, contests, or tests. Still, the troops are eager to face a real foe en masse.

There is no distinction between male or female soldiers.

BRISANTS

Fulfilling an important role in Vralkan society, brisants are punishers who inflict pain on those who fail at their duties. These torturers master many styles of inflicting pain: slowly, quickly, pain that leaves a scar to remember, and pain that leaves no mark at all. They can carry out their task quickly with a few lashes of a whip, or take days or weeks with a subject in a chair. All brisants carry numenera artifacts they call “consequences.” A consequence looks like an iron rod with a silver tip. It measures and records the amount of pain a subject endures so the information can be shown to superiors, confirming that the subject has been properly punished for wrongdoing. Thus, a Vralkan can request a brisant to give a punishment of a specific level, rated on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the highest, achieved over a period of many weeks and involving processes most subjects cannot survive). The brisant then reports back that the punishment has been doled out at the proper level.

Brisants wear black and red armor and carry an array of devices, most in a large black leather satchel. They bear their consequence as a badge or symbol in a sheath across their chest.

QUEEN AUSTER

Ruler of Vralk, her Dread Majesty **Queen Auster** was a mighty warrior and a brilliant administrator while young, and when the former monarch died, he left instructions for Auster to be his successor. This method of succession has been in place for centuries because the monarch is an absolute ruler with no superiors to judge or punish failure. Still, the overthrow of a terrible monarch is not unknown in Vralkan history. But woe be to those who try to do it and fail.

Feared and adored by her subjects, Auster is both cunning and ruthless—the very archetype of the idealized Vralkan. She surrounds herself with loyal, powerful warriors who are likewise intelligent enough to serve as counselors, advisors, and, in many cases, consorts. She also possesses the kingdom's second-largest array of

Typical Vralkan

skirmisher: level 2, defends as level 3 due to shield; health 10; Armor 2; 4 points of damage

Typical Vralkan

archer: level 2, attacks with bow as level 3; health 8; Armor 2; 4 points of damage

Typical Vralkan infantry

and cavalry: level 3, attacks as level 4; health 16; Armor 3; 7 points of damage

Thorash, page 141

Queen Auster: level 7, administrative duties and all interactions as level 8; health 40; Armor 5; affected only by attacks that damage her indirectly, such as area attacks; other numenera-granted abilities as needed



Dessanedi,
page 187

Augur-Kala, page 215

Norou, page 213

The Sheer, page 213

Sere Marica, page 192

numenera devices (the largest being in Thorash). These items protect her, monitor various situations, provide comforts, and assist in destroying enemies. It is said that thanks to some of her devices, it is literally impossible to speak a lie in her presence or aim a weapon directly at her.

Auster wants nothing more than to expand her kingdom, and she plans to invade the lands to the southwest—a sparsely populated region just north of Dessanedi. This is a small matter, essentially involving marching through the lands and ignoring the few nomadic tribes that dwell there. After that, she wishes to spread into the realm that people in the Steadfast call the Beyond. She knows, however, that her greatest challenge will be the Augurs in the region of Augur-Kala. Her spies report that their military might is considerable. She plans on building a new vallation fortress in Dessanedi, not far from the town of Norou, from which she

can launch an invasion of the land within the Clock of Kala. However, if the Augurs remain isolated in their well-protected region, Auster is more than happy to simply maintain her fortress near the mouth of the Sheer to keep them bottled up, and press southward toward easier conquest. Her goal is to reach the Sere Marica, but eventually she dreams of nothing less than plundering the Steadfast for its wealth.

Auster spends most of her time in Morlash Kor but makes frequent pilgrimages with a huge retinue to Queen's Spike, a place of personal significance to her.

THE MNETHASHI

The Vrkans share their land with an intelligent nonhuman race, the mnethashi. These creatures possess humanoid upper torsos ending abruptly at the waist, where four mighty arachnoid legs grow. Their claws drip with a powerful acid that also runs through their blood. As they cannot abide



the sun, mnethashi dwell underground in caves and tunnels beneath the kingdom. They share some of the sensibilities of the militaristic, violent Vrkans and interact with them amicably. (If anything, the mnethashi capacity for cruelty and sadism is greater.) Some mnethashi serve as spies and assassins for the Vrkans and have fully integrated into the hierarchy of Vrkan society. Others dwell apart but still appreciate that the advancement of the Vrkans will aid the mnethashi. These creatures are as eager as their human counterparts to spread into other, more hospitable lands and take what can be taken.

Queen Auster keeps two highly skilled mnethashi assassins skulking in the shadows near her at almost all times.

Deep in the mountains, small communities of mnethashi are not as cooperative with the Vrkans. These few capture humans and use them as slaves and food. This kind of activity almost ingratiates them with the folk of Vralk, except that these mnethashi show no deference to station or the overall war plan. They are hunted and killed when possible.



WHY GO TO VRALK?

At this point, some readers might wonder why anyone would leave the Steadfast or the Beyond and go to Vralk, a place where everyone and everything is likely to kill you. Even the air can be deadly.

Vrkans make awesome villains. They are, as a kingdom, a well-organized society of sadists and psychopaths, and they are eager to conquer and plunder the world. Vralk is a bomb about to go off in the Ninth World, and the frightening thing is that most people in the Steadfast and the Beyond don't even know the Vrkans exist. Because they have holed up for so long in their harsh, isolated land to hone their skill and their blades, perfecting everything they can about war, domination, and murder, they have not yet made their presence known to the rest of the world.

In many ways, it is the greatest of ironies that the people of the Steadfast fear the machinations of the Gaians—who have no interest in conquest—and are completely unaware of the Vrkans, who may come sweeping across the landscape any day.

In the course of a Numenera campaign, a noble or local ruler who has heard of Vralk can send the PCs to gather information about this newly discovered land, or perhaps the Vrkans begin their invasion of lands to the south and west and the PCs must gather intelligence or attempt to subvert the enemy. In the latter case, the PCs might have one or more dangerous encounters with the Vrkans in the Beyond as the invasion moves southwest, and later head into the Red Kingdom as the culmination of the scenario. It would be wonderful if the PCs learned enough about the Vrkans early on that a chill runs down their spines when they realize that they need to go into Vralk. It's like learning that one must go to Hell itself after sparring with the devil again and again.

Maybe the PCs go to Vralk for a reason that's entirely incidental to the impending invasion. Perhaps the trail of an artifact they need takes them to the Red Kingdom, or someone they like or need is kidnapped and enslaved by Vrkans (such as a friend with a great deal of numenera knowledge being taken to the war machines in Thorash). In any event, the course of what seems like a typical adventure takes the PCs into a land they never heard of that's set to explode into a war for which no one in the Beyond or the Steadfast is prepared. What they do with that information could send the campaign into all sorts of new and interesting directions.

The GM could also start a campaign in Vralk, with all the PCs being Vrkans. Such a campaign would differ greatly from the norm and probably isn't for everyone. Although terms like "good" and "evil" aren't often tossed around in Numenera, by most standards the Vrkans are evil, at least in terms of their capacity for cruelty, domination, and bloodlust. They have little altruism or compassion. A Vralk campaign would need to address these issues in a way that made the players and the GM comfortable.

The Iron Wind is unknown in Vralk.



GHASTLOV

The barren wasteland called Ghastlov is the empty, callous heart of Vralk. Red and brown stone and sand fill this region, although spiky stone formations are common, formed by the terrible winds that blow, sometimes for weeks at a time. Even if it weren't so dry and hot, the ashfall from the surrounding volcanoes would choke most living things, and the dark clouds of smoke and ash would keep the sun from reaching most places.

Still, some things manage to squeeze out an existence here. Vralkans interested in proving themselves for advancement are sent to Ghastlov to see if they can survive—and the ash-covered bones and skulls that litter the edges of the wasteland offer testimony that many cannot.

The abhuman **igothus** dwell in small numbers in Ghastlov, able to sustain themselves without food or water for long periods. They operate in small bands, although not in the numbers they once did, as the Vralkans enjoy capturing and enslaving them. A few mind-controlling **sarraks** and small groups of **ferno walkers** also somehow survive in the wasteland. Ferno walkers are heat-resistant, six-limbed mammals with a pair of usable hands. These predators supplement their diet of meat by ingesting large stones that sit in a special portion of their gut. Through an unknown process, this organ produces extreme temperatures, heating the rocks so that ferno walkers have literal furnaces in their belly at all times.

The **lagliard** is a creature that actually thrives in the hot barren, as it feeds on ash. It provides a source of food and water to others in the desert, but like so much in Vralk, it can defend itself admirably.

THE GHOSTS

There are people who live in the Ghastlov, if you can call them that. Scrabbling about, mostly at night, they are the Ghosts, and they are cannibals of the worst kind. Since food is so scarce, they eat many of their own young and all of their old and feeble, but they prefer to murder non-Ghosts in the wasteland and feed upon them. Like jackals

preying upon a herd, they worry at the weak or slow members of a group with hit-and-run attacks in the dark of night. They are not choosy about their food, so if they can get a mount or animal companion, that's fine as well.

When Ghosts cannot find larger food, they subsist on insects, worms, and grubs. They use bone weapons, wear no clothing, and make no shelters. Their speech is a very limited, guttural form of Vralkan. During the day they bury themselves in the dust and dirt to hide from the sun.

SCREAMSTORMS

The merciless, ash-filled winds of the Ghastlov are infamous, but the screamstorms are a step beyond. An unknown force or energy creates these windstorms, interwoven with a sonic wail that can literally flay flesh from bone or split stones. Some people speculate that incorporeal, ultraterrestrial entities are involved, but it also might simply be uncontrolled sonic energy harnessed and discharged in ways beyond understanding.

Anyone caught in one of these terrible storms must make a Might defense roll (difficulty 5) or suffer 8 points of damage. The worst screamstorms force two or even three such rolls. Finding adequate cover reduces the difficulty of the roll by one or two steps, depending on the quality of the shelter.

MORLASH KOR

The capital of Vralk and home of **Queen Auster**, Morlash Kor is as old a Ninth World city as any in the Steadfast or the Beyond. This large stone city lies in the shadow of the Crimson Gallows mountains at the edge of the Ghastlov wasteland and is home to more than 30,000 people. The city is protected by a stone wall of fairly recent construction. Inside is a much older wall that the city outgrew almost a hundred years ago. The portion within the older wall is known as the First City, and the rest as the Outer City.

The First City contains the Obsolete Palace (home of the queen and the arena for battles, tests, and competitions), the

Igothus, page 231



Sarrak, page 255

Ferno walker: level 6, perception as level 7, uses tools and weapons as level 5; bites for 7 points of damage; spits hot liquid at all within immediate range; see The Ninth World Bestiary, page 252



Lagliard, page 233

Queen Auster, page 129



main temple, known as the Bloody Sacristy, and other places of note. This older section of Morlash Kor has a fully functioning sewer system and, thanks to hot springs, has hot and cold water on demand. Some, but not all, locations in the Outer City have these conveniences.

The Bloody Sacristy: The temple of the Red Gods in Morlash Kor is a huge structure covered in trellises with entwined thorny black and brown vines. It is set up as a ring that surrounds an inner chamber in which dozens of blood sacrifices are conducted each week. The blood flows in such quantity that metal drains in the floors collect it and turn it into blood meal to fertilize the crops around the city.

The nearly seventy-five priests and priestesses of the Red Gods that serve the Bloody Sacristy are called the Thorned Ones. Each wears a crown or helm of thorns that digs into the scalp, with blood running down their face and neck in small rivulets. Their entire bodies bear extensive tattoos of entwined thorns and the dripping wounds that they would create.

The Obstinate Palace: The queen dwells within a palace of volcanic stone and glass. The central portion is a single black tower called, of late, the “Lesser Spike,” in deference to the Queen’s Spike in the Firefang Mountains. A large garrison of troops is stationed at the palace, but there is a far larger force of soldiers and selectors in the Outer City.

Since the queen lives in Morlash Kor, she is, in effect, its ruler as well. However, an appointed administrator named Tasthau oversees most of the city’s affairs. She occasionally clashes with General Forlarren, who oversees the troops stationed in the city. Neither agrees on who is superior to whom, although the queen seems to favor Tasthau.

The Arena: Although most Vralkan towns and cities have an arena, the one in Morlash Kor is larger and more elaborate than most, a proper site for battles, races, and contests. It uses a wide variety of numenera to provide challenges such as pits of acid, geysers of flame, and nearly impenetrable walls of force.

The Red Gods, page 126

Tasthau: level 5, administrative duties and all interactions as level 6; health 20; Armor 2

General Forlarren: level 5; health 25; Armor 3; 7 points of damage

Illanan: level 8, disguise and subterfuge as level 10; uses level 8 poison on her blade that inflicts 8 points of additional Speed damage

Planai: level 5, all pleasant interactions as level 4; Armor 3

Dahr mud mask: level 4. Allows the user to take on any appearance desired, although it affects only the face. Serves as a two-step asset for disguise tasks in attempts to impersonate a human, or a single-step asset in attempts to impersonate a nonhuman humanoid. Lasts for one hour. Anoetic.

The School of the Sun: Located in the Outer City, this university offers all areas of study to anyone who shows an aptitude for learning and its practical application. No learning in Vralk is recondite, impractical, or purely academic. The School of the Sun is the largest university in Vralk and focuses entirely on physical sciences, tactics and strategy, and similar topics, rather than splitting its focus between scholarship and physical performance the way other Vralkan schools do.

DAHR

Near a small mountain runoff collection known as Dahr Lake, the town of Dahr is home to about 5,000 residents. Most are herders and farmers in the foothills, struggling to eke out a living in the inhospitable land. The leader of Dahr is a woman named **Planai**, a particularly ruthless individual who enjoys meting out suffering first hand.

Mud Masks: In Dahr, some numenera experts have perfected a process of creating a type of mud paste that can be applied to a human's face. Once dried, the **mud mask**

conforms to the wearer's desires, allowing her to appear as anyone she wishes.

"The mud-faced people of Dahr" isn't an insult about the residents' cleanliness, but a warning to those who visit the town. Being Vralkan, the people of Dahr use mud masks to show their prowess and worth by becoming the kingdom's primary spies and assassins. Chief among them is a woman named **Illanan**, who frequently travels abroad to gather intelligence in lands few Vralkans have ever heard of. It is thanks to Illanan that the Vralkans know as much as they do about much of the Steadfast.

AGGAN

Aggan is known as the Hunters' Fastness. Hunting dangerous game is an important part of Vralkan culture, and the hunters of Aggan are renowned throughout the land.

Aggan is a small village of just under a thousand people next to a walled fortress of black basalt. The hunters gather in the fortress—the "fastness"—like a hunting lodge. Ostensibly any hunter is allowed to use the fastness, but only the greatest hunters of the land are made





to feel welcome. The group is insular and elitist. Like all Vralkans, they have established a hierarchy based on skill and accomplishments. **Spine dragons**, **cragworms**, **melliks** (desert-dwelling flying beasts more or less identical to **rasters**), and **erynth grask** are frequent challenges for these hunters, so all are highly skilled, to say the least.

The greatest of all the hunters is **Nurant**, a one-eyed, eight-fingered man covered in scars and wounds who walks with a limp. His hunting trophies alone fill one room in

the fastness. But in Vralk, one does not rest on one's laurels. Strength is strength, and reputation and past accomplishments are only as valuable as one's ability to back them up. **Nurant** is a tough old man, still capable of gutting a living **ravage bear** with his bare hands, so he remains on top—for now.

Aggan exists to support the fortress and the hunters, producing food and other goods to supply their endeavors. Whenever a hunter brings down a particularly impressive kill, the village throws a feast in her honor.

Spine dragon: level 5, stealth as level 6; health 36; Armor 4; spikes on armored flesh carry a paralysis poison that affects all who fail a Might defense roll for one minute

Cragworm,
page 236

Raster, page 253

Erynth grask,
page 240

Ravage bear, page 254

Nurant: level 7, perception and stealth as level 8, all other Speed-based tasks as level 6; Armor 3



GHASTLOV HEARSAY

Plague of Serpents: It's no secret that almost everything in Vralk wants to kill you. This is especially true in the area immediately to the south of Dahr, which is filled with horrifically poisonous serpents. These squirming masses are so prevalent that some say the ground appears to be in constant motion. Anyone who can do something about this threat to the few tiny villages in the affected area would certainly show their worth.

Hidden Oasis: Rumors have begun to circulate of a clear spring in the wasteland, covered by an ancient structure that has kept it free of dust and ash over the years. If true, the location of this water source deep in Ghastlov would be extremely valuable, particularly to the military, which often has to move large numbers of troops from one side of Vralk to the other. Finding it would be difficult, as the structure is likely covered in years' worth of ash and sand.

Buried Machine: While digging the foundation for a building in the Outer City of Morlash Kor, workers uncovered a machine of mysterious purpose. Word is that it will soon be dismantled and any valuable parts shipped to Thorash, but anyone who gets to it before that happens might have access to a wealth of cyphers.

THE WEIRD OF GHASTLOV

Wasteland Preachers: A pair of figures wanders the wilderness, preaching to whomever they can find about the evils of the Vralkan ways. These mysterious, unnamed figures—a man and a woman—speak of the virtues of peace, mercy, and love for humanity. If they encounter a threat, they instantly disappear, as if they were just shimmering mirages in the heat. Some people call these wasteland preachers “The Prophesied Ones,” but it is unclear as to why.

The Flattened Orb: Every eighteen days, something appears in the sky above a particular outcropping of rock in the middle of the wasteland. Witnesses have reported spotting a hovering object, spherical except that it is slightly wider than it is high. They say that it is at least 200 feet (61 m) across, with scintillating lights, or perhaps it is made of ever-changing lights. Reports differ.

Sewer Creatures: In the sewers of Morlash Kor, humanoid creatures of what would seem to be solid slime lurk and hide from the humans above. Sometimes, however, these creatures skulk to the surface at night to steal miscellaneous objects or food. Anyone who confronts a slime creature hears it speak in his mother's voice, and it talks about some event from his childhood.



Broken hound,
page 232

Yovok, page 267

Minnern: level 7, perception as level 5; health 35; Armor 4; touch inflicts 7 points of damage and moves foe one step down the damage track if it fails a Might defense roll; can render a numenera device within short range inoperable for ten minutes; possesses and will use 1d6 random cyphers; see The Ninth World Bestiary, page 85

Hellsfont heat entity: level 7, interacts as level 5, Speed defense as level 3; health 500; immune to anything that cannot affect insubstantial energy; 4 points of damage per round of exposure



THE FIREFANGS

These volcanic mountains are extremely active, and the region is rife with tremors and geological upheaval. It also teems with a poisonous, biting insect called the johun fly. Other creatures that call these mountains home include broken hounds, yovoki, and the floating minnern.

HELLSFONT

A place of living fire, Hellsfont is a proving ground for Vralkan warriors. Some kind of dramatic event in one of the prior worlds caused the air here to burn with fire in a radius of 5 miles (8 km). Moreover, the fire has a sort of sentience and awareness. In other words, the heat that “dwells” in Hellsfont is a living creature of pure energy.

As such, visitors can appeal to and negotiate with the heat entity, asking it to burn or not burn a given creature or object within its confines. Although the heat is not telepathic in the usual sense, it seems deeply empathic and can receive and transmit images and strong emotions. To a smart negotiator, this is enough to allow communication with the intelligence here.

The heat of Hellsfont can interact with multiple creatures at once.

The entire area is a single entity, but it hosts other fire-dwelling creatures too. Eleven “cinder giants” can be found amid the scorched rocks and earth. These appear to be 9-foot-tall (3 m) human skeletons in some kind of numenera armor, blackened and petrified so that they are almost metallic statues, covered in a fine layer of white ash. They show signs of once having been living creatures. No one has been able to pry off the armor or any of its components.

Hellsfont is also the home of ancient, beast-faced humanoids known as ember scions. These engineered biomechanical creatures have flame-shrouded bodies and white-hot claws. They are playful and devilish, killing and tormenting for fun. They do not seem to require normal sustenance, water, or air. Particularly powerful Vralkan warriors come to Hellsfont to hunt the ember scions, although sometimes it is difficult to know who is hunting whom. First, however, the Vralkans must come prepared to deal with the heat or convince





the heat entity to leave them unscathed. This is a particular challenge for Vralkans, who are not known for their diplomacy, but they must learn to excel even in this arena, for sometimes a foe that cannot be killed comes along, and any means of outwitting a foe can be an advantage.

NABIR ENTHRU

Twenty-seven thousand people live in the walled city of Nabir Enthru. Second in size only to Morlash Kor, Nabir Enthru is equally old. The two, together, are referred to as “the old cities” or “the cities of the old ones.” Each dates back more than a thousand years to the beginning of recorded Vralkan history. Morlash and Nabir, the story goes, were brothers. Each was determined to found an empire greater than that of the other. Their power grew, one on each side of the Ghostlov wastes, and each gathered a powerful army. They marched across the wasteland to do battle, but each lost half his army to the hazards of the Ghostlov, so neither could conquer the other. Eventually, after decades of feuding, the brothers joined together and

united their empires to create the kingdom of Vralk.

And then Morlash betrayed and murdered Nabir.

This tale is as much fable as history, but there is enough truth to it that a rivalry between the two cities remains to this day, despite the fact that both have been ruled by a single monarch (who dwells in Morlash Kor) for centuries.

Nabir is known for its weapon smithies and armories. It is often shrouded by the black smoke of foundries that draw natural gas from the ground to burn dangerously hot fires day and night. The foundries achieve incredible temperatures to work and rework strange alloys recovered from ancient sites to make armor and weapons.

Like Morlash Kor, Nabir Enthru has a sewer system, and running water is pumped to most every dwelling.

The Gate of Stars: The main entrance to the city is called the Gate of Stars. The gate is a tall, imposing fortress guarding the massive egress, itself surrounded by inset alcoves

Ember scion: level 6; mental defense, perception, and seeing through trickery as level 4; health 22; Armor 1; claws and teeth deal 6 points of damage and burning touch deals another 4 points; see *The Ninth World Bestiary*, page 42

In Vralk, wood is a rarer commodity than metal, so many items that would be made of wood in other places—axe shafts, spear shafts, wagons, ladders, arrows, and so on—are made of metal here. Thus, Vralkan equipment is heavier (and sturdier) than that found elsewhere, but the Vralkans believe it means that they must be stronger than others—which, overall, they are.



that hold glowing motes of light, like stars. These motes once decorated a crystalline crown atop a tall statue from the prior worlds that stood within the Firefangs, but the people of Vralk toppled the statue long ago and took the motes of solid light to Nabir Enthru. In addition to being glittering trophies, several motes do other things. One flashes brightly when an ultraterrestrial being comes within long range. Another flashes when something not visible in the normal spectrum moves within a similar range. A third flares if a weapon of level 7 or higher comes within range. It's not known whether the other motes have functions, but they do flash from time to time.

Lubrous: *level 6, interactions as level 9, perception as level 7; health 20; Armor 3*

Lubrous: The ruler of Nabir Enthru is a tall, skeletal, hideous man named **Lubrous**. Mutants are extremely rare in Vralk (they are usually sacrificed at birth or as young children if their nature is discovered), but Lubrous is an exception. He has the weird mental ability of knowing something about everyone he meets that they don't want him to know. He suddenly becomes aware of a childhood fear, a terrible

(perhaps forgotten) deed from the past, or something the person desperately wants to keep hidden. In fact, the only way to hide anything from Lubrous is to ensure that one has many secrets, because he only ever learns one thing from a single person.

Lubrous is more than willing to use the secrets he learns against others, if possible. It's one of the ways in which he keeps his position. However, that alone wouldn't ensure his status in Vralk. He also is tough and capable, his thin frame deceptively strong, and he is rather infamous for his terrible breath.

QUEEN'S SPIKE

A massive monolith floating high above a narrow canyon, this ancient monument is now called Queen's Spike because it was Queen Auster who discovered how to get inside it and plumbed its interior. The monolith floats 800 feet (244 m) in the air and stands 1,200 feet (366 m) tall. Auster knows that a secret platform below the hovering monolith has controls that can teleport anyone on the platform inside the structure.



A small village thrives at the edge of the canyon, providing a place for the queen and her retinue to stay when she visits. And she does visit—frequently. Auster is convinced that the Spike still holds secrets, and she wants to discover them for herself. There are still large areas that have not been fully explored, in part due to the monolith’s potent internal defenses.

Queen Auster comes to the location at least twice a year, entering Queen’s Spike alone to explore it further. Many of the interesting numenera devices she wields have come from within this ancient structure.

DERHAL’S PEAK

Deep in the heart of a mountain called Derhal’s Peak is a hidden fortress known as Stormgod’s Adytum. “Stormgod” is what the man who lives there calls himself, and in truth few would argue the point. Somehow—through mutation, a device, or some combination of the two—Stormgod can exert control over the weather.

Specifically, he can summon storms while atop Derhal’s Peak and call down aimed lightning strikes if a storm is present. This has caused many people to believe (incorrectly) that an electrical storm always surrounds Derhal’s Peak.

Stormgod’s Adytum is a subterranean fortress, and Stormgod is the only resident. He is a loner and does not wish company. Rumor has it, however, that within the Adytum he has one of the world’s greatest repositories of numenera books, scrolls, and diagrams—enough to delight any scholar for a lifetime. A few people have attempted to visit Stormgod and entreat him to share access to this information. Others have tried to burgle their way in. Both methods usually result in an untimely demise.

Worshippers have set up a small shrine to Stormgod at the base of Derhal’s Peak. These individuals sincerely believe that he is a mortal who has ascended to divinity. It’s unclear what Stormgod thinks of this.

Stormgod: level 9; health 40; Armor 4 (10 versus energy attacks); can call storms and exert significant influence over the weather





FIREFANG HEARSAY

Vengeance: Some of the villagers near Queen's Spike have reported that mechanical creatures come out of the monolith from time to time, particularly after one of Queen Auster's visits. These creatures are hostile and dangerous, but if the villagers hide, they remain safe enough. The machines appear to be looking for a specific person.

Woman on the Road: A woman without armor, wielding only a knife, confronts anyone following the western bank of the river south out of Nabir Enthru. She challenges them to a fight and will take on one opponent at a time. She promises that if she loses, she will tell her opponent an important secret, and she requests a similar promise from him. She has never lost.

THE WEIRD OF THE FIREFANGS

Sleeping Sickness: Anyone who touches the waters of Love's Lake, a small mountain lake 35 miles (56 km) southwest of Nabir Enthru, falls into a deep sleep for at least a day. During that time, she dreams of an otherworldly place with three moons in the sky and a blue sun.

Thunderbird: A huge winged creature has been seen circling around the volcanic peaks when they are most actively belching smoke and ash. Reportedly, this bird—or whatever it is—has a wingspan of at least 80 feet (24 m) and makes a deep bellowing sound that rolls like thunder.



THE CRIMSON GALLOWES

A dark and terrible volcanic region, the Crimson Gallows seem to be a small spur of the Clock of Kala, but anyone knowledgeable in the ways of mountains knows that they are entirely different from that circular range, which seems to have been artificially created. The Crimson Gallows are far younger, geologically speaking, formed by a great instability beneath the surface where powerful forces churn and grind. (In fact, these upheavals may be a result of whatever artificial forces created the Clock of Kala.)

Vralkans consider points east of the mountains to be part of this region as well. Beyond the River of Sorrows is a desert of sand dunes, but along the river the land is extremely fertile due to its frequent flooding. The riverbank region grows a variety of crops and supports many grazing herds as well.

LERAN'S FIST

At the heart of the Crimson Gallows stands a mighty fortress built in the very early days of Vralk, before recorded history began (but

still decidedly a part of the Ninth World, as opposed to one of the far earlier ages). Rising like a literal fist toward heaven, the main tower of the fortress is sheathed in red glass. Although it was once the ancestral home of a noble family, it was eventually annexed by stronger elements in the expanding Vralkan society, becoming first a military stronghold and then the home of the kingdom's monarch.

About fifty years ago, however, a strange thing happened. A woman appeared—some say in a flash of lightning at the top of the tower—and commanded everyone in the fortress to leave. When they did not, they all fell victim to a fast-acting flesh-eating disease that killed them within the course of a single day. The monarch and his retinue got out alive, but hundreds of Vralkans died. As far as is known, no one has successfully entered Leran's Fist since that day. A robust energy field hedges out all attempts.

The identity of the woman is unknown, but some people say she is a descendant of the family that originally built the fortress—the Lerans. If true, then **Lady Leran** is very likely a powerful nano or mutant (or both), with an

The mysterious "Lady Leran": level 9, all tasks that involve the numenera (including attacks with energy weapons and effects) as level 10; Armor 6; can produce a variety of extremely powerful effects as needed



arsenal of extremely potent devices that have held all of Vralk at bay for five decades. No one today knows if the woman is still inside, for she hasn't been seen in years.

VASTORN

Vastorn is perhaps best known for textiles and other manufacturing. It is a walled city with a population of almost 15,000 and a significant military presence.

Desert raiders, sometimes working with abhuman **chirogs**, plague the city from regions to the east. Many times in the past, these raiders have served as excellent training for Vralkan troops, who are sent out in great numbers to deal with the threat. Wherever these raiders come from, they seem to be nearly endless, because they keep coming back even after the military crushes them out in the desert.

Vastorn's ruler is **Grausa**, a broad-faced, middle-aged woman with very short-cropped hair. She served as a high-ranking commander in the military for many years before finding herself placed in charge of this city. Grausa is deadly with her favorite weapon, a buzzer with poisoned disks.

Spies and explorers from Vastorn have made their way to the far south and east, around the Clock of Kala, to discover the populous Sagus Cliffs region. One day, the forces of Vralk will likely turn their attention to this region with a thirst for further conquest.

NORDE

Norde is a river port city of 10,000 people that trades with Vastorn. The city is sunken and sits about 120 feet (37 m) below the level of the River of Sorrows, with a thick retaining wall serving as a complex levee to keep the water at bay. Multiple piers and docks are built on top of this wall, with ramps and stairways leading down the other side into the city. A single floodgate controls a spillway that brings fresh water into the city in the form of a cascading waterfall that fills a pool.

A path winds up the other side of the city to the surface, which is the only access to Norde apart from the river.

River Gate: A massive stone wall built across the River of Sorrows is pocked with metal grates to allow the water to flow through, and a huge metal gate built into a central grate controls the flow of boats and barges. Only vessels approved by the city's ruler, Orundur, are allowed through. Vralk has no currency system, so there is no toll.

The Spires: Three strange spires in Norde rise extraordinarily high into the sky. At 3,000 feet (914 m) tall, they can be seen for miles. Each of these synthsteel structures has a base that is 200 feet (61 m) across, narrows to 100 feet (30 m) in the middle, and then widens at the top to match the size of the base. One spire has functioning internal machines that carry people up to the top and down again. The other two require climbing interior shafts, and few people are willing to take on such a task. From the tops of the towers, the view is amazing, and the city's leader, Orundur, keeps his office at the top of the spire with the functioning elevator.

Orundur: A tall, thin man with long braided hair, **Orundur** is not physically skilled at combat—rare for a Vralkan leader. He was bequeathed a special gift from his mother when she died while he was still quite young. The gift is an invisible, artificial construct that defends and protects him. Few people who have had to deal with the **guardian** have lived to speak of it, so the fact of how Orundur has easily survived every attack against him is a bit of a mystery to others.

Orundur is not above ordering his guardian to kill those who get in his way or who simply annoy him. He is a very dangerous, almost deranged man. He treats Norde as his personal domain and seems to have no ambition beyond ruling the port city.

THORASH

As if the fates had it in for the Ninth World, one of the greatest caches of usable ancient weaponry ever discovered lies in Vralk, in a place called Thorash. The devices are fantastically huge, mobile war machines,

Chirog, page 235

Grausa: level 5, ranged attacks as level 7, Speed defense as level 6; poisoned disks inflict 5 points of Speed damage on top of normal buzzer damage

Orundur: level 4, level 5 at persuasion

Orundur's guardian: artificial construct; level 7, level 9 at Speed defense due to invisibility; health 30; Armor 5

each the size of a small fortress or castle, bristling with weaponry between armored plates that are practically impossible to pierce.

The site has the feel of a place where huge animals have gone to die, with giant metal carcasses strewn about in a pit many miles wide. Most of the machines are partially buried in the earth, almost as if time was slowly swallowing them up. In fact, when Vralkan explorers first came to Thorash, the machines appeared to be hills covered in rough grasses and scrub brush, with only the occasional bit of metal exposed. Over the centuries, the Vralkans have managed to uncover many of the machines, at least in part, with workers and slaves toiling endlessly to carry away the millennia of sediment.

Amid the half-buried hulks are numerous camps for the workers and their overseers. Some of these camps are more like permanent towns, but extensive building is not allowed, so the camps are still made up of huts and tents. A defensive perimeter around the massive pit is well patrolled to keep intruders away from the machines.

The exception to the prohibition of permanent buildings is the large storehouse and library of numenera located within the pit. For more than a hundred years, Vralkans who show an aptitude for working with the numenera have been brought to Thorash. These scholars and technicians are commissioned with a single task—get some of the large mobile fortresses up and running so they can lead the Vralkan armies when the invasion begins. By decree of the prior monarch, a large percentage of cyphers, artifacts, and oddities found in Vralk are shipped to Thorash to aid in the efforts there, providing understanding and potential spare parts.

This storehouse likely has 1d100 functioning cyphers and 1d10 artifacts, all (barely) safely stored so that no inadvertent interactions occur. It is extremely well guarded by elite soldiers bearing numenera weaponry and defenses. The large building also serves as a laboratory, a library of reference works, and a dormitory for dozens of numenera experts from throughout the land.

The War Machine: Well before Queen Auster's reign, her predecessor wanted a terrifying, earth-grinding war machine at the head of his army, leading them into battle. So important was this dream that he delayed invasion plans throughout his lifetime. Now Queen Auster finds that seductive vision, so tantalizingly close, to be delaying her dreams of conquest as well. Technicians keep assuring her that they grow close to readying a monstrous, hulking machine that will rain destruction before it on the field of battle. Now the dream is about to become reality, more or less—a single war machine is mostly functional.

The operational war machine is a monstrosity 1,000 feet long and 300 feet high (305 m by 91 m). Its belly holds three hundred and fifty troops, who can come out quickly through doors on either side or in the back. Some people have likened the machine to a dread destroyer, but it is in fact worse.

However, the drawbacks to the Vralkan war machine are numerous. First, it is only as good as the soldiers operating it, so its attacks are treated as level 4, not level 10. Second, its systems are unreliable. At any given moment, one malfunction is in effect:

d100	Malfunction
01-30	One troop door will not open
31-50	One weapon not working
51-65	Moves an immediate distance rather than short
66-70	Two troop doors will not open
71-85	1d6 weapons not working
86-95	In a given round, moves in a random direction rather than the desired direction 10% of the time
96-00	Cannot move at all

The random malfunction can be repaired if the Vralkan technicians shut down the machine for 1d6 hours and work on it, but a new malfunction will occur within 28 hours.

War machine: level 10, attacks as level 4; health 200; Armor 10; moves a short distance, and anyone in its 200-foot-wide path takes 10 points of damage each round while caught beneath it; has nine weapons of various types, each inflicting 15 points of damage on a single target up to 1 mile away or 10 points on all targets in short range



*Dread destroyer,
page 239*

An interesting scenario might involve the PCs learning of the Vralkan war machine and having to sabotage it so that it cannot be used in battle.



Third, operating the machine requires ten people working at once, and only fourteen people in all of Vralk are currently qualified to do so. Months of instruction and training would be required to teach new operators. The military is attempting to train additional personnel, but finding people talented enough to perform the tasks proves difficult.

Fenorsan and Deir: The leading numenera experts in Thorash are a man named **Fenorsan** and a woman named **Deir**. These two bitter rivals begrudgingly worked together with more than a hundred others to get the war machine operational. Fenorsan continues to put all his time and effort into it, but Deir now focuses on two other machines that are nearly excavated. She believes that either or both will be more powerful and reliable if she and her teams are given time to get them ready (which will take at least half a year).

Fenorsan is surprisingly large and muscular for a scholar, with a broad face and narrow eyes. Deir is slight but wields a variety of esoterics that protect her and

make her capable enough to survive in the harsh Vralkan society.

WELTERKIN

To the north, Vralkan explorers have found what has been described as “endless jungles and swamps,” as well as particularly strange creatures and places. For the most part, they do not look northward when dreaming of conquest. Still, they keep their eyes open, both for opportunities and for dangers to their homeland. As the northernmost town, Welterkin is home to explorers, spies, scouts, adventurers, and (self-imposed) exiles.

Vralkans who dislike the ways of their people often end up in Welterkin, where the rules of society, such as they are, break down. It's a chaotic place, and more than once the monarch has sent troops to the town to quell what seems like the beginnings of a rebellion. However, these incidents are usually just misunderstandings. Those rejecting the Vralkan ways do not seek to foment war and rebellion. They want to escape the violence and bloodshed and live in peace on their own.

Fenorsan: level 4, all numenera-related tasks as level 7; health 18; Armor 1

Deir: level 5, all numenera-related tasks as level 7; Armor 2 (permanent force-shield); long-range energy blast attack for 7 points of damage; other esotery abilities as needed



CRIMSON GALLOWS HEARSAY

River Contamination: People and animals have been found dead along the banks of the River of Sorrows 20 miles (32 km) north of Norde. It appears that the water was contaminated, but no sign of such an issue appears downstream. The authorities in Norde would like more information as to the cause of the occurrence.

Disguised Caravan: A band of nomads in a caravan of wagons moving from north to south on the eastern slopes of the range are reportedly bandits in disguise, waylaying unsuspecting travelers. However, whenever a military force is dispatched to deal with them, they cannot be found.

Escaped Automaton: A man made of damaged metal is making his way through the mountains, telling stories of atrocities to machine intelligences that are being committed in Thorash. Unfortunately for him, there are few sympathetic ears in Vrank.

THE WEIRD OF THE CRIMSON GALLOWS

Black Volcano: A fissure in the northern portion of the mountains spews black and violet flames. The air around this area smells of burned hair and rotten fruit. Strange dark green beetles, utterly unaffected by fire or heat of any kind, are common in the area, although they are found nowhere else in the world.

Fertile Monolith: Forty miles (64 km) northeast of Aggan, a synth pylon 20 feet (6 m) high seems to exude nutrients and fertility. It is surrounded by lush green vegetation, insect hives and cocoons, animal nests, and so on. The few people in the remote region give the pylon a wide berth, however, as women who come within 100 feet (30 m) of it soon thereafter find themselves pregnant, even when such a thing could not be possible. None of the pregnancies have gone to term.

When Vrankan troops attempt to bring the more unruly elements of Welterkin in line, most of the residents simply flee into the wilderness and remain there until it is safe to return.

Hiraum: level 5; Armor 3

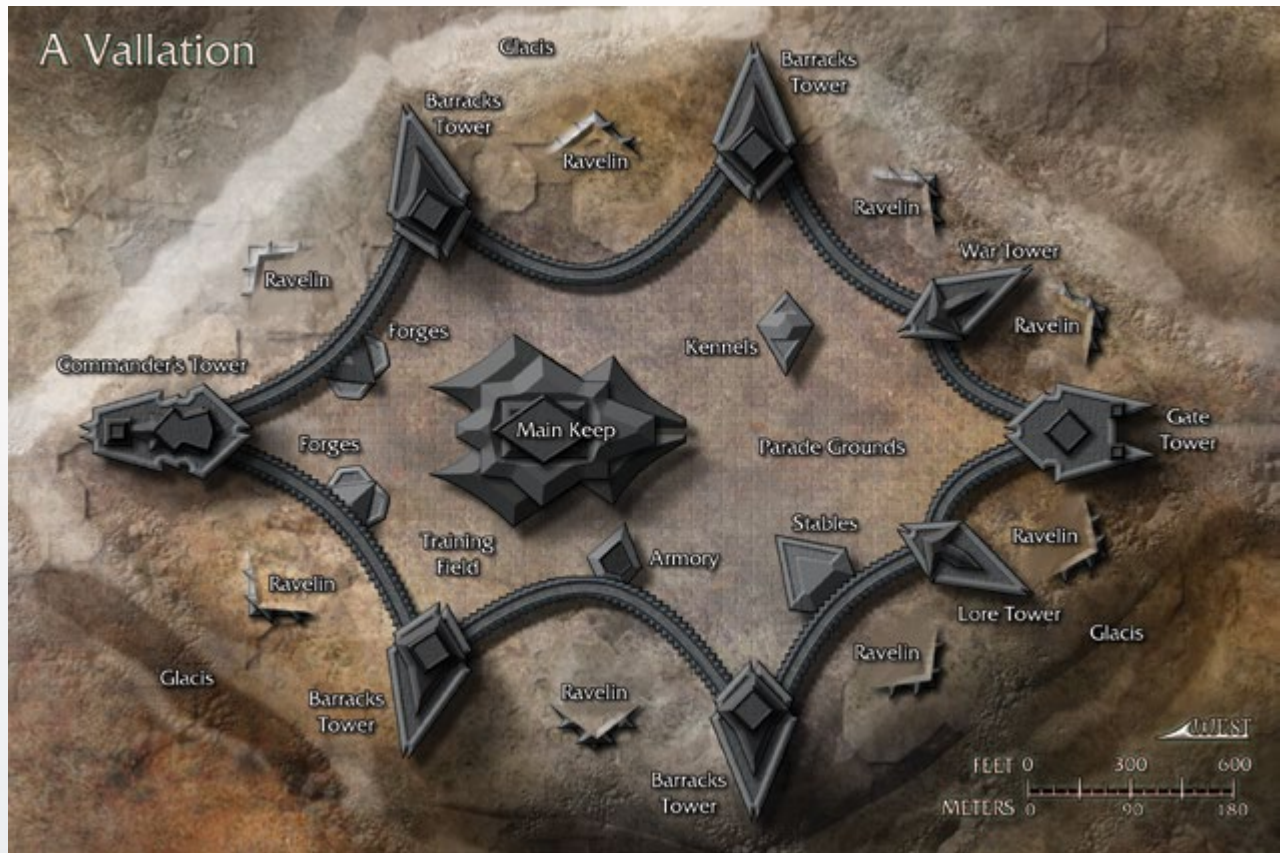
This doesn't mean that everyone in Welterkin looks for peace. Some are hunters, others explorers, and a few are criminals, but all usually work alone outside the hierarchy of Vrank. These men and women explore the unknown northlands and sometimes bring back information or strange wonders.

Welterkin has a population of about 3,000. Although many quietly or openly reject any sort of leader, the head of the town is ostensibly a woman named **Hiraum**, a well-seasoned explorer and spy who gathered information in various lands beyond Vrank's borders before ending up in Welterkin. She is secretly sympathetic with the outlook of some people in her town, but she still believes in the Vrankan ideal and is loyal to her queen.



A GATHERING FOR WAR: THE VALLATIONS

The Vrankans are amassing a terrible army of great size, mustering their troops at four fortresses called the vallations. Huge forts of dark, volcanic stone, each vallation is built a bit like a stylized star fort, with each pointed bastion actually a tall, angular tower. The fortresses are girded by outworks known as ravelins to further repel invaders and ranged attacks of destructive power, and the entire complex is surrounded by a steeply sloped glaxis. The entrance, designed to look like a hideous, toothy maw, is through one of the towers. In fact, the entirety of each vallation is covered in barbs and spikes, more for intimidation than defense.



The main keep has a chapel to the Red Gods as well as numerous offices, records storage, strategy planning rooms, commander quarters, trophy rooms, prisons, torture chambers, and more. Although the towers serve various purposes, each is also set up for defense, with arrow loops and high-placed platforms for defenders to rain death upon approaching attackers. The walls of these fortresses are not made for soldiers to stand atop them; instead, the soldiers use the ravelins as defensive positions in times of attack.

It is probably worth noting that none of the vallations has ever been assaulted, as Vralk has no enemies as of yet that could muster the capability to do so.

The vallations do not survive alone. Each has three to five small villages within a few miles to help supply and sustain them. Even so, the large number of soldiers billeted at each fortress requires that more supplies be shipped from farther away. Although each vallation has ample storehouses, these supply lines might be their greatest vulnerability.

VALLATION SKUARL

More than 2,000 soldiers are billeted in Skuarl, led by General Ulathesh. The general is a beast of a man who greatly fancies the numenera. Rather than the standard heavy armor of a Vralkan soldier, Ulathesh wears a pair of rings that generate a powerful nimbus of energy that he mentally shapes into an intimidating, looming suit of Vralkan armor made of reddish-orange light. His heavy maul likewise crackles with infused energy, making it more dangerous.

Skuarl is the fortress guarding the western entrance to the pass between the Firefangs and the Clock of Kala, with Combrech on the east. Ulathesh likes to think of it as the most important of the vallations for this reason. When the Vralkans launch their invasion to the southwest, however, troops will issue from Skuarl, Orgthun, and Baorm.

VALLATION COMBRECH

General Allaidrix is the supreme commander not just of Combrech but of the forces in all four vallations. When the orders come to invade the areas to the southwest,

The Red Gods, page 126

General Ulathesh: level 6; health 30; Armor 4; 8 points of damage

General Allaidrix: level 7, attacks versus automatons as level 8; health 32; Armor 4

Thorash, page 141

Allaidrix will be in command. At that time, he will lead half of the 2,500 soldiers stationed at Combrech to Vallation Skuarl, where they will join with 1,500 more troops from that fortress and lead the vanguard southwest, to be supported by 1,000 troops each from Orgthun and Baorm. The plan is that the war machine from **Thorash** will be with them, with Allaidrix inside or atop it. However, when the invasion starts, Allaidrix will actually be astride his armored shantag, holding aloft the banner of Vralk.

General Drauil:
level 6, perception
and seeing through
deception as level 8;
health 30; Armor 4

 *Vuechi, page 313*

Mnethashi, page 234

 *Jiraskar, page 242*

General Theusin: level
7; attacks, lies, and
deception as level 8;
health 28; Armor 4



Allaidrix is middle-aged and bald, with a long, pointed beard. He uses a massive axe and frequently wears trophies from his conquests, which sometimes include severed heads or other body parts. Allaidrix hates automatons and has a distaste for the numenera in general. He resents the war machine project in Thorash and the delays it has caused in Vralk's invasion plans.

Believing that he got where he is solely due to the blessings of the gods, Allaidrix is a particularly devout man. The temple in Combrech's main keep is large and opulent, and its priests are afforded even more respect and care than usual. To appease the gods, the general sends a sortie of troops out of the fortress each week to kidnap or capture suitable sacrifices. All who live in the area know to steer well clear of Combrech for fear of being snatched by these soldiers.

VALLATION ORGTHUN

Orgthun's commander is **Drauil**, youngest of the Vralkan generals. She is quiet and mysterious, keeping to herself most of the time. Always plotting her next move, and always planning through every contingency, Drauil is difficult to surprise. She has a **vuechi** that follows and protects her, and a **mnethashi** companion serves as her advisor and spy.

However, the real General Drauil has been replaced by a woman using mud masks from Dahr. The real Drauil—wearing a helmet that conceals her features—is held in the prison of Vallation Baorm because the imposter works for General Theusin.

Orgthun currently holds 1,800 well-trained soldiers eager for conquest. In addition, a beast tamer named Eddick has a pair of desert reptile predators that are similar enough to **jiraskars** to use the name. The creatures are trained and ready to accompany the troops into battle.

VALLATION BAORM

General Theusin commands Vallation Baorm. She is a stern taskmaster who spends almost all of her time training with weapons and sparring with other soldiers.



VALLATION HEARSAY

The Enemy of My Enemy: General

Theusin has agents in key places throughout Vralk looking for outsiders and newcomers to the land. If any are found, they are approached to see if they can be of service to her cause.

Deadly Creatures: A *travonis ul* hunts the slopes of the volcano near Vallation Skuarl. Most people avoid this area already, so its presence is a small threat. However, for reasons beyond understanding, the ultraterrestrial creature spends much of its time using its considerable strength to open fissures into the volcano, redirect lava flows, and create avalanches. General Ulathesh has decreed that the creature must be found and killed before it can cause more trouble.

THE WEIRD OF THE VALLATIONS

Watersoil: A village near Vallation Orgthun is built on a disk of solid water about half a mile (0.8 km) across and 20 feet (6 m) deep. This solidified water has the consistency of hard, compact earth, so it can be dug up, but loosened bits of the substance instantly turn into ordinary water. Digging down has proven a fine way to get fresh water, and some people have found that crops planted in the watersoil flourish.

The Loosed Controller: An experimenter in Vallation Skuarl opened a gateway to another universe using some numenera devices he found. Although he was hoping to use the portal for military applications, he allowed a creature of pure thought into this world. This creature now inhabits three to five minds at a time in the fortress, exerting various levels of influence and control, working clandestinely for some unknown purpose. Most people don't know it exists, but a few do, including the upper echelons in command of the vallation. The experimenter was tortured to death by military *brisants*.

Theusin is well known for losing her temper in this practice and killing her opponents. She sports a long scar down the left side of her face, and her left eye has been replaced with a fully functional mechanized one.

What very few know is that Theusin is a traitor. She works to subvert the Vralkan war effort because she does not want to see the invasion occur. She hates both *Queen Auster* and General Allaidrix and wants to see major changes wrought upon Vralk, making it a less militaristic state. Theusin has a few allies in Morlash Kor, Dahr, and elsewhere who agree with her outlook and will do anything to help. However, it is crucial that she not be revealed as a traitor—she would be executed quickly.

Baorm has a large arena in an underground chamber beneath the main keep where Theusin holds weekly combats. On these nights, the blood flows as though the arena were a temple to the Red Gods.

About 1,700 troops are currently stationed at Vallation Baorm.

THE RIVEN

This ancient structure appears to be a glass cube 200 feet (61 m) to a side. One side has torn and twisted metal couplings, as if the cube had been ripped from a larger structure and left here. The “glass” is actually strongglass, so it has the strength of steel. Some explorers have discovered a way into the cube's interior by tunneling beneath it. This tunnel leads to a hatch that grants access to the inside of the cube, which in turn gives way to the interior of the larger structure the cube was once a part of—some kind of spatial warp allows the two to remain connected. However, no one who has traveled to the larger structure has found another way out of it, so no one knows where it's located.

The interior of the Riven is filled with numenera to be plundered, but spatial warps and transdimensional geometry make it a very dangerous place. Those who try to explore it might turn a corner and be split into a thousand pieces or step backward out of a chamber and be compacted into a small sphere.

Travonis ul,
page 263

Brisant, page 129

Queen Auster, page 129

MOUNT ERROW

The entrance to a prior-world installation called Errow Cascade lies in the caldera of a volcano in Vrank. Most Vrankans are completely unaware of it. Evidence for its existence can be found in secret pockets of the datasphere, as cryptic maps sketched on synth blocks scattered about random locations in the Beyond, and encoded in special cyphers called **Errow guides**. (Errow guide cyphers point toward Errow Cascade for thirty-three days after being activated.)

Errow guide, page 154

ERROW CASCADE BACKGROUND

A nano named Demanisix Mal found a numenera-filled installation a few decades ago, according to a recovered journal penned by her hand. The journal had been partially burned, leaving large sections unreadable. The decipherable portions described Errow Cascade (the name Demanisix bequeathed to the place) as “a voluminous installation—possibly an entire hibernating city—that straddles a subterranean magma sea.”

Bloody Sacristy, page 133

The nano’s journal describes her exploration of the installation’s fringe.

The Red Gods, page 126

She encountered extremes of heat, living creatures “native” to the area, tiny energy-phase creatures called vil “that sparkle with blue light,” and various sorts of automatons that patrol the complex.

Some kind of disaster ended Demanisix’s exploration, but the incident isn’t mentioned in the journal. In the final entry, the nano records her intention to send her companion “silverwing” to safety with a report (the journal) of what she found. No one has seen Demanisix since.

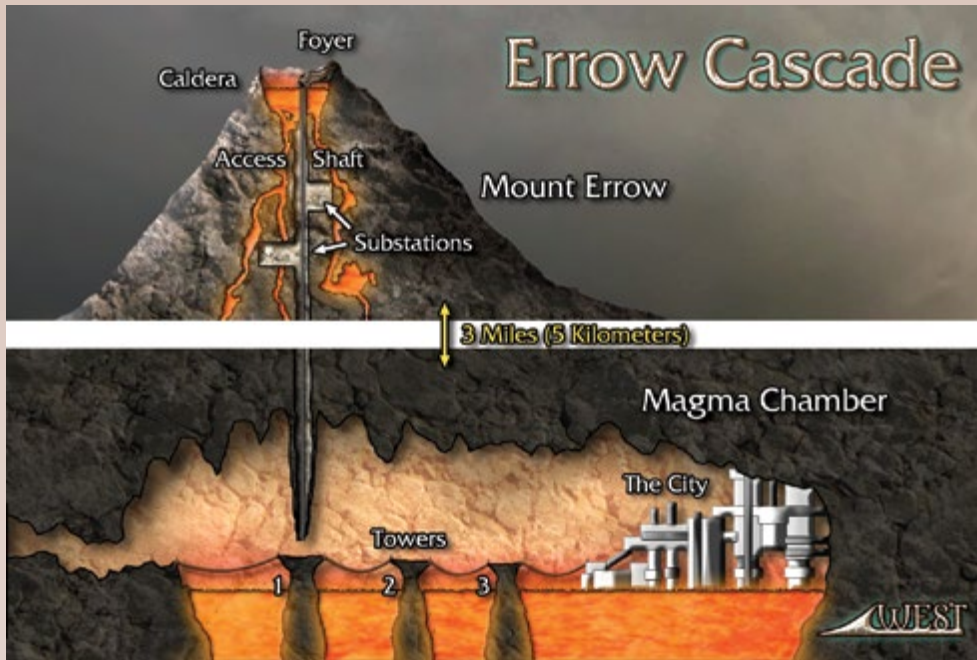
THE MOUNTAIN

Reaching the volcano caldera that hides the entrance to Errow Cascade is no easy task. Travelers who can’t fly or use some other extraordinary means must cross the surrounding land of Vrank. The journey is a slog through a region of sulfurous air beset by poisonous serpents, insects, and plants, not to mention the Vrankans, who do not take kindly to foreigners. If intruders are not killed outright, they are shuffled off to the **Bloody Sacristy** in Morlash Kor to serve as sacrifices to the **Red Gods**.

GETTING THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

The GM can use Errow Cascade several ways in a campaign. The following scenarios could be provided as hooks to players:

- Find the missing explorer Demanisix Mal, and either quiz her about something only she knows or retrieve an artifact that she keeps safe.
- Locate a piece of the numenera called “the Forge” and input a template for creating a specifically required artifact.
- Acquire samples of an energy-phase life form known as vil.
- Discover a piece of the numenera called “the Confessional” and use it to make a query directly into the heart of the datasphere.
- Hide from a group of Vrankan scouts tracking the characters.



Mount Arrow reaches well over 13,000 feet (4 km) skyward. Even a group led by an accomplished mountaineer with experience picking the best routes will find themselves tested on the final ascent up a 100-foot (30 m) sheer cliff face (a level 5 task).

In addition to the terrain, challenges include creatures that hunt Mount Arrow's slopes, such as a subspecies of *ithsyns* able to climb, *tetrahydraz*s, and possibly a Vralkan scouting party.

Vralkan Scouting Party

The highly fortified vallations keep watch on the surrounding lands. Each fortress lookout monitors the area for a distance roughly equal to 50 miles (80 km), assuming no direct cover. If intruders are noticed, a Vralkan scouting party is dispatched to intercept the interlopers—or covertly track them to see why they're on Vralkan land.

Errow Vralkan Scouting Party: A Vralkan scouting party is usually made up of one tracker-mountaineer, two archers, and two skirmishers. The tracker generally has command of the group. A scouting party sent to investigate intruders is under orders to kill or capture them and, if possible, discover why foreigners risked

travel into the Red Kingdom. If a scouting party learns of a previously unknown installation from a prior world, the top concern is to investigate the facility briefly and then report back.

THE CALDERA

The caldera atop Mount Arrow is usually filled with boiling lava that occasionally flings geysers of molten rock hundreds of feet into the air. In addition to these occasional burning "bombs," the heat is oppressive, and visitors suffer 1 point of ambient damage for each hour spent on the lip or climbing around inside the caldera.

MOLTEN ROCK CONTACT EFFECTS

Molten rock (known as lava when encountered outside a volcano and as magma when encountered underground) is lethal. Victims who fall into it take 6 points of ambient damage each round they maintain direct contact and for a couple of rounds afterward; molten rock is far more viscous than water. That same quality modifies attempts to swim to safety by one step to the swimmer's detriment.

Ithsyn, page 241

Tetrahydra, page 262

Typical Vralkan tracker-mountaineer: level 3, attacks as level 4, all tasks related to mountaineering and tracking as level 5; health 12; Armor 3; 5 points of damage; might carry a Vralkan truth needle cypher (level 5)

Typical Vralkan archer: level 2, attacks with bow as level 3; health 8; Armor 2; 4 points of damage

Typical Vralkan skirmisher: level 2, defends as level 3 due to shield; health 10; Armor 2; 4 points of damage

*Vralkan truth
needle, page 154*

*Ray emitter,
page 154*

*Using a concentrated
cold ray emitter on lava
will cause a surface
layer to solidify for
several rounds, allowing
someone to walk upon
it without burning.*

Silverwing, page 242

An artificial synth structure is built into the side of the caldera. From it a central tube hangs down directly into the lava, along with several smaller cables and lines. Demanisix's journal refers to this structure as the "foyer."

Calithir the Silverwing

The silverwing that once served as Demanisix's companion still haunts the caldera of Mount Errow where it lost its mistress decades earlier. Though wild silverwings are incredibly dangerous, Calithir doesn't automatically attack newcomers investigating the foyer. Instead, it wings down, lands nearby, and attempts to communicate. If given a reason to defend itself, it becomes aggressive and dangerous.

The silverwing wishes to recover the body of Demanisix, which still lies somewhere inside, far down the tube. Calithir has grown too large to fit, but it attempts to enlist the aid of human-sized creatures that visit. In return for assistance, it offers to open the foyer

hatch by using one insectoid leg stinger to tap out the passcode. The silverwing also presents those who agree to help it with a couple of cyphers it has gathered from the area: a Vralkan truth needle and a ray emitter (concentrated cold).

ERROW FOYER

The external entrance to the foyer lies several dozen feet (11 m) below the almost sheer lip of the caldera. A failed difficulty 3 Strength-based task drops climbers into the lava-filled caldera.

External Traction: The exterior of the foyer is composed of grey synth. Though it appears smooth from a distance, it's slightly adhesive and provides excellent traction despite its sloping surface. Standing on the foyer exterior doesn't risk a slip into the lava beneath, all else being equal.

Entrance Hatch: A large circular hatch provides access into the foyer. Opening it can be accomplished by several different





methods, including entering the correct passcode by tapping or connecting to a numenera port, hacking the machinery (a difficulty 5 Intellect-based task), touching an Arrow guide cypher to the hatch, or allowing Calithir the silverwing to open it.

Foyer Interior: The hatch opens into a cramped space of dull black synth. Illumination is provided by a few spots of white light that don't correspond to any particular structure.

A cryptic control surface stands near a dark shaft that descends from the nose of the compartment. Blue, green, and yellow points of light hover and shift a fingernail's width above the control surface. The shaft by the control surface was visible from outside the foyer; it's the central pipe descending into the boiling lava. Thankfully, whatever grade of synth the foyer and shaft are composed of seems up to the task of insulating the interior from excessive heat. In fact, it's slightly cool inside.

MAGMA CHAMBER

The transparent access tube provides an excellent view of the magma chamber. Geysers of molten stone erupt from the surface of a boiling sea of magma in a subterranean vault of immense size. The scarlet light is hazed by pillars of black smoke that erupt here and there from the molten surface.

A slender path of synth towers and hanging spans—sprinkled with gleaming blue sparkles—provides a route across the chamber. The path connects one end that contains only a dark tunnel with the far side, which is dominated by a series of artificial structures. The blocky white and grey shapes tumbled one upon the other might be buildings or something else entirely.

Control Surface and Access Shaft: The shaft is transparent, which means that the first hundred feet of descent is lit by swirling lava. After an intermediate descent through solid rock, the shaft opens into a magma chamber far below, and anyone passing down the shaft gains a wonderful view of the massive subterranean cavity.

The shaft must be activated to function properly; otherwise, anything or anyone who steps into it falls several miles to the towers. Activating the control surface (a difficulty 3 Intellect-based task) powers up the access shaft to deliver travelers to one of five substations or Tower 1. The control surface apparently has other functions, but those have been deprecated, are burned out, or are perhaps locked out. The only additional piece of information the control surface yields is that Tower 1 is at the bottom of the shaft, and the foyer is at the top.

If the control surface is successfully triggered, explorers and objects are safely shuttled via crackling lines of brilliant force to the chosen substation, or unsafely shuttled to a point about 30 feet (9 m) above Tower 1.

SUBSTATIONS

Five substations lie along the vertical access shaft. Each one features a space around the shaft similar to the foyer (including a control surface). Each also contains a connecting passage to a larger area beyond it.

For the most part, these areas are filled with dead and defunct mechanisms of unknown purpose that offer nothing particularly notable to explorers, at least at first glance. That said, determined explorers who fully investigate a particular substation can recover shins and perhaps a cypher or two, though doing so could wake previously somnolent automatons.

Gazers: Gazers are spherical metallic automatons, about 1.5 feet (0.5 m) in diameter, that levitate. Various bits of

Gazer: level 1, perception as level 5, Speed defense as level 2; health 3; Armor 1; long-range heat beam attack for 2 points of damage; a swarm of three gazers acts as a level 3 creature dealing 4 points of damage (and 1 point on a miss); see The Ninth World Bestiary, page 56

equipment and blinking cyphers festoon their battered alloy bodies, including an always-scanning beam of red light. If the two gazer swarms (six total gazers) activate and hunt down intruders, the scarlet beam on each gazer intensifies, creating a ray capable of burning through nearly anything. Three cyphers in total can be salvaged from the remains of both gazer swarms.

TOWERS

Three towers of dark synth rise up from the boiling magma and support supple spans of lighter synth between them. The synth material's uppermost layer is translucent, and tiny blue lights scuttle and swarm beneath or within it, almost like insects, though their true nature isn't obvious. (They're actually energy-phase creatures called vil, described below.)

Shaft Nadir: The access shaft is damaged. It doesn't reach down all the way to the surface of Tower 1; it's about 30 feet (9 m) shy. An object or explorer relying on crackling lines of brilliant force to travel the shaft is in freefall for that last distance.

A control surface like those found in the foyer and substations is located next to the stump of what was once the shaft's foot. Coaxing the crackling lines of brilliant force to suck a traveler back up into the shaft terminus 30 feet (9 m) overhead is a difficulty 5 Intellect-based task.

Climate, Blue Sparkles, and Vil: The tower tops are only about 50 feet (15 m) above the surface of the magma sea, but the heat is not immediately lethal. The climate control is provided courtesy of energy-phase organisms scuttling





like blue firefly sparkles within the matrix of the towers and spans. These organisms—the vil—are subterranean and sometimes live symbiotically with other organisms when not infesting mineral deposits.

Tower Ladders: Synth protuberances that could be used as ladders run up the side of each tower.

Tower Spans: The hanging spans are about 6 feet (2 m) wide, have no railings, and tend to sway.

Wandering Shoun

A herd of shoun (and related creatures) lives in a nearby subterranean cavity. Shoun often wander onto the towers and even into the city in search of prey, or perhaps distraction. One or two can usually be found along the synth tower path.

THE CITY

The “city” (which Demanisix’s journal dubbed Errow Cascade) is vast, alien, and dangerous. Only a fraction of the mysterious, blocky structures allow access to their interiors. A confusing jumble of the numenera can be found inside these, from which determined salvagers could recover 1d100 shins, 1d6 randomly generated cyphers, and possibly access to one of the special areas presented below: the Forge, the Confessional, the Tomb of Demanisix, or one of the GM’s creation.

Exploration also draws attention from the inhabitants. In addition to gazer swarms, shoun, and Vralkan scouting parties, explorers could encounter decanted.

Decanted: A decanted is an automaton with a frosted glass dome clutched in its chest cavity by protective iron fingers. Visible through the dome’s condensation is a frozen humanoid head, held immobile in a chassis of iron bracing, silver wires, and glowing

cables. When a decanted speaks, a voice devoid of emotion issues from a buzzing grill mounted on its metallic head. The decanted here aren’t natives of the original installation and don’t know Errow Cascade’s original purpose.

The Forge

A chamber extending over the magma sea has seven control surfaces plus a central bubble-shaped translucent crucible. Experimentation with the control surfaces reveals that magma can be slurped up into the crucible by crackling beams of white energy. However, what happens next is the tricky bit (a difficulty 5 Intellect-based task), lest magma spray across the interior of the forge, damaging anyone who comes into contact with it.

Successfully contained magma could be used to create an artifact (another difficulty 5 Intellect-based task) using additional trace materials and templates provided by the forge mechanism. Exactly what artifact is being produced isn’t apparent until after the three-hour crafting process concludes. A failed crafting task still produces an artifact, but one that is dangerously flawed in some way.

The templates provided by the control surfaces include several artifacts described in the *Numenera* corebook; roll on the **Artifacts Table** to determine what artifact is produced.

Limitations: Once the forge has produced a couple of artifacts, it runs out of trace elements. The materials requiring replenishment are identified on the control surface using symbols of linked circles and lines that only someone trained in the numenera has a chance of figuring out. The forge won’t operate again without them. Acquiring more trace elements is likely beyond the technical capacity of most explorers; on the other hand, functioning artifacts might contain the needed elements. Perhaps the forge can recycle one or two to extract enough elements to make a completely new artifact.

Shoun, page 241

Artifacts Table, page 301

Decanted: level 4, stealth tasks as level 6 (when moving invisibly); health 12, Armor 3; melee attack for 5 points of damage and freeze foe in place for one round on failed Might defense roll; short-range attack (once per hour) for 5 points of ambient damage and foe descends one step on damage track on failed Might defense roll; see The Ninth World Bestiary, page 34

Quotien: level 7, knowledge of history as level 9; health 21; Armor 3; long-range psychic attack on all targets within immediate range of each other for 7 points of damage; regenerates fully after a few weeks if any scrap of tissue remains; has two or three cyphers and an artifact; see The Ninth World Bestiary, page 103



Datasphere,
page 12

The Confessional

A larger than normal control surface fills this chamber. It's shaped almost like a humanoid in bulky armor, with a touchscreen of glowing contact points instead of a face. Each time the device is activated, the user is prompted to tell a secret. If she fails to do so, an electrical charge renders her unconscious and locks her into a nightmare-ridden coma for a few hours. If she does tell a secret (to the GM's satisfaction), she can ask a question in return, which is answered by the *datasphere*.

The Tomb of Demanisix

A human-shaped sarcophagus fed by many cables, wires, and conduits hangs in the center of this space. Beneath it lies a control surface. Inside the enclosure is Demanisix, horribly changed from the woman who entered the Errow Cascade so long ago.

Interaction with the control surface reveals the name of the sarcophagus occupant (Demanisix Mal) and that she is in a deep state of suspended animation. If the control surface is used

to release her, Demanisix emerges after a few minutes, but what comes out is no longer human. Demanisix has been transformed by the numenera of Errow Cascade into a creature called a *quotien*.

Demanisix the Quotien: Demanisix's body and mind were transformed into a horrific parody of humanoid anatomy and normal psychology by mechanisms in the city. Now she looks something like a naked brain stuck on a fetus corpse with spikes for hands. Demanisix retains only the mildest grasp on her original mind, but it's enough for her to answer questions, give the PCs a relic that they came to recover, or otherwise satisfy some larger storyline (if any).

After that, Demanisix's thread of lucidity quickly unravels. The *quotien* decides that intruders who remain despite being warned to flee must be converted into beings like her, because she's lonely.



ERROW GUIDE

Level: 1d6 + 2

Wearable: Bracelet

Usable: Handheld device

Effect: For thirty-three days after activating the guide, it shows the distance and direction to Errow Cascade (located in the caldera of Mount Errow in Vrak), as long as the guide is in the same dimension. If the guide is not brought into Errow Cascade within that time period, it explodes as a shrapnel detonation of the same cypher level, and the release of energy spawns a handful of *vil* that infect all creatures damaged by the blast. If the guide is brought to Errow Cascade or its vicinity, the *vil* still come out when the timer runs down, but they scurry away without harming nearby creatures.



VRALKAN TRUTH NEEDLE

Level: 1d6 + 1

Wearable: Large hooked needle

piercing with pulsing yellow lights

Effect: When the cypher is worn and activated, the user takes 1 point of Might damage (ignores Armor) as the needle sinks into her flesh. For the next hour, if a lie is told within immediate range and the user hears it, she can identify it as a lie.



CONCENTRATED COLD RAY EMITTER

Level: 1d6 + 2

Wearable: Wristband, headband

Usable: Handheld device

Effect: Allows the user to project a ray of concentrated cold up to 200 feet (61 m) that inflicts damage equal to the cypher's level.

Vil, page 241



CHAPTER 9

RAYSKEL CAYS



Today, after much travel (so very much travel), I have arrived at the island of Darnali in the archipelago known as, I believe(?), the Grayskull Chase. I have no idea what that means, but I am sure I will discover it in time. The language here is made of an odd tongue, one that I will surely never emulate, but which I hope I can at least come to understand if I surround myself with it day and night.

From what I can ascertain, there is some sort of event or ceremony this evening; I cannot tell whether it is important nor whether there is anything of interest about to happen, and in any event, I am too tired to keep my eyes open a moment longer. I shall sleep and set off fresh in the dawn to see what I have missed.

~Naind Oreni, notes from her journal

Rayskel Cays is an archipelago located far west of the Steadfast. The chain has five major islands—Darnali, Augh-Chass, Angmorl, Edelmid, and Omaris—that together form a shape that is roughly circular. Scattered among these main islands are the *Rysors* (a group of nearly identical standing structures), the *Rynach*, and at least a hundred smaller islands, possibly many more. There are probably as many small islands that are uninhabited by humans as there are with human inhabitants, but there is no way to know for sure without venturing onto their shores.

Each of the major islands is so physically different from the others that it is difficult to imagine how such diversity of geology, botany, and ecology ended up within such close proximity. Even the weather is different from landmass to landmass, with some dealing up deadly lightstorms nearly every day and others offering calm, consistent conditions.

Not surprisingly, while there is a general shared sense of culture, religion, and economics across the islands, each one has also developed its own way of doing, seeing, and running things. Throughout the known history of the area, there has always been at least one entity with the desire to unite all of the islands under a single rule. To this date, no one has ever succeeded, although it doesn't prevent anyone from trying.

The majority of the population is split between rural dwellers—who mostly live off the land and the sea as hunters, gatherers, fishers, and farmers—and the citizens of the towns and cities that dot the coasts.

Connecting the otherwise disparate islands, at the very center of the Cays, is the *Slavering Falls*, a large underwater waterfall that is the focal point for what shared culture, economy, and religion exists throughout the archipelago.

Darnali, page 164

Augh-Chass, page 166

Angmorl, page 178

Edelmid, page 172

Omaris, page 169

Rysors, page 180

Rynach, page 175

Slavering Falls, page 157



RAYSKEL CAYS CULTURE

LANGUAGE

The inhabitants of the Cays speak more than thirty unique languages. Most are local dialects that extend no further than the town or city in which they are based. However, a pidgin language called Ayon can be heard in most of the inhabited areas. Ayon seems to be at least partially based on the Truth. Although it started as a language used only for trade, the large number of speakers means it is quickly growing into a language more commonly spoken in general conversation.

Under the guise of preserving knowledge, scholars at an order known as Racknage on the island of Omaris are attempting to kill this spoken pidgin before it grows into a full-fledged language. They have been sending missionaries out to teach the importance of preserving languages. Of course,

most Racknage scholars speak only the language of their order and a bit of Ayon, so bringing people into the fold has been difficult, to say the least.

COMMON AYON WORDS

Ayask: beg, ask, need, "please," "will you...?"

Grine: lazy, lost, someone with no purpose

Hifa: trustworthy, honest, leader, good person

Nasay: false, tall tale, lie, "I don't believe you."

Shinto: trade, sell, exchange, "I'd like to buy..."

Sline: untrustworthy, thief, cheap

Trusay: big talker, salesman, story, expensive

Racknage, page 170

Omaris, page 169



THE SLAVERING FALLS

Nearly 150 miles (241 km) in diameter, this circular underwater waterfall isn't actually a fall of water, although for all intents and purposes, that's exactly what it looks like. Its unique appearance is caused by the constant runoff of sand and drit deposits over a pocked and eroded structure that rises up from (or is somehow anchored to) the ocean floor. The structure is roughly circular, with a lip on the top like a drain pipe, and the top of it rests about 125 feet (38 m) below the surface of the water. The caves and crevices inside and outside the structure are home to myriad creatures of all shapes and sizes, and they catch flotsam of all kinds, including oddities, cyphers, artifacts, and other, even stranger items.



Children from many of the surrounding islands are trained from birth to be moonbabies, those who dive deep into the caves and crevices to search for food, riches, and, most important of all, airels—tiny gelatinous spongefish that are believed to be living parts of the moon. Stories say the airels were provided to the people of the Cays for protection and sustenance in exchange for their loyal worship.

A few times a year, the falls grow still, the waters become flat and clear as glass, and, over a period of days, the buried structure begins to rise out of the water. Slowly it pushes upward, sometimes not resting until it reaches 100 feet (30 m) or more above the surface. It stands that way for nearly a week, water and sand and silt running down its sides, creatures flopping out of every crevice to fall back into the water. During that time, islanders swarm the structure, attempting to connect with it in some spiritual or secular way. Some want to kiss it and caress it, paying homage. Others want to destroy it. Some want to make love on it, believing it will bring them children or luck. And still others want to take everything from it that they can—creatures, washed-up items, treasures, or whatever they can find. Although it takes a few days to rise from the water, the structure recedes into the water at a surprising rate (usually under an hour's time), which can make it a hazardous spot for anyone not carefully watching for tremors and other signs of impending movement.

Auguries—those who attempt to predict the rise and descent of the Slaving Falls—live on all of the major islands. Most make their predictions using star flags, young men with tattooed backs who are laid side by side, backs up, in a random order. The augury then reads their backs with the aid of a piece of the numenera (each augury uses a different type of device). Their predictions are almost never correct, but if an augury even comes close, he earns a lifetime of recognition.

GOVERNMENT

The archipelago is mostly self-governed, with each of the islands populated with small city-states and even smaller village-states (which in this case are often single villages or small family collectives with a single person in charge). Some of the islands have a single “ruler,” although they are not recognized as such by all the inhabitants.

However, one man, along with his family of loyal servants, warriors, and creatures, is working hard to rule the entire archipelago. Trau Yad calls himself the God of the Gold Canyon but has yet to explain where that

moniker comes from or what, exactly, it even means. Tall, with broad shoulders, slim hips, and a large expanse of bright yellow hair, Yad resides on Augh-Chass, along the northwestern shores of Dyn's Scar. He believes that he just “has a way” with people and that's why they follow his lead. Although he is extraordinarily skilled in his powers of persuasion, in truth, it is his collective of bonebreakers, led by an echryni called Ormere, that rule the islands through a combination of fear and extortion.

Yad, who rarely, if ever, leaves Augh-Chass, talks often about his conviction that uniting the Cays under a single leadership—

Dyn's Scar, page 166

Echryni, page 162

Trau Yad: level 2, all tasks involving intimidation as level 1, all tasks involving persuasion, lore, knowledge, or social graces as level 4; always has three bonebreakers watching out for him, usually from the air on their mounts



"I understand what the people of the Cays need, even when they don't understand it themselves. I challenge anyone who listens to me for more than a few minutes to deny that I should be—and will be—the rightful leader of these isles."

~Trau Yad

namely, his own—will allow the archipelago to rise to great power. But that isn't his true, secret dream. No, that comes thanks to the whisperings of his conjoined children, triplets who share an external brain among them.

When the children became teenagers, they suddenly began to have visions—wild images of a world beyond the Cays, one giant landmass full of mysterious creatures and structures. For years, Yad did not believe these to be more than fanciful dreamings of three children trapped by their own bodies. But in recent years, a few ships have landed on the shores of Augh-Chass, claiming to have come from just such a place. Since then, Yad has pumped

the triplets for information regularly and makes his collective keep an eye out for new visitors. The more he hears about this faraway place, the more determined he is to conquer and control it.

Yad has put a number of regulations into place, most of which are ignored unless the bonebreakers are around to keep watch. One of these is the decree that all visitors must trade in their "shins" (a concept he picked up from his children, and that he has seen in action thanks to occasional explorers arriving on the islands) to his hired shin traders, who travel the Cays exchanging shins for the local currency, called airels.

Rumor has it that Yad has also struck a deal with the *Jaekels* that roam the nearby



Jaekel, page 169



seas, promising to reward them handsomely with coveted body parts and ships for any “landmassers” that they bring to him.



BONEBREAKERS

Yad’s collective—he doesn’t like the word “army” because it implies that he is not the one in control—is nicknamed the “bonebreakers” not necessarily because they break bones (although they are not opposed to doing so) but because of their weapons of choice. Bonebreakers construct elaborate stick-weapons from the bones, skin, and biomods of their dead mounts, creatures called *quaaenit*, adding a bit to the weapon from each mount that dies in their care. Most weapons consist of a long shinbone decorated with “skin flags”—hanging bits of cured hide filled with numenera devices that attach to and enhance the weapon in some way.

Leader *Ormere* has placed a collective of bonebreakers on each of the major islands, as well as along the smaller islands of the Slaving Falls, to establish outposts and keep the peace. Some of the more powerful, organized towns and cities are protesting via

riots, fighting, and other means. So far, no one has caused enough of a fuss for *Ormere* and the rest of the bonebreakers to pay much attention, but the tension continues to rise.

ECONOMY

Generally, the islands rely heavily on trade—exchanging a fish for a rug for a numenera device that helps you fish better—but the official currency is dried, living aires. Collected by moonbabies and others willing to risk the deep, dangerous dive off the Slaving Falls, live aires are run through a complicated, month-long dye process that turns them ochre. Once they’ve been through this process, they are considered legal tender. Only official airelistas are allowed to partake in this preparation process, the orangish hues of their lower forearms denoting them as someone of import.

Aires are amphibious and long-lived. However, a dead airel is worth less than nothing, so most people have elaborate systems in their homes, on their sea craft, or in some hidden venue to sustain their wealth.

Trau Yad’s recent shin decree means that the waterways between the islands are dotted with his collectors, traveling from place to place, gathering shins. Because most island people see shins as worthless (no one accepts them as currency except for Trau Yad), this high exchange rate has created a rash of petty thievery, where numenera devices and other imperative machines are destroyed for whatever shins they might contain. Some people have even tried to take out the shin traders, in the hopes of stealing their shins and aires (and, of course, trading in the shins to other unharmed shin traders elsewhere). Trau Yad

Moonbabies, page 157

Bonebreaker: level 3, all tasks involving initiative or intimidation as level 4; Armor 2; carries a level 4 artifact (also called a bonebreaker) that does one of the following: directs a spray of poison gas at a single target in close range (4 points of damage, ignores Armor), shoots a tongue-like projectile in close range that does 5 points of damage and recoils for reuse, or deploys a small heat-seeking pebble that finds the nearest single target in close range and explodes on contact (4 points of damage). Depletion: 1 in d100

Quaaen, page 239

Ormere: level 5; Armor 2; carries an artifact that looks like a cane but is an electricity conductor, causing *Ormere* to have an electric current running through his body constantly. This shock does 5 points of damage, ignoring Armor, to anyone or anything that touches him. If someone takes shock damage from *Ormere* for three or more rounds in a row, she is knocked a step down the damage track.

The current conversion rate is two aires per shin.

Aires—at least the dried, living, dyed aires—are likely very rare in other places of the world. Although they wouldn’t be seen in those places as an official measure of currency, they could fetch a decent price from collectors, scientists, or others interested in such things.

Bonebreakers must develop a long relationship with their mounts, typically starting when the creatures are small enough to hold in the palm of their hand. Quaaenit stay palm-sized for six months to a year, and then, when submerged in water, grow to their full size within two days’ time. If they aren’t submerged within a year of their “birth,” they die before reaching maturity. Thus, most bonebreakers have multiple young quaaenit in their care at any given time.



Slavering Falls, page 157

Angmorl, page 178

Edelmid, page 172

has threatened to decrease the conversion rate if the crimes don't stop, but so far he has not taken action on this warning.

RELIGION

The archipelago has a loosely organized religion that has a few core principles but otherwise varies widely from island to island (and even from town to town). Most people worship the moon as their main god, believing the sky to be a giant sea that mirrors the one they live on. The moon, therefore, is seen as another circular set of waterfalls, a sky twin to the *Slavering Falls*.

Some people—mostly those who live on *Angmorl* and *Edelmid*—believe that when the *Slavering Falls* rises from the sea in its irregular cycle, it does so in an attempt to

puncture the moon, either to impregnate her or kill her. Others worship the Falls as the moon's little sister, daughter, or long-lost lover; when the Falls rise, they believe the two gods are attempting to reunite after ages of being separated. In the past, many of the island cultures performed elaborate sacrificial rituals of creatures and humans on the risen structure to either help it on its journey or send it back beneath the sea, depending on their beliefs. That practice fell out of favor for a while, facing derision and revolt from the younger generations, but has since experienced a bit of a revival.

The majority believe that when a person or creature dies, he must be put under the waves for three days so that he can leave his body to become a bioluminescent creature in the skysea. At the end of that time, the body is pulled ashore and offered up as meat and sustenance for wild or domesticated animals. Anything that is left is made into tools, fertilizer, or decoration by those closest to the deceased. If someone drowns and is not pulled out, or if his body is not put under the waves for three days, he is considered lost forever and his name is not mentioned again.

Most people can name all of the constellations that make up their loved ones' new homes in the sky, and they know which part of which constellation they are going to "live" in when they go skyward.

TRAVEL

Typically, there is more passage and exchange between the shores of any two islands than from one end of a single island to the other. This is mostly thanks to the vast array of sea craft, iuskies, bubbleboats, underways, and companion animals that make it far faster to travel short distances over water than to walk inland.

Sea Craft: Most island sea craft consist of simple, small boats, skiffs, kayaks, and canoes. They're designed to carry passengers and small amounts of goods across short distances and in mostly calm waters. Some craft, however, are more ornate and elaborate, designed to cover long distances or move with great speed.



Iuskies: These long, thin, kitelike plants grow wild on many of the islands. Comprised of a long, hollow root tube (that can grow up to 40 feet [12 m] long in soft soil) topped with feathery foliage, iuskies are used to propel craft forward or to pull a person on a board or bubbleboat across the water more quickly. Sometimes, iuskies are altered with bits of the numenera to create a stronger pull; the largest of these can lift a person into the air and carry her across the water for short distances.

Bubbleboats: These large semicircular devices aren't really boats, nor are they bubbles. They're the discarded shells of duems, creature that look like large floating jellyfish but have hard top shells that they shed once or twice a year. The shells are hydrophobic, but many people put a lot of work into their bubbleboats to make them even more efficient at resting on and gliding across the surface of the water.

Advanced riders can learn how to catch air under their bubbleboats, using them to hover on the currents for short periods of time.

Underways: Throughout the islands, square, air-filled tunnels run from one shore to another, providing quick passage via air currents. No one knows how the underways are created or when new ones might appear, but they seem to be composed of a dark green plantlike material that keeps water out and breathable air in. Some people speculate that they're passageways inside the body of a giant sea creature; others say they're plant matter.

Inside the tunnels, wind currents push in one direction on one side, and in another direction on the other (the particular side varies from tunnel to tunnel). By hugging the correct wall, a traveler can cover the distance three times as fast as walking. Standing in the exact center of an underway holds the person in place, as the currents push with the same speed and pressure from both directions.

Riding a bubbleboat along the current is a level 3 task.

Attempting to catch air on a bubbleboat is a level 6 Speed task.

One possible way to tell if a tunnel is about to collapse is to stand in the very center. If the current doesn't hold you fast, but instead pushes you in one direction or the other, the underway is likely becoming unstable. Of course, by that point, you'd better have an escape plan in place.

WHY AND HOW TO TRAVEL TO RAYSKEL CAYS

Characters from the mainland might come to the Cays for any number of reasons. Although the distance is far—about 1,000 miles (1,609 km)—most characters can get there in about ten days, depending on their speed, the weather conditions, and any dangers they encounter along the way.

The most common routes are from **Kaparin** up to Hearttide Crag and from the **City of Bridges** across to Vonnai. However, common doesn't mean well- or often-traveled. It just means that in those two towns, out of all places, you *might* find someone who knows someone who has heard of someone who has sailed west to the Cays. One bar tale sometimes told in the City of Bridges is how a **rastrider** flew his mount across the long blue divide, the two of them landing on passing ships, tiny islands, and once upon the back of a great creature from the depths in order to reach the Slaving Falls. There are even two maps of Rayskel Cays on the wall of the **RFM** in Kaparin; however, they appear to show entirely different locations, and thus the authenticity and accuracy of both are in dispute.

Those on the mainland who talk of Rayskel Cays likely speak of it as a place of rumored wealth, treasures, and undiscovered numenera, available for the taking if anyone were intrepid enough to make their way there. Anyone with interest in wild, unknown beasts, cultural unveilings, or geologic discoveries will find the Cays much to their liking.

It's also possible that word has spread from Trau Yad, in what he calls his Gold Canyon Crusade, where he offers people homes, work, and an opportunity to be part of his regime if they travel to Augh-Chass with at least 100 shins.

Lastly, characters might arrive at the Cays in ways outside their control. If they have interactions with **Jaekels** or other pirate types while at sea, they might be captured and brought to the island as prisoners.

Kaparin, page 167

City of Bridges, page 145

Rastrider, page 166

RFM, page 167

Jaekel, page 169

Echryni descriptor,
page 216

A common echryni expression used to express solidarity and sympathy is, "The bone betrays its softness. The water hides its face." It portrays the echryni belief that everything must be both weak and strong to work together and survive.

Underway thieves typically keep an eye on the entry membranes, in the hopes that a traveler will forget to remove his jewelry, airels, and other small valuables before going through the membrane. If a thief is fast, she can grab any such items and run off before the person remembers—and before the tides bury the objects under sand and silt.

Underways are typically anywhere from 7 to 15 feet (2 to 5 m) in diameter and can be as long as 20 miles (32 km). Sometimes they branch off, but they always go from one shore to another. New ones are easy to spot because they appear in a sudden geyser of air, about 10 feet (3 m) out in the water. A large circular membrane appears in the shallows; anything larger than about the size of a human fist can sink through it, but it captures anything smaller.

Underways are known to depart as quickly as they appeared, collapsing onto themselves without warning, capturing everyone inside and dragging them down. This danger gives them the moniker "skyways," since they take you not just from island to island but, possibly, from this sea to your death in the skysea.

The danger doesn't stop people who want to move quickly from one island to another, but many who use the underways wear some type of protection against potential collapse. A special bladed device called a fremmer is a common, inexpensive (and often homemade) choice. Fremmers fit on a person's head like a hat or headband and have a long, sharp knife or stick protruding from their top. The hope is that the fremmer will puncture the tunnel material before it completely collapses, allowing the wearer to escape.

Airbreathers can also be purchased for a price, as can flotation devices and inflatable spheres.

Airbreather: Allows someone to breathe underwater for up to one hour. Activation is an action. Cost: 50 airels/25 shins

Flotation device: This beltlike device activates automatically as soon as it senses water pressure and propels the wearer upward at twice the speed of swimming. Cost: 200 airels/100 shins

Inflatable sphere: Called the poor man's savior, these spheres must be inflated by blowing into them, which takes two actions. They help someone float to the surface. Cost: 20 airels/10 shins

THE ECHRYNI

The **echryni** are amphibious humanoids who inhabit most of the islands in the Cays, with the largest population living along the westernmost shore of Darnali. Although adult echryni look only slightly human, most of them live among humans with ease. The majority speak the Truth, but they also sing in a short, staccato language that others call wave speech, which is designed to carry for long distances underwater.

Echryni go through three stages, taking a different shape in each.

Early Life: Their life cycle starts in the water, where they begin as larvae in a carefully constructed birth bed. The young have leathery grey bodies, with wide, finlike wings, webbed feet, and tails like rudders. A series of variously shaped openings along the front of their bodies serve as food filters and gills. The young mostly spend their time eating tiny creatures that live in shallow, warm water and growing at a rate of a couple of inches per day. This stage lasts anywhere from two to four months.

If out of water for more than a few minutes at a time during this stage, the young quickly begin to suffocate.





They are barely mobile on land, able to push themselves forward with their webbed feet and wings only a few inches at a time.

Adult Life: As adults, echryni metamorphose into creatures that are equally suited for land and ocean dwelling. Their strong legs and large webbed feet allow them to travel over hot and rough terrain as easily as over wet sand, their now-smaller wings provide streamlined movement across land or through water, and their adaptable lungs and gills let them breathe on land or underwater for up to 28 hours at a time (at which point they must switch environments, even if only for a few minutes, to clean out their delicate gill passages).

Their adult lifespan is slightly longer than a typical human's, provided they are not designated to give birth to younglings (see Death Stage). It is rare to see one echryni without others near, as their culture is particularly based on groups and families.

If the echryni have specific genders, they are not easy to ascertain by sight. Most dress in simple clothing that allows their

wings a full range of movement and keeps the gills along the sides of their chests exposed. Although they typically prefer handmade leatherwork and waterwear for special occasions. Waterwear is a liquidlike fabric that flows around and over the skin, giving the impression of moving water, although it provides protection from the elements, as well as from ambient and weapon damage.

As adults, echryni can control and change the very structure of water—specifically saltwater—using an enzyme on their skin. This allows them to turn water into a semisolid state while retaining most of its fluid properties, creating things with it that would normally seem impossible, including fish nets, temporary shelters, and the expensive and much sought-after waterwear. Some echryni create special gloves, clothing, and other devices to further enhance their abilities.

Death Stage: The largest and strongest echryni are chosen as birth beds. An echryni

Waterwear is rare and expensive. Convincing an echryni to craft a piece of waterwear for someone outside of its immediate circle of friends and family is a level 8 task. A small piece of waterwear, such as a bracelet or necklace, would cost about 50 aires. A larger piece, such as a shirt, could cost two or three times that much.

Sladd: level 1

Starglass storm: level 3.

Anyone caught in such a storm takes 2 points of Might damage for every minute that they can't find shelter. Any exposed, damaged flesh bears tiny star-shaped scars for about a week.

In some places, there is so much starglass along the beaches that it makes the shores seem transparent, as if you could see down through them. Because the starglass constantly shifts, it's like looking through a wet mirror. Look too long, and you're likely to feel a bit nauseated.

"I don't care what my people think of me, as long as they are alive to think it." ~Loles

Loles: level 3; Armor 2 (4 when she's inside or in contact with her house); carries a lunar-powered razor ring that inflicts 5 points of heat damage

may decline the position, but the societal pressure and the honor is enough that few do. To be a birth bed, an echryni builds a water basket along its chest, then collects an enzyme-soaked egg from everyone in the community who wants to provide one. In a complex ceremony on a predetermined day, the chosen ones take to the sea.

Deep in the water, they build elaborate water cocoons to house themselves and the eggs. During the cocoon building, which takes about a day, the rest of the community stays underwater with them, singing to them in wave speech. At the end of the day, only the chosen echryni stay behind, encased in their cocoons.

By the time the eggs hatch about a month later, the adult is long dead. The larvae burrow into the adult, living and eating inside the body for a few months or until their food source is depleted. By that time, they typically have their wings and are able to start swimming and hunting on their own.

THE ISLANDS OF RAYSKEL CAYS



DARNALI

Darnali is the largest island of the Rayskels and the most populated. Located along the easternmost edge of the archipelago, it is mostly natural rainforest, rolling hills, and starglass beaches. Sustenance is found deep in the forests from fruit, seeds, and nuts; myriad small, trappable animals, including sladds; and the common caliet tree, which draws saltwater into its trunk and drips fresh water from its red, heart-shaped leaves.

VONNAI

The largest city on Darnali is Vonnai, a sprawling construction located along the eastern shoreline. With a population of nearly 30,000 people, it is arguably the largest city in all of the Cays (although the citizens of Darrad would likely take umbrage with that, considering the sheer amount of space that Darrad takes up). Tight and compact, the city is built of houses and

STARGLASS

Starglass, a substance that is slightly larger than sand and utterly transparent, comes from the broken glassine hivelike structures that dot the landscape of Darnali. These oval hives are about 5 feet (2 m) in diameter and stand anywhere from 10 to 20 feet (3 to 6 m) tall, typically clustered around a single large tree. The hives are built every winter by colonies of fist-sized, winged marsupials called **sladds**, although it's not known how they create the structures or from what materials. Every spring, the winds that cross Darnali tear most of the hives apart, creating **starglass storms** that bite and sting the flesh like insects.

buildings that tuck into each other like puzzle pieces to create a single structure. Walkways run through the structures rather than between, and even the city's many docks are located beneath houses and buildings.

There are only four ways to enter Vonnai, two from land and two from the sea. These lunar-powered circular doors stay open to anyone who wishes to enter during the day but lock solidly when the sun goes down, preventing both entry and exit.

The official ruler of Darnali, a woman named **Loles**, resides here, in the Floating House of Scarlioni, the only unattached building inside the city. Situated just off the shore, the four-story hovering tower, built of large black panels, constantly rises and falls so that it's never more than a few inches above the water.

Loles is rarely seen away from her house, giving her speeches and decrees from its roof, and requiring anyone who wishes to see her to join her on the first-floor balcony. The house provides her with additional protection as long as she remains in contact with it. There are some who would say Loles is paranoid and heavy-handed in her ruling, but in truth she is a level-headed, forward-thinking ruler who is determined to keep her people and their city safe.



She is most often accompanied by her partner, **Tanet**, the genius architect behind the entire city's structure, as well as the creator of her house and weapon. He specializes in harvesting the moon's tidal energy to create power.

KINIDER

Kinider is a village at the southernmost tip of Darnali, along a peninsula called Goryl's Breath. Despite having a population of nearly 225 people, the village is almost impossible to see from a distance. That is because the majority of buildings are deep under the surface of the earth to protect them from the Terrible Exhale.

Created inside long tubes called sinkers, homes and other structures are made of a clear, glasslike substance, yet with a surface that is slightly malleable to the touch. The tubes run between 50 and 100 feet (15 to 30 m) in diameter, and anywhere from 10 to 100 feet (3 to 30 m) deep. There are exactly one hundred sinkers dotted along the shore, buried deep with just the top few inches sticking up out of the sand. The top openings always stay level with the sand as it shifts, as though buoyed by the very earth itself. Elaborate webbed membranes stretch across the tops of the sinkers to provide protection from the elements, while still allowing an exchange of air.

Ladders, sliders, complicated risers, and other devices are used to enter and leave the long tubes. Very little sticks to the walls of the sinkers, so inhabitants build elaborate standing screens and tall furniture. They will tell you that it's for the beauty of it, but in truth, they're merely blocking the horrible views. For through the crystal clear walls, it's possible to see any creature that burrows, digs, or buries itself in the earth around the sinker. Most of these creatures are harmless—and in some cases, lucky children will wake up one morning and find that an adorable, pink-skinned **ossill** has taken up residence in a burrow near their bed or that a swarm of insects are busy building an underground city against the wall in their living room. Others place large bouquets of sea mattrians around the rooms, hoping that the bright flowers will

THE TERRIBLE EXHALE

At various times throughout the year, a hot, fluid-filled wind whips across Goryl's Breath. The wind consists of watery bubbles that carry all manner of things inside them, from live snails and small fish to broken bits of dishes, equipment, and weapons. The bubbles release a noxious smell just before they explode, turning their contents into shrapnel, sending shards or guts or shells out with great force up to a short distance. This seasonal phenomenon is known as the Terrible Exhale, or just the Hale, and it works hard to destroy anything in its path. It can occur up to two dozen times in any given year and can last from an hour to many weeks.

Characters caught in the Hale might get lucky and lose only a few points of Might, or they might find themselves **stunned** or knocked a step down the damage track by a particularly violent explosion of shrapnel.

attract **lekohs**, small round grubs that give off a flickering red light.

But for most people, those small pleasures aren't worth the risk of drawing a **sandsulche** to their residence—and worse, having to look at it through the translucent sinker wall. These iridescent, many-legged amphibious worms grow up to 50 feet (15 m) long, with hard scales across their top and a pellucid underside that shows their organs clearly. They're attracted to sinkers for reasons unknown, and it's not usual for one to take a liking to a particular sinker, wrapping its entire length around and around the tube, exposing its clear underbelly, with all its internal workings, to anyone inside. It would be one thing if sandsulches were herbivores or had more complex digestive systems. However, their carnivorous nature, combined with a digestive system that is essentially one long constrictor tube big enough to encapsulate a full-size decaying mammal, makes for quite the gruesome show.

On the other hand, sandsulches will eat

Tanet: level 3, all tasks involving designing, spatial awareness, lunar knowledge and manipulation, and the numenera as level 6

Stunned, page 95

Lekoh: level 1

Sandsulche: level 7; Armor 2; can ingest an entire creature (no bigger than a human child) in a single action if the creature is within short range; ingested creatures take 4 points of damage per round until they break free or die

Ossill: level 2; Amor 2



DARNALI HEARSAY

Hole in the Ground: Just outside Kinider proper, a man named Jough Char has discovered what he believes is a new sinker, albeit one that is less than half a foot in diameter. He is convinced that sinkers are creatures that grow to a larger size given time and the necessary resources. Jough is looking for assistance to test his hypothesis, but he will only take people who can keep their mouths shut, as he has no intention of sharing this discovery with anyone until he can figure out a way to capitalize on it.

A Generation Destroyed: One of the most popular places for echryni birth beds is in the deep water off the western shore of Darnali. Shortly after the most recent birth bed ceremony, three underwater cocoons were attacked, and all the young ones and birth beds were killed. An echryni named Hooy says

he has proof that this was a deliberate attack by someone from Darnali. It's unknown whether Hooy is seeking retribution, an explanation, or both.

THE WEIRD OF DARNALI

Dullest Blade: An extraordinarily tall, thin man is sometimes seen along the western peninsula of Darnali, running a strange instrument along the shore. If asked, he says he is sharpening Darnali's knife. And in fact, it does look as if the edge of the beach is slowly beginning to compact, turning into a sharp edge that cuts the water.

A Shadow Falls: Near the westernmost wall of Vonnai, a large black, cloudlike object has appeared. It hangs just 15 feet (5 m) above the ground, and it often looks as if there's something alive inside it, attempting to get out. Occasionally, a series of short whistles can be heard from within the black mass.

anything smaller than a human child, so having one attached to your sinker is likely to keep down pests. And pets.

No one knows what the sinkers' original purpose was or how to create new ones, so as Kinider continues to grow, the residents face a housing shortage. Those with extra room charge exorbitant prices for long- or short-term rentals. Most people have elaborate passkeys, security systems, and living wills designed to keep their house safe and in the family name. Even a permanent sandsulche isn't enough to pry people loose from their sinkers; they just put up higher screens and deal with the sight (and sometimes the smells).

To offset the housing shortage, a small village has cropped up just north of Kinider, mostly old boats or debris turned into makeshift housing. These slums last until the next Hale, and then they are destroyed, along with many of the people who lived in them.



AUGH-CHASS

A large portion of the island of Augh-Chass is covered by an inland sea called Dyn's Scar, the large rivers of which flow toward, but never reach, the shores. Augh-Chass has the calmest, balmiest weather of all the islands. It is sparsely populated, with a single city named Ces. The rest of the inhabitants live in small groups, mostly along the shore of Dyn's Scar.

DYN'S SCAR

About 40 miles (64 km) across at its widest, this inland sea is murky white, as are its rivers. Despite its color, the water is clean and safe for consumption. Inhabitants of Ces have built long trenches to draw water from the sea to support their city's agriculture and inhabitants.

No matter what the weather conditions on the island, the sea is always stratified, with a cool top layer, a warm middle layer, and a bottom layer that often freezes, forming sunken icebergs, the largest of which occasionally float to the top. The



surface is covered in float pods—organic plants that stretch up to 10 feet (3 m) across and nearly 15 feet (5 m) high. Due to its unusual makeup, the Scar is filled with creatures and plants not found elsewhere.

Chain of Hawes: These hook-shaped insects connect together and skim or fly across the water in long ropes. They attack prey as a group, wrapping themselves around a creature's neck and chewing through the top layer of skin until they hit a vein or an artery.

Hyperfungus: All around the edges of the sea, these tall, spotted mushrooms sprout after certain rainstorms, sometimes gaining as much as a foot (0.3 m) per day. When they reach about 6 feet (2 m), they begin to shake violently, releasing thousands of tiny spores into the air. Most of the spores are harmless; however, every spore release includes one larger, winged spore called a **hyperspore**. This spore seeks to start a new colony of hyperfungi by being carried to a new place within a living creature. It glides into a creature's ear and begins to mentally issue directions. Those who can't resist its suggestions find themselves in a new place without any memory of how they got there and feel the urge to submerge themselves in whatever water is nearby. Hyperspores that are not submerged in water within one week go silent and die.

Gedyr

The sea is also the home of a city of multi-eyed creatures called **gedyr**. These highly intelligent, amphibious animals have built a complex city-structure in the middle layer of the sea from shells, bones, rocks, and a type of glue harvested from the float pods. They have an organized social structure, in which everyone has a designated role. A gedyr's sidefins and color striations give away its position in the community; the longer the fin and the more time nodules (tiny skin tags that show its age) it has, the higher the gedyr's standing. They are quick builders and creators, thanks to their tentacles and claws, which they use in tandem to construct all

manner of buildings, objects, sculptures, and weapons.

Gedyr are talented mimickers, able to replicate almost any sound by moving air through their pores (including their mouth, which is essentially a very large pore). Those who believe the gedyr are merely repeating sounds without understanding would be wrong; most gedyr can speak a variety of languages, including the Truth, although their "accent" can make them difficult to understand.

They are also skilled hunters, seeming to take great pleasure in stalking humanoids for the mere enjoyment of it. They build "blinds"—tents or tiny buildings designed to look like restaurants, inns, or other small establishments—and use their talents of mimicry to create the sounds of people inside.

Chain of hawes: level 4; moves a long distance each round; does 2 points of damage on first successful bite, then 3 points of damage on each subsequent bite

Hyperspore: level 2, all tasks involving persuasion and mental suggestion as level 4

It is not unusual for people who live near Dyn's Scar to cover their ears with netting, earmuffs, or other devices. Livestock and companion animals are often dressed in elaborate earwear to protect them from hyperspores.

The highest-ranking gedyr, a turquoise and salmon creature that is nearly 3 feet (1 m) tall, claims to be more than three hundred years old. Those who talk to it (or any of the others in the high ranks) before they are killed are likely to discover other claims, including tales of past and future worlds, both on Earth and beyond.

Gedyr: level 5, trickery and deceit as level 6, mimicry as level 7; moves a long distance each round when swimming or flying





Each gedyr has its favorite way of hunting: some trap creatures and drag them down to their city in the sea, others use their claws, and still others use custom-built melee weapons, typically bludgeoning types.

It is possible to reason with a gedyr. They have a great deal of respect for intelligence and creativity, but they don't believe that humans have those skills. A smart, quick-thinking human might surprise a gedyr into letting her live, but probably only if she agrees to let the gedyr test her mental capacities for a while first.

CES

Located just off the northwestern shore of Dyn's Scar, Ces might claim to be a town, but it is really the sprawling habitation of Trau Yad, his children, his employees and servants, and his many bonebreakers. The city is built of concentric rings, each one larger and tougher than the last. In the outermost circle live the bonebreakers, shin traders, and quaaenit, then Yad's employees, then his servants, then his children, and finally himself, in the smallest,

innermost ring. Between each ring, crops and creatures of various kinds are raised to sustain and feed the town, and vendors and traders set up shop against the curved walls at all levels.

In the middle of Yad's residence, a large tower rises 200 feet (61 m) into the air and is topped with a flat plate about 30 feet (9 m) in diameter. A large contraption in the center sends out puffs of yellow smoke at regular intervals. If it has a purpose (and it probably does), Yad hasn't yet told anyone what it is.

WATCHER'S ROW

Along the eastern shore of Augh-Chass, the area known as Watcher's Row sits near the water. This long line of towering machines isn't ancient; in fact, they all seem to have been built or placed there within the past hundred years, but no one can remember what they are supposed to do or how they got there. If you ask around, most people will say, "They've always been there." But with a little more probing, people will likely concede that they don't remember



AUGH-CHASS HEARSAY

Shifting Tide: Citizens of Lytum, a town along the western shore of Augh-Chass, are planning a revolt on a nearby group of bonebreakers. The bonebreakers have set up a temporary camp while they search for a well-known thief. Either group would gratefully accept help—and would probably offer something interesting as thanks.

Star Charts: An ancient augury named Boath claims that his most recent star chart reading suggests that the Slaving Falls soon will rise and fall in the same day, something that has never happened before. He foretells that the unexpected movement will bring unusual treasures from the deepest sea.

THE WEIRD OF AUGH-CHASS

Broken Connections: There are whispers that Yad's children are only sometimes conjoined and that the youngest of the three (by about a minute) occasionally disconnects from the others and wanders the shores of Dyn's Scar, talking into a white box.

A Ring of Tremors: A broken circle of brilliant purple stones welcomes any who set foot within it by shaking the visitors drastically, as if they've stepped into a contained earthquake. Most people report a sense of completeness after the experience, but others find that their nails turn bright red and begin to curl.

There is an ancient tale of a horrible flood of glaili that comes once every few hundred years, running through the tunnels with a bestial roar, wiping out everything and everyone in its path. No one alive on the island remembers living through such a thing, so it has passed into legend and myth.

Creatures called ern sharcey thrive in dark, damp corners of kibics. These cup-shaped beings grow up to 2 feet (0.6 m) in diameter and spend their short lives rooted to a single place, where they sing to any who pass by. The songs remind listeners of the best moments of their childhood, and they feel compelled to leave one of their most valued possessions inside the creature's "cup." Any deposited items disappear instantly, as if warped from existence. Anyone who touches the rim of an ern sharcey momentarily feels as if she were a child again, experiencing great joy but also finding that the difficulty of all tasks is increased by one step for the next ten minutes.

Ern sharcey: level 3, tasks related to persuasion as level 5

the machines always being there, but that must have been the case because no one remembers their construction.

The machines are doing *something*—from the outside, it's easy to hear a low gurgling, as if listening to a stomach digesting its last meal—but anyone who attempts to touch one hears a deafening tone inside his mind. There are no words, but the mental squeal is enough to deter even the hardest of explorers. That, of course, doesn't prevent people from attempting to uncover the secret of the watchers, using any devices they can get their hands on to try to overcome the high-pitched defenses.

A group of people have become obsessed with the machines and have built a small town under the southernmost structure. Some believe that the machines hold gods that must be worshipped, others think they are crashed ships that house creatures from another world, and some want to crack them open for the treasures they believe exist inside. In attempts to breach the machines' defenses, the obsessed have built a number of devices, and some have even blinded themselves, deafened themselves, or tried to give themselves (or each other) lobotomies.



OMARIS

Located along the northwest border of the Cays, Omaris is the third largest of the islands. Its surface is scarred with hundreds of miles of deep, wide trenches called kibics. These open tunnels crisscross the island, in some places up to a mile wide and nearly half a mile deep (1.6 by 0.8 km).

The floors of the tunnels are made of a soft and porous silvery material that sometimes acts like firmly packed sand and other times like warm tar. No matter its state, it constantly bubbles with tiny holes, each about the size a human thumb. All year long, the holes release a viscous burgundy liquid called glaili, sometimes in small amounts and sometimes in geysers that shoot syrupy streams. A group of nanos in the area who call themselves the glaili strippers have discovered that if they compress glaili inside machines with great force over a long period of time, the liquid turns into something else. They haven't perfected the process, however; glaili might become a hard lump that can be used to power numenera devices, or it might turn into a device itself. More often than not, it compresses to a lump of pretty, but utterly useless, blood-red stone.

The walls of the kibics are made of a thick

Gyliam Liamsel: level 4; Armor 2; wears two numenera slugspitters on her hips that auto-aim for the target's eyes (creatures that fail a Speed defense roll take 4 points of damage and are blinded for one round)

In combat, blinded combatants use the same rules as if their target was invisible.



Invisible target,
page 96

Racknage scholar: level 3, all tasks involving deciphering codes and using or understanding the numenera as level 5; Armor 1

Rondirs are marble-sized orbs that can be thrown or launched, causing 4 points of explosive damage to everyone in immediate distance. After they detonate, they take one round to rebuild themselves.

In most places, scholars have covered the sharp points of the walls and floors with a clear gel that hardens to protect those who use the space. However, rumor has it that some areas have been left untouched and are used for training, discipline, and information gathering.

golden cement inlaid with elaborate designs—spots of light that blink and utter guttural growls, indentations that appear to be the fossilized remains of plants and animals that are extinct or never existed, ancient languages scrawled and carved, and bits of technology and unusual natural elements sunk into the surface. The walls shine in places, reflecting light to produce elaborate sun patterns. In other places, the material seems designed to absorb light, creating spots of deep shadow and utter darkness.

Sliding panels, giant hinged doors, and enormous apertures are scattered along the floor and walls of the trenches. Many of these passages can still be opened, often to reveal large, complicated underground structures. Some are filled with the remains of the dead or the remnants of abandoned cities, ripe for the picking. Others reveal more dangerous opportunities: still-thriving civilizations, unusual ecosystems filled with unknown plants and creatures, or ancient machines that continue to churn out bizarre devices, automatons, or other bits of the numenera—not to mention other humans and sentient beings who also search behind the closed doors.

ACKNYT

*Here lies all the knowledge of the world
Buried deep within its tomb
It waits for our hands
It waits for our hearts
It waits for our heads
It waits for our will
We will know it as we know ourselves, and
better still.*

~Racknage prayer said at the Tomb of the World

A place that prides itself on scholarly learning and, more importantly, the active dissemination of that information, Acknyt is home to the order that calls itself Racknage, or “scholars of the world.” Those who take the vow of Racknage promise to discover, preserve, and share the true knowledge of the world, at any cost. Those who do not wish to learn the truth of the world are put to death quickly and quietly (or sometimes slowly and loudly) or brought back to Acknyt as unwilling

participants in the “finishing school.”

The current leader is a woman named **Gyliam Liamsel**, who was captured as a young child and raised within the order. To prove her devotion and gain her rank, she killed her parents and her cousin while they were in finishing school, becoming the youngest leader at the age of 13. She is now nearly 80 and growing frail, but she is not ready to give up her position.

Racknage scholars dress in rusty orange tranirs, a type of robe that puffs out to give them the shape of a spherical body, and their weapons of choice are **rondirs**. Created by prisoners of the finishing school, these small throwing globes explode upon impact and then put themselves back together. As part of their vows, scholars are also trained with a variety of melee weapons and many kinds of numenera devices.

The order resides in the sprawling ruin that makes up Acknyt. The scholars believe it was once a university of great renown, although its structure and size indicate that if someone did study there, they were likely not humans as the Ninth World knows them today. The walls and floors are sloped at unusual angles and inlaid with sharp points of clear metal, the remaining ceilings stand just 3 to 4 feet (1 to 1.2 m) high, and the doorways are all tall, thin triangles, about 6 inches (15 cm) wide at the base. Needless to say, the ruins are no longer used for their original purpose—whatever that was. Instead, the scholars have built upon the ancient structures, while attempting to preserve them as much as possible.

The most important place in Acknyt is the Tomb of the World, a large pit, nearly 150 feet (46 m) across and endlessly deep, in which a bright orange globe floats. Every morning before they begin their work, scholars gather at the tomb and stand in silent prayer, waiting for the first shadow to fall upon the globe. When that happens, the globe projects hieroglyphs onto the faces of all living creatures within a half-mile radius, “blessing them with knowledge.” Each time this happens, each scholar receives a small amount of information from the symbols on her face; however, each person learns something different about a different topic,



and the scholars must work together to create an understanding of what they've learned. An entire building is dedicated to recording and then piecing together all of the different bits of information the tomb has provided. Anyone who is not out in the world as a missionary is expected to spend much of his day working in this building.

A small percentage of scholars go mad when the hieroglyphs are shown upon their faces. It might occur during their first prayer or their hundredth, but all who are afflicted rise into the air briefly, as if no longer held by gravity, and then fall limp to the ground, babbling words that sound like sparks from an electric current. They appear to recover, but a day or so later, they begin to believe they are not themselves, but rather are the person who was standing nearest to them at the time of the incident. So far, the orange globe has given no information on the reason for the madness or how to treat it. Those with the mimicking disease are housed in a special building called the Ephemeral Ward until a cure can be found.

MAER OUTPOST

"The inside of the nyek was strewn with oddities, things that glittered and shone, talked and sang and echoed our voices. Were they there, inside the creature all along? Had it eaten them? Incorporated them? Or were they already here on the beach, just waiting to be found?"

~Garene, wreck survivor and cofounder of Maer Outpost

This tiny town along the coast began life as a shipwreck—or rather, as the point of collision between a passing ship and a young **bellowing nyek**. Both the vessel and the creature were destroyed in the impact, sending shards of ship and bone and supplies and skin scattering across the shore.

Those who survived the wreck—two women named Garene and Tiage, and a thuman named Maer—set up a temporary camp with whatever supplies they could gather. Surprisingly, they found far more in the wreckage than had been on the ship. All manner of the numenera were tangled among the nyek's corpse: oddities, cyphers, unknown parts, and even a few intact artifacts.

Bellowing nyek: level 9;
Armor 5; swims up to 500
feet (152 m) each round

Bellowing nyeks are behemoth amphibian creatures with multiple finwings and a long, serpentine tail. They spend most of their lives in the air, flying and leaping above the ocean's surface. Once they reach a certain size, however, they become waterbound, able to breach the surface only rarely. The sight of a fully grown bellowing nyek breaching is one of wonder to even the most hardened and experienced Ninth Worlders.



OMARIS HEARSAY

To Create a Man: A woman named Brige, a member of the glaili strippers, announced that she discovered how to compress glaili and turn it into a living human. Unfortunately, the first one she created ran off and has disappeared. Brige is willing to pay handsomely for the return of her “proof.”

Horrors Unleashed: A swarm of grublike insects was discovered and accidentally released from one of the passageways in the northernmost kubic. The grubs enter people through any available orifices and grow large enough to burst open the bodies of their hosts. They then “carry” the body around, using it as protection and nutrients. The people of the area are calling for assistance in destroying the plague.

THE WEIRD OF OMARIS

Unusual Gifts: In a small village called Hardu, a strand of a clear, jellylike substance 20 feet long (6 m) and 5 inches around (13 cm) has been winding its way through the streets, hovering about 3 feet (1 m) in the air. Hundreds of long, white tendrils hang down, and most people who touch one discover a new oddity or cypher on their person within a few hours. The discovery of the object is accompanied by an intense throbbing behind the eyes.

Duplicate Protection: A full suit of armor washed ashore outside Maer Outpost, the metal dented and scratched, with the name Kyale stamped onto the front. A day later, what appeared to be the same piece of armor, with the same marks, washed ashore in the same place. And again a day later. Since then, five more identical pieces of armor have appeared.

Somehow word spread, and soon people began arriving on the beach, asking to purchase this thing or that thing. It wasn't long before Maer's Outpost became a place to buy things you couldn't find elsewhere. The store, built inside the remains of the nyek, is a long, rambling, tunnel-like structure, full of pockets and side rooms.

Garene has since passed on, but Tiage, with Maer at her side, continues to run the town and the trading post. Ships continually arrive from nearby islands and from much farther away as well, carrying those who seek rare and unusual items.

No one is entirely sure where the goods continue to come from—Tiage and Maer don't tell—and, besides, who wants to look a gift aneen in the mouth? Customers gladly take what's offered, especially since prices are more than fair. Often, the item you're looking for isn't there when you arrive, but Tiage will tell you to come back in a few days or a week. Upon your return, she will send Maer into one of the back rooms to retrieve your desired item.



EDELMID

An island in the southwestern region of the Cays, Edelmids entire surface is covered with huge ringed structures. These rings, called Grask's Hoops, vary in height and size. The largest is just over 200 miles (322 km) across and 1 mile (2 km) above sea level.

The structures are layers upon layers of rings made of what looks like a combination of dirt and sand. However, the substance doesn't act like typical soil or drit. Very little seems to grow in it, it is harder than stone when wet, and it runs in rivers when dry. As the material shifts and hardens and shifts again, always the rings remain, perfect circles spreading outward.

The weather on Edelmids is daunting and disconcerting to the unprepared.

- Travelers might find themselves stuck in a storm of scent—tiny star-shaped drops that break open upon them not with liquid, but with smells. Sometimes a storm carries just one odor, good or bad, in its downpour; other times it drenches creatures in a cacophony of fresh fruit,

Although getting caught in a sensation storm of any kind is discombobulating—causing nonadapted creatures to be stunned or dazed for anywhere from one round to one day—touchstorms are potentially deadly. Being in a bad touchstorm for just ten minutes can cause 10 points of Might damage and 5 points of Intellect damage (both ignore most Armor).



- animal dung, green twigs, and the mating stench of unknown animals.
- When the wind picks up, it carries the sounds of long ago—not the noise of the traveler’s past, but of someone else’s.
- A touchstorm is an experience wished only upon one’s worst enemies. This silent and invisible—but often deadly—weatherfront erupts in a series of sensations, from the barest of ticklish touches to the agony of being beaten repeatedly.
- The rarest weather pattern is tidalsnow, a wet, low-hanging cloud that starts at the size of a fist and grows larger over a week or two. When it reaches a critical mass—usually a mile or so across—it explodes, pelting the land with small creatures, oddities, bits of the numenera, and anything else it has gathered from . . . somewhere.

While it might seem like such a place wouldn’t sustain life, Edelmid is home to a variety of plants and animals, many of which have adapted to thrive in the unusual ecosystem.

Crowns of Kavess: Covering a large area in the center of each of Grask’s Hoops, a gelatinous raspberry-red plant grows in crystalline clumps. Called **Crowns of Kavess**, the plants grow up to 10 feet (3 m) high and survive by “drinking” the scents and sounds brought by the storms. After these large storms, each group of crowns begins to vibrate and churn, working together as if they’re a single large machine. Within a day, the largest crown in the area sprouts one or sometimes two powerful artifacts at the top of its tallest crystalline structure. Removing the artifact intact is a level 5 task.

To protect themselves during this time, the crowns emit clouds of red chemicals that color the earth and air for miles. The **chemical storm** lingers for one day, attempting to attract all organic organisms in the area. Creatures that fall prey to the chemicals are compelled to get to the crowns as quickly as they can and defend them (and most important, the artifact) from any perceived threats for one hour, until they are brought to their senses, or until their death.

Crown of Kavess: level 3; health 20; Armor 1 (plus any Armor from the creature that is defending them)

Chemical storm: level 3, persuasion as level 5

If an artifact grown by a crown is depleted, the user can attempt to revive the artifact by providing it with an intense sensory experience, such as the emotional death of a loved one; a beautifully cooked, savory meal; or being bathed in the blood of enemies. Reviving the artifact in this way is a level 4 task. Once revived, the artifact returns to its former depletion rate.





Erynth grask,
page 240

Erynth grask seem to stay underground to avoid the red chemical clouds of the crowns, giving the impression that despite their alien nature, they might be affected by a chemical storm's call to action.

Usken: level 4; Armor 2; carries a medium bludgeoning weapon; when "senseless," becomes level 1 in tasks involving perception, and all attacks and defense tasks are modified by one step to their detriment

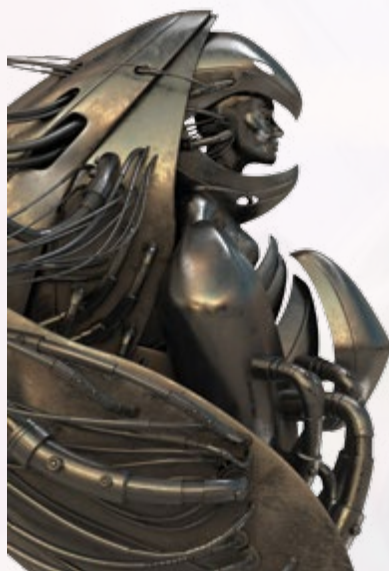
Usken leader: level 5; Armor 5; typically has a random artifact

Damor the Cleansed: level 5, mental tasks and leadership abilities as level 6

Edel's Erynth Grask: A peculiar subspecies of erynth grask thrives beneath Edelmids' hoops. This dark purple and black creature is slightly smaller around and longer than the main species, and typically has eight small arms instead of six. They mark their bodies extensively, often using an unknown process that causes their symbols to glow with a green bioluminescent light.

Usken: These abhuman brutes have thick, short torsos, with large feet and long legs that carry them quickly over the stretches of the hoops. They call themselves the Purblind and bear faces devoid of not just eyes but also nose, mouth, and ears. Their enhanced sensory organs are located in long tendrils that trail behind them. When the storms come, or when the crowns release their chemicals, the usken wrap their tendrils in protective gear to safeguard their senses. They are blind and deaf during this time, making them vulnerable; thus, they choose one or two of their fellow Purblind as sacrificial guards to protect the rest of the tribe.

Any other time, the usken are daunting, fierce foes who crave fresh meat and power.



Cily: level 3

They hunt in packs of three to ten, using their enhanced sense organs to sniff out those in hiding. Fast and stealthy, they sneak up on prey and use bludgeoning weapons to attack. Their preference is to make their prey submit in some way and acknowledge the power of the Purblind before being killed and eaten. But if the usken just have to kill someone, they will do that, too.

The leader of each pack typically carries an artifact (sometimes two) gathered from one of the Crowns of Kavess.

ISEATH

The only notable gathering of creatures on Edelmids is in the town of Iseath. Located at the juxtaposition of two large hoops and the shore, Iseath is a military-style complex run by a creature called **Damor the Cleansed**.

The complex is designed to hold up to 10,000 inhabitants (although it currently holds much fewer than that) and is efficient, neat, and clean. Creature comforts abound, including warm water (generated by an odd device in the middle of the city that is powered by a swarm of winged creatures), soft lights that come on automatically in the evening, and a large working farm and kitchen that provides sustenance for everyone.

Damor the Cleansed stands nearly 10 feet (3 m) tall, and for all intents and purposes, she is a cybernetic organism, although her organic parts appear to consist of a biological metal. She doesn't eat, doesn't sleep, and spends her extensive brainpower on building an army to fight the forces that are coming to the Ninth World to take her back to her homeworld, a place she calls Symas Anet. She is not a fighter but a thinker and a leader, and she is incredibly good at both, almost as if she was bred or created for that purpose.

Her companion is Cily, a spiderlike



"On my homeworld, I am one of many, all the same. Here, I am the only. Here, I am the one who leads. I will never go back there. You will protect me. You will keep me here. You will be my saviors. Come now, and together we will clean this world of those who defile it."

~one of Damor's inspirational speeches



EDELMID HEARSAY

Joining the Ranks: A varjellen called Koukehry traveled a long way to join Damor's army. Koukehry is not a believer, but a researcher; he wants to find out how to get to her homeworld. However, he has fallen ill in Maer Outpost and is asking for someone to help him get to Iseath. He understands that this is likely his final journey, but he wants to take it anyway.

Body of Work: A large, living mass of gelatinous matter wanders Edelmid, apparently unaffected by the storms. Even the usken stay a safe distance from it. It speaks in a soft, melodious voice, quietly asking passersby for help in finding its true body so it can experience life again.

THE WEIRD OF EDELMID

The Shattering Vessel: In the very center of one of the hoops near Iseath, a large hickory-colored container covered with white footprints is slowly rising from the earth. Each day it rises a bit more. Small cracks are starting to appear along the top, showing a bright green light inside.

Wildflower of Promise: Here and there, a low-lying garnet flower grows, its long-thorned tendrils stretching out along the ground. The tendrils yell to anyone who passes by, promising a quick death to all of their enemies if they just pick a flower and let it prick their finger.

creature that stands waist-high to Damor on twelve long, thin legs and has an integrated transmission tower on its back. Cily's job is to send broadcasts into the world every day, announcing the creation of the army and providing the location to interested parties.

The army that Damor is building comes from everywhere—she isn't choosy. If they vow to protect her and fight against the army from Symas Anet, she takes them in. Currently her army is nearly 2,000 strong, including fighters, weaponsmiths, numenera crafters, and support staff. Damor believes in rewarding those who are loyal, and she works hard to provide her army with everything they can dream of (except, perhaps, freedom and originality).

Every **army member** wears a suit made in her likeness, no matter their species or gender. The suits give them some of Damor's unique abilities—the ones, she says, that will best allow them to deal with the approaching forces—including detecting ultraviolet light, manipulating gravity, and going without food or water for up to a week. Time is spent creating weapons, improving the city, training for combat, and learning extensively about the people and culture of Damor's homeworld

in order to best fight them.

Once a person joins Damor's army, he is in for life. A change of heart, a need to return home, or any other reason for attempting to leave is considered a form of treason, and Damor will quickly command someone to put an end to it.



RYNACH

Tucked between Angmorl and Darnali, Rynach is an island shrouded in the thick, tangled jungle called the Vatic Woods. Getting through the woods is a struggle that few attempt and even fewer

Some members of Damor's army say that she isn't really a fugitive, but instead has been sent here to assemble an army to help those from Symas Anet take over the Ninth World. But no one says it very loudly.

Army member:
level 3, tracking as
level 4; Armor 3



Hovering spoolwood: level 3, tasks related to telepathy, perception, and deception as level 6; whipbranch attacks do 3 points of damage; they can grab a creature and pass it along from tree to tree until they dump it back on the shore of the island

What "true" means is known only to the spoolwoods, for they are ancient and their original purpose is long lost. However, there is always a philethis in the background of one of the possible futures, which could be a key to the trees' motives.



Philethis, page 252

To best show the futures that the spoolwoods foretell, GMs could show images to the players instead of giving verbal descriptions. The images on page 5, 29, or 110 all feature a philethis in the background and would be good choices.

succeed at. That's because at some point the trees were biogenetically enhanced, designed to sniff out the ulterior motives of anyone entering the forest.

The trees, called hovering spoolwoods, bend their long limbs down over any approaching organic creature. They sweep their tendrils across hair or skin to create a telepathic connection, and then show the creature two very different possible futures and ask them to choose one. The spoolwoods spread the answer to all of the other trees on the island via their extensive root system and come to a joint decision. If the trees deem that a creature's motives are true, they allow it to pass and even open the way. If not, the spoolwoods actively block passage and access

to the island. If a creature doesn't leave when asked, the spoolwoods will attack (although it seems clear that their preference is to avoid combat if possible).

COMPLEX OF THE CARIOUS

In the center of Rynach is the Complex of the Carious, a large, mostly underground and underwater fortress that houses around 5,000 creatures. This place of science and experimentation is secluded, but not necessarily closed off to those who find their way to its doors.

The majority of the complex's inhabitants are kathons, brilliant bioautomatons that constantly modify and enhance themselves, those around them, and anything else they



"The body is the only true lab, the perfect resource for experimentation, learning, and growth. Every element of the world is enclosed within the body, ripe for our hands and minds. It is the reason the all-knowing experimenter built us this way, so that we might follow in his path of enlightenment and knowledge."

~ ❧ chirog Ninaki





can get their hands and brains on. The complex is run by a cete of a hundred and one kathons, each of whom has a specific role within the group. Although most kathons are focused on their work, they also exhibit a hospitable, kind nature and are, for the most part, highly social creatures, able to interact with almost anyone.

The complex is easy to find, even from far away, because the uppermost floor (the only one above ground, and it is way above ground, rising nearly 100 feet [30 m] over the tops of the trees) is a structure made of solid light. This is where the labs are housed, each one labeled with a symbol. Light bridges extend out to the end points of the island, as well as all the way to Angmorl. A second, smaller structure rises above the water between the two islands. It is here that ceremonies, public events, and other large gatherings and festivals take place. Despite being made of light, the top floor is impossible to see into or out of without augmentation. Only the floors are transparent, allowing a view downward into whatever forest or waterscape is below.

Being experimented on and modified is such a vital part of kathon culture that they struggle to understand those who choose not to participate in this great



RYNACH HEARSAY

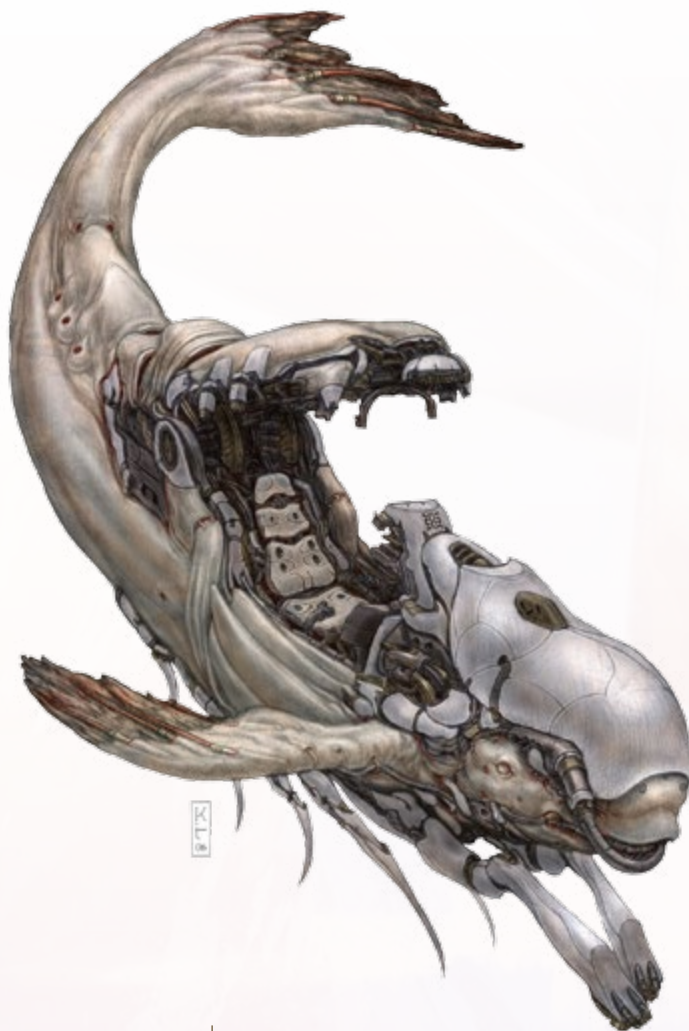
Glass Trappings: A creature that seems to be made of fog and smoke has been caught inside a transparent box trap. It speaks in a voice that sounds like rain on the roof, and is deathly afraid of the trap's owner, which it believes is coming back soon to turn it into some type of medicine.

Golden Blight: A square patch of spoolwoods has recently started to turn golden, a sign that the trees are passing on to their next phase of life, allowing new spoolwoods to take their place. However, something in the area is keeping them from fully dying. The trees ask for help from all who pass by, promising beautiful dreams in return.

THE WEIRD OF RYNACH

Tangled Roots: In the wee hours of the morning, a band of yellow snakes sometimes begin to writhe together around the base of a tree. When they are finished, they slither away, leaving behind a metal device full of pipes that dissolves in the next rainstorm.

Buried Treasure: Along the eastern shore of Rynach, a claw-like object that is nearly 10 feet (3 m) high and 8 feet (2 m) around protrudes from the earth. It sounds hollow when it's banged on, but the material it's made from is unknown and seems impenetrable.



Guin: level 3, navigation and swimming as level 4; weapon modifications deal 4 points of damage

Kathons speak a version of the Truth that sounds warmer and more melodic than it typically sounds elsewhere. They assert that it's because the language itself was created by kathon experimenters thousands of years ago, deep within the Complex of the Carious.

opportunity for learning and growth. From the time they're conceived—and sometimes even before that—kathons receive enhancements, mutations, and additions. Egg injections, neonatal brain buds, and prebirth muscle stimulants are all common, as are mechanical and biological implants and replacements, cross-species experiments, and genome alterations. The goal is never to create a certain look or even a certain type of personality; the drive is always a greater understanding.

The only two things that stay the same about a kathon through its life are its lab and

its name. A child receives a three-part name before it is conceived—the first part is the lab where it will work throughout its life, the second is the name of its experimentation spirit animal (used only by other kathons who work on the child), and the third is the common name that everyone uses.

Kathons share the complex with a wide variety of other living things—companions, pets, livestock, plants, and wild creatures—all of which take part in experimentation and augmentation. Perhaps the most famous of these are the **guins**, bioenhanced, cybernetic mounts that are bred and enhanced for their long-term relationship with the kathons. These creatures take on the roles of companions, friends, mounts, protectors, and family members, living in ornate waterways inside kathon homes that provide free access to both the house and the ocean. They speak using a combination of whistles and machine language, and they travel great distances at great speeds. Most guins are created to fit and transport a specific kathon inside their mount compartment, but others can carry up to three individuals.



ANGMORL

Angmorl is the second largest of the islands in the Cays. Most of it is full of freshwater lakes, waterfalls, and tall, rocky structures called clads that are sharply chiseled and often arranged in a circular pattern around the shores of a body of water. Clads are hollow, with large trapezoidal holes at their bases, and have a number of levels that can be accessed by climbing up indents chiseled along the inside walls. The original indents are about 12 feet (4 m) apart, so most of them have additional, newer hand- and footholds to make it easier for humans to climb them.



"Orlerfish are intelligent, fast, and eat flesh of any kind. They have been known to strip a human being of flesh in less time than it takes him to yell for help. At least their bite is full of a numbing poison, so you can't feel them tearing your flesh from your . . . whatever that stuff is that's inside your skin. I would like to capture one and keep it as my pet. However, they keep biting me."

~ Carl Linnal, naturalist



Clads are always surrounded by what appear to be low-hanging clouds or thick mist. These clouds are actually the nests of creatures called orlerfish. Orlerfish lay streams of eggs in the ocean, creating cloudy patches that rise into the air. The eggclouds hover for months and then rain hundreds of small fish back down into the water.

VESYM

Vesym is sometimes called Dog City, for long ago it was overrun by a feral population of large canines. Once loyal companions to Zhaind, the king of Vesym, these canines, some twice the size of a human, turned on their leader while he slept and ate every last bit of him. No one knows what provoked them, or why they have since developed an odd habit of sometimes walking on their hind legs and using their dewclaws like opposable thumbs. A few of them have even learned to write, although they are unable to emulate speech.

The canines have taken over the king's residence, sleeping in his bed, and have ruled the town as a pack, using scare-tactic snarls

and growls that can be heard throughout the area. Signs around the former king's home proclaim that they call themselves the *nex*. They have gained a small number of human assistants—some who volunteered, others who were forced into service—and are likely planning to add more.

DARRAD

"Beware the blue man—you're not allowed to remember him."

~a popular toast in Darrad

Located inland, Darrad is a sprawling town in terms of the land it covers, but it is sparsely populated, boasting fewer than 2,000 inhabitants. Darrad has a history as a mining town, and beneath the simple structures is a complex maze of tunnels and pathways that were used to access the materials: a blue essence that was stuck between the stones and could be used to power numenera devices and machines of all sorts. Most people in the area worked for Blue Datasphere, a large mining company that collected and stored the essence,

Nex: level 5, intimidation and coercion as level 6; Armor 1

Addiction rates are high in Darrad, and a drink called blueminers' blood is particularly popular. Made from a sugary red flower mixed with a bit of blue essence, it is highly addictive and hallucinogenic. It also leaves drinkers' lips black for a few minutes after drinking.



ANGMORL HEARSAY

Whispering Palms: In the tiny village of Ahony, a woman mined a piece of numenera from the earth. Now, her hands constantly whisper secrets to anyone who touches her. She has twice attempted to cut off her hands in despair, but both times, they have grown back, and she is at her wits' end.

The Edge of Yesterday: A man in Vesym claims to have created a time machine, and he wants to use it to go back in time and stop the dogs from taking over the town. He is asking for volunteers for trial runs, and will pay 20 shins to anyone willing to be the first to try out his machine.

THE WEIRD OF ANGMORL

The Bitter Pit: Fruit trees grow on the very top of a certain clad, producing a dark green berry called benges. One beng on every tree contains a dark purple pit that tastes like saltwater and bitter greens. Anyone who eats a pit begins to grow small roots from the bottoms of their feet.

The Walls Have Ears: Stretches of an ancient, crumbling wall made of slotted-together synth can still be found here and there around the island. Those who speak near the wall will find their exact phrase repeated back to them at a later date from a random stranger, always in perfect context of the conversation.

selling it to a faraway investor who wanted to power a large device.

The mines were shut down when a rumor began that the blue essence was actually the souls of creatures that had been buried deep within the earth long ago. Miners rebelled, scared and angry that they had been digging up their—or someone else's—ancestors. Blue Datasphere threatened the miners with death, and the company had to follow up on the threat when most of them refused to go back to work.

Now there is a second town built upon the first, and a new crew of miners is digging up a new round of blue essence.

As a way to prevent additional rumors and rebellion, Blue Datasphere requires those who seek work in the new mines to undergo a temporary mutation that renders them mute. Of course, being unable to speak doesn't keep workers from communicating in other ways, and rumors continue to haunt the company and the mines.



THE RYSORS

The Rysors is the name given to a group of tall, thin islands between Augh-Chass and Angmorl. All ten islands are roughly the same size and shape, towering structures that rise hundreds of feet above sea level.

Sometimes called the Walking Islands (other times, especially in scary stories around the fire, just the Walkers), the Rysors appear to move in the twilight hours. Anyone standing on the shores of Augh-Chass or Angmorl who looks across the water at just the right time might see the Rysors push up from the surface, shake themselves slightly as if to remove the water, and begin to shift back and forth as if they're interacting with each other. During this time, a high-pitched echolocation signal can sometimes be heard and the Rysors often seem to glow, as though a light was shining down upon them from the skies.

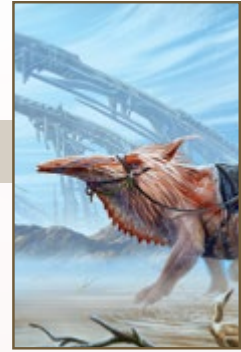


Those who attempt to approach the Rysors find themselves feeling heavier and heavier the closer they get, as if the gravitational pull has severely increased. They may even discover that upon their return home, more time has passed than they might have expected.



CHAPTER 10

LANDS OF THE DAWN



The machine began to hum. Ramov stepped backward reflexively as the pitch increased and the sound grew in intensity.

"What's going to happen?" Jain clutched at the hilt of his broadsword with white knuckles, but if you'd asked him, he couldn't have told you why.

"I'm not entirely certain," Ramov whispered, still staring at the device. The simple, grey metallic plate seemed as though it might vibrate right off the cliff face that it was set into.

Nax-Fourl growled. Clearly, the lattimor's bursk was at the fore. "Aren't you supposed to be an expert on this kind of thing? You're always going on about the numenera this and the numenera that. That's why we brought you along, isn't it?"

Ramov turned toward the lattimor and squared her shoulders, perhaps to show that she was not intimidated by the visitant's hulking frame, or perhaps just to convince herself of that.

"I believe it's going to grant us entry into a hidden structure inside this mountain."

"Then why didn't you say that?"

"Because I'm not certain. Which is exactly what I did say. Something . . . unexpected seems to be happening."

Almost as if in response to her words, the hum reached its crescendo. Metal tendrils squirmed out of the sides of the rectangular plate and laced through the brown stone of the cliff with surprising speed. Some split into two threads and continued to spread, and then split yet again, still moving.

Jain and Nax-Fourl backed away slowly. Ramov turned her head in time to see the ropy metallic threads stretch through the rock like veins in a leaf—or in a living thing. They didn't burrow through the rock so much as force their way into its substance. If one imagined the rock being made of particles so small they couldn't be seen—which Ramov knew to be true of all matter—the tendrils suddenly occupied the spaces between those particles. Fusion was the word she might have used, if she had the opportunity.

Jain's sword was drawn now, and he put a hand on Ramov's shoulder to pull her back. "This doesn't seem like any door I've seen. Seems more like a beast."

Nax-Fourl nodded. The lattimor pulled an iron bolt from his quiver and placed it in his crossbow.

The tendrils reached out a hundred feet or more through the rock, to the left, the right, and above. They also reached down to the ground level, but Ramov noticed they went no farther. Still humming, the metal panel at the heart of all of this spread an orange glow that ran down each branching tendril until all of them were glowing.

And then it all just stopped. The hum stopped, and the glow was gone. The tendrils were gone. The central panel was gone.

The cliff was gone.

At least, the portion of the cliff that the veins had run through. Now a section of the rocky face more than a hundred feet high and twice as wide yawned open like a silent mouth—the beginning of a tunnel into the solid rock. Except that wasn't quite it, either. Because beyond that opening wasn't a tunnel but a bright grassland with mountains—unfamiliar mountains—in the distance. The first thing that Ramov noted was that she could see the sun through this massive hole, high above in the sky, as if it were noon, even though she could also see the early dawn light of the sun that still hid behind the peaks of the Black Riage.

"What is that place?" Jain asked.

"Another world," Nax-Fourl said.

"No." Ramov shook her head. "I think it's our world. But it's not what's inside that mountain, or even on the other side. I think that place is far away. Very far away."

On the other side of the passage, a flock of large, deeply colored birds circled around something that looked a bit like a shining whale, except that it was high in the sky.

Ramov wondered what they had done.

~As told to Naind Oreni, transcribed in her journal, along with a note along the margin that reads, "I must go to this place before I cease my travels"

Most people in the Steadfast don't travel to the next town, let alone the next kingdom, so the idea of a whole new region of the world means little to them, if they heard about the discovery at all. But for those who do travel, the sudden appearance of a new land is intriguing, to say the least.

Very recently, in the land of Thaemor, a group of explorers found and activated a device that created an apparently permanent passage to another region of the Ninth World. The passage has been dubbed the Great Reach, and it allows someone to take just a few steps and move

many thousands of miles away, to a place of unknown people and places, and where the sea lies to the east, not to the west.

The distance, in fact, is well over 8,000 miles (12,875 km), to the other side of the mega-continent that makes up most of the Ninth World's landmass. The Great Reach,





then, allows for instantaneous travel from the eastern end of the Steadfast to the central portion of a heretofore unknown region that came to be known as Corao. It lies on the eastern seaboard of the continent and in the Northern Hemisphere (the Steadfast and Beyond lie in the Southern Hemisphere). In many ways, it is as though a number of new lands just appeared next to the Steadfast through a narrow passage. Thaemor and Corao share a sort of metaphysical border.

Explorers from the Steadfast came in groups and found mostly an empty

wilderness, for the Great Reach was quite a distance from any major town or city. When they encountered people on the other side, those people were surprisingly . . . human. And yet there were differences. These new people did not speak the Truth—had never heard it, in fact—and knew nothing of the Aeon Priests or the Amber Pope. The first forays into Corao were difficult and fraught with wariness.

This quickly opened up opportunities for trade and exploration from both sides. It also raised concerns regarding spies, invasion, and other more nefarious events,

Using devices similar to sextants, explorers from both sides have determined how far their lands lie from the other side of the Great Reach. Prior to this, neither had any idea how large the world truly was.



but neither Thaemor nor Corao have managed to seal this new border on either side.

Corao is the largest and most powerful area in a region of five distinct lands. The entire region is similar in size to the Steadfast and includes Corao, the Republic of Bruul, the Kingdom of Zare, the inhuman land of Majehm, and the dark wilderness of Sor Rumnar.

THE PEOPLE OF THE LANDS OF THE DAWN

There are those who speculate that the people of Corao, Bruul, and Zare could not possibly be of the same origins as the people of the Steadfast based on nothing more than the sheer distances involved. However, the humans of the Steadfast are not physically different from the humans of these lands far to the east. Their language and customs may be significantly different, of course, but such differences can be found anywhere in the Ninth World.

The recorded history of Corao and its neighbors goes back slightly farther than that of the Steadfast, but there is a common understanding among most people that their full history goes back much, much farther than that. In the Lands of the Dawn, the term “Ninth World” has little meaning. Folk here see themselves as the latest part of one continuous line that spans all of Earth’s history, rather than a new civilization rising. The only real difference this makes is that they feel a deeper connection with the numenera. To them, it’s not the leftovers of a mysterious past, but their birthright.

The cultures and religions of the region are varied and separate. Corao, however, is more unified and cohesive than any kingdom of the Steadfast. Travel in Corao is far faster and easier than in the Steadfast or the Beyond thanks to the *soarcraft*. In contrast, Zare and Bruul have an outlook on travel and the wilderness more like that of people in the Steadfast.

Each of the major lands—Corao, Bruul, and Zare—has its own language. In Majehm, the uraeyl speak their own tongue as well. Likewise, each of these lands mints its own coinage.

Varjellen and lattimors are unknown in the Lands of the Dawn. In fact, the people here have no concept of visitants at all.

CREATURES OF THE LANDS OF THE DAWN

Some of the same creatures that dwell in the Steadfast and the Beyond can be found in Corao and its neighbors. Others appear to be similar but are not. An intelligent species called the *stuir* greatly resembles the abhuman *murdens*, for example, but they have no psychic static or any other mental abilities. Instead, they excel at hiding and disguise and are effectively one level higher than that of their *murden* “cousins.” They often hide in human cities and use thievery and kidnapping to get what they need.

Other creatures look different from their counterparts in the Steadfast and the Beyond but are functionally the same. Creatures that appear to be pack-dwelling, serpentine hounds are functionally no different from *broken hounds*, for example.

A great many unique creatures dwell in these lands as well. They include the *hirroc*, a very large, six-limbed lizard with red scales and white fur. These beasts are used as mounts throughout the east, fitted with special reclining saddles. They are not particularly fast but can carry very large loads and walk for days without rest. The *hirroc* has a long, birdlike bill it uses to dig in the ground for roots.

The houndlike predators known as *vro* are a threat throughout the region. Many places have put a bounty on *vro* hides.

THE PROXIMA

The existence of *proxima* suggests that the humans of the eastern lands are rapidly evolving or changing. *Proxima* appear to be humans, though anyone can look at them and tell that there is something notably different about them. However, the distinctions are difficult to articulate. They aren’t as obvious as height, skin tone, or physical features, though it’s possible for these characteristics to play a role. Instead, it’s more a subtle change in pallor, eye position, or skin texture. Still, these

Corao, page 187

Bruul, page 195

Zare, page 201

Majehm, page 205

Sor Rumnar, page 210



Murdens, page 247

Broken hounds,
page 232

Hirroc: level 3, Speed
defense as level 2 due
to size; health 25

Vro, page 247

Soarcraft, page 187

Most merchants and
vendors in Corao, Bruul,
and Zare will take shins
in exchange for half their
normal value.

GMs are encouraged
to use the standard
Numenera creatures in
Corao when they wish
but alter them in some
way, even if the alteration
is only cosmetic. Bright
blue cragworms, flying
ithsyns, or six-eyed margr
without horns are all
possible inhabitants.



descriptions don't quite explain it, and proxima don't necessarily have a common appearance.

It may be easier to simply say that they look like "approximate" humans, hence the name. The writer Gornal Strahm's oft-used quote is, "They look like a sculpture of a human by a skilled nonhuman artist—physically, they are essentially correct. It's the soul that's a bit off."

Proxima live among humans, hoping for acceptance and a chance to lead normal lives. They seem to have no particular affinity for the company of other proxima (if anything, they avoid each other). In many places, they are accepted well enough. In others, acceptance comes harder. In these latter situations, they are called "nears," as in "near humans" or—even worse—"near misses." Sometimes, proxima are killed.

As far as can be determined, proxima are born to normal human parents. This suggests that they are mutants, but they never possess preternatural powers or abilities. They are, in all measurable ways, human. There's just something not quite right about them, something almost

artificial in origin or extraneous to their appearance. Every year, more proxima are born than in the year prior.

Proxima suffer an inability with interaction tasks when dealing with humans. They are particularly healthy and long-lived. (The difficulty of Might defense rolls is always decreased by one step for them.) In all other ways, proxima are treated as humans.

THE URAEYL

The inhuman creatures known as uraeyl are intelligent and numerous in *Majehm*, the land they rule to the south. It's the only region of the Ninth World completely run by nonhumans, yet in the end, the country is not all that different from lands ruled by humans.

Uraeyl have a terrible relationship with humans, which comes in part from the fact that humans are their preferred source of meat. For the last millennium or more, uraeyl have hunted humans for food or captured them to add to "herds" that they kept for both work and food. As humans struggled to establish their kingdoms and tame their lands, uraeyl preyed upon them

Majehm, page 205





Navarene,
page 137

Order of Truth,
page 222

The Convergence,
page 223

WHY GO TO THE LANDS OF THE DAWN?

These lands, so far removed from the Steadfast and even the Beyond, represent the explorer's deepest dream—lands truly unknown to anyone in the familiar regions. They lie so far beyond any map made by the cartographers of Navarene or the atlases compiled by the Aeon Priesthood that it is difficult for many people to even put them in context. These lands offer new sights and sounds, new tastes and smells, and new lore and philosophies. Explorers will find challenges undreamed and treasures unimagined.

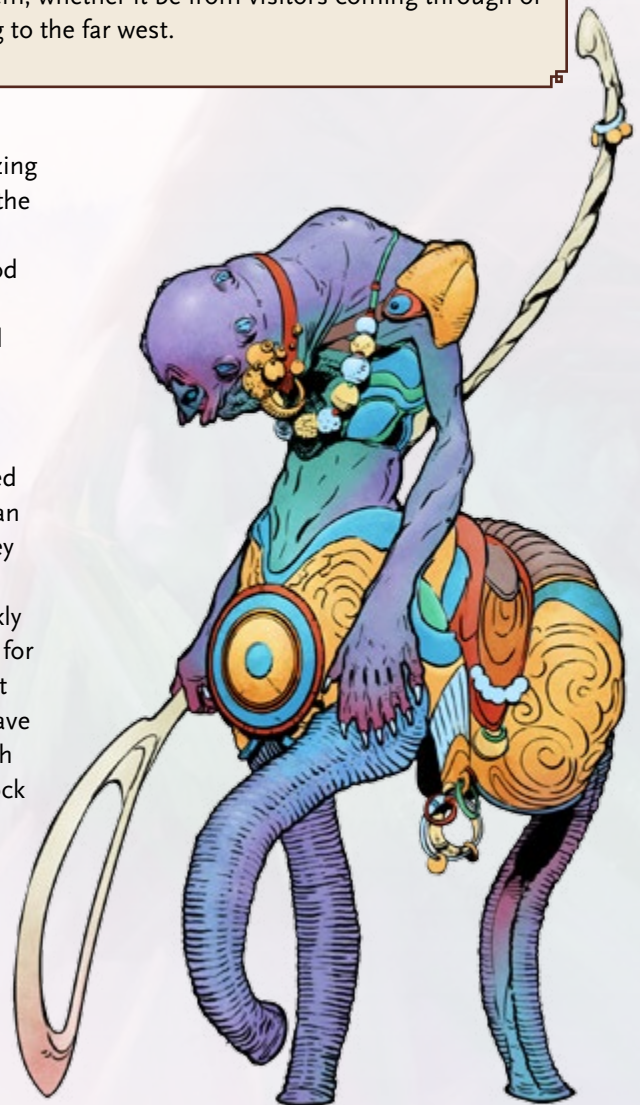
The powers that be in the Steadfast likely are both curious and afraid of this region. The Great Reach is large enough to lead an army through—but it is also large enough to accommodate trade caravans. So far, only the latter have crossed the distance, and only a few at that. The nine kingdoms of the Steadfast all have their reasons to pay explorers to travel to the Lands of the Dawn and report back what they have seen. The Order of Truth also craves information about these new lands (and their understanding of the numenera). Even the Convergence would like to see its tendrils worm their way into these new lands. First and foremost, what they all want to know is, are these far eastern lands a threat or a boon? So far, what few reports have been made have been conflicted and confusing.

Likewise, Corao, Bruul, and Zare are just as curious (and as concerned) about the Steadfast, and would pay handsomely for more information about what lies on the other side of the Great Reach from them, whether it be from visitors coming through or their own explorers and spies traveling to the far west.

and tried to keep humanity from organizing and advancing. The uraeyl looked upon the advancement of human civilization as a distasteful and absurd threat to their food source.

But the efforts of the uraeyl failed, and humans have established organized and powerful societies that repel their hunts and infiltrate uraeyl lands to liberate the “livestock” there. Uraeyl have been forced to retreat to lands they control rather than hunt in the wilderness (which is how they think of human lands such as Zare or Bruul). Uraeyl do not reproduce as quickly or live as long as humans, so their need for territory and their ability to replenish lost numbers is not as great. Today, uraeyl have grown weary as the constant conflict with their preferred choice of prey and livestock has waned—but not ended.

Humans in the Lands of the Dawn call uraeyl “devils” and often attack them on sight. (Turnabout is not fair play—all humans who have attempted to eat uraeyl flesh have sickened and died.) The border between Majehm and Zare is a tense





place, with armed camps on either side. Uraeyl armies are organized much like their human counterparts, with somewhat similar armor and weapons. Despite what most humans believe, uraeyl are not sadistic, bloodthirsty, or cruel. They simply prefer the taste of human meat and find it difficult (if not impossible) to see humans as intelligent, sapient creatures. To them, humans are crafty, cunning, and dangerous prey. That humans seek to establish their own society, develop their own technologies, or consider themselves on par with uraeyl is almost inconceivably ridiculous—as ridiculous as what a human herder in the Steadfast might think of the idea of her **gallen** suddenly forming a society and using tools and weaponry.

Not all uraeyl are hunters. They grow crops, craft goods, and write songs and poetry, among other things. It is true, however, that finding objects in uraeyl marketplaces made from human skin or bones is not uncommon, although such items grow more rare (and thus valuable) as time goes on and the uraeyl are able to kill fewer humans.

They still tend “herds” of humans in some places, and some of these herds are very old. The humans in them have lived as livestock for generations. Most have no language and certainly no tool use. Human prisoners introduced into these herds find their captive brethren to be little more than degenerate beasts.

Uraeyl have a complex relationship with the numenera. They do not fear it, per se, but they find it distasteful and have no affinity for it. They find it particularly offensive in the hands of humans, and many uraeyl believe it can “taint the meat” if used by a human.



CORAO

Corao is an old land, ruled by a line of hereditary monarchs that goes back farther than any written records. The Queen in Lilies, as she is called, rules from a palace grander than anything on either side of the Great Reach. The Crested Mountain—or, as it is sometimes called, the Ghost Mountain—is

a crystalline spire that reaches almost a mile into the sky with gauze-thin crests that catch and store sunlight like the petals of a colossal flower in full bloom.

Corao is wealthy and enjoys many technological advancements developed by its scholars and researchers over the centuries. More than any of the lands of the Steadfast, and far more than the lands of the Beyond, Corao is a well-traveled, connected place. Its fleets of soarcraft make travel relatively quick, easy, and—for the most part—safe.

SOARCRAFT

Both creature and machine, the biomechanical soarcraft are living vehicles that fly through the air, held aloft by massive sacs of lighter-than-air gases that the creatures produce. They are propelled by numenera engines that allow them to move 300 miles (483 km) per hour if need be, although speeds of a quarter of that rate are more typical. Corao soarcraft tenders are both technicians and caregivers, working in landing towers and platforms across the land. They control the craft/creatures by singing them complex and delicate songs developed centuries earlier, full of praise and flattery as well as detailed information. The main hub of all soarcraft is the Ghost Mountain, but the vehicles travel to all major locations in the monarchy.

One of the biggest threats to soarcraft are the **cloud volii**, ancient biomechanical creatures that are drawn to the living vehicles, eager to destroy them and consume and absorb their organic and inorganic parts.

THE GHOST MOUNTAIN

The Crested Mountain, also known as the Ghost Mountain, is an amazing structure of the ancient past that is used as the home of the Lily Queen, as well as a thousand of her direct servants and tens of thousands who live in the mountain-city. Despite its name and location, it is not a mountain, but a structure of stone, metal, glass, and synth with hundreds of interior levels, winding passages, and vast interior chambers.

People who enter the Ghost Mountain

Uraeyl tend to refer to humans not in a controlled herd as “wild humans.”

Gallen, page 145

The number of soarcraft, while large, is finite, and no one knows how to create or spawn new ones. Thus, they are a precious commodity.

Cloud volii, page 226

The “ghost” of the current Queen in Lilies appears to be a small child that stares unnervingly at anyone addressing the queen.

Arumna is a unique synth material found only in the Ghost Mountain.



The Queen in Lilies:
level 6, any matter
relating to interactions
as level 4

Lily Crown: artifact;
level 8; produces a cloud
of choking gas in an
immediate area when
the wearer is truly angry
or afraid; those affected
cannot act while in the
area (wearer is immune).
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Tialka Vermanix: level
3, all interactions and
matters of administration
as level 5

immediately sense a presence. Each visitor instantly becomes tied to an incorporeal, translucent humanoid figure. These “ghosts” follow their host, singing songs in languages no one seems to know. Some people believe that your ghost companion looks like you or has one of your personality traits, but most dismiss this, claiming that it is random. If you leave and return, the same “ghost” reappears and resumes the connection you had before.

Only humans have “ghosts” in the mountain. Proxima do not.

Although no one is certain what these “ghosts” are, there is no reason to believe that they are, in fact, the souls of the dead. Illusions, holograms, ultraterrestrials, ancient people trapped

between universes—there could be many explanations. However, many people insist that a world as old as the Earth has an overabundance of ghosts, and the mountain is a focal point for their otherworldly energies.

In addition to being the capital and residence of the monarch, the Crested Mountain is a city within the mountain-structure. The people who live here are generally supplied by soarcraft shipments, trading for the silks and textiles of woven arumna and other handicrafts and art created within the city. Gathering arumna from the walls of interior chambers is a task that occupies many residents. Although it is possible to enter and exit the Ghost Mountain through means other than the soarcraft, those paths are difficult and only occasionally used.

A massive landing platform allows for up to one hundred and thirty soarcraft to enter and rest inside at one time. A significant section of the Ghost Mountain’s populace tends to these craft or works in industries that support their maintenance or related activities. About 90,000 people dwell in the Ghost Mountain, but there is room for three times that number to live comfortably.

The Queen in Lilies and the Inner Palace:

The queen dwells within a special suite of chambers known as the Inner Palace, where the walls are made of layers of intertwined flowering vines, grown without sunlight thanks to the powers of specialized nano-sorcerers.

Similar to her home, the queen wears only garments made of flowering plants. She also wears the traditional **Lily Crown**, an immortal, living artifact that protects her in times of distress.

The relatively young queen is reticent and withdrawn, often unwilling to speak, although if pushed too far she can become enraged and violent. Most people agree that she is a terrible head of state. Few of them realize that her chief advisor, **Tialka Vermanix**, is the real leader of Corao, serving as the queen’s voice in most matters. The Lily Queen is merely a figurehead who makes appearances (and only rarely does even that).



VO

At the foot of the Crested Mountain lies a town of 12,000 people known as Vo. It is a simple place, made up mainly of farmers who produce much of the food for the inhabitants of the mountain above them. Although there is a direct path between Vo and one of the ground entrances to the Ghost Mountain, the goods are often shuttled up via soarcraft.

Vo is spread out over a series of forested hills, almost more of a cluster of tiny agricultural hamlets in close proximity than a true town or city. Its leader is Mayor **Guardich Fome**, a feeble old man who spends most of his days in bed.

The Broken Clock: One of Vo's claims to fame, other than its prestigious location, is a structure of colored glass in the heart of the city near the courthall used for town meetings and other gatherings. The glass edifice, far older than Vo itself, is an intricate clock powered by moving glass disks. The device's face always indicates the position of the sun traveling through the sky, so as to correspond with the time, but it is usually wrong. It appears to function as though the day were only 25 hours long, thus the clock's name. All attempts to repair it have failed.

NOREU

Nine thousand people dwell in this town, although a third again as many live immediately outside it in a vast and ever-changing tent city, filled with pilgrims wishing to visit the Pool of Aasalmis.

Ostensibly, the ruler of the city is, depending on who you ask, Duke Raverall or Duchess Raverall. But as no one has seen them for years, the de facto ruler is a man taking the self-appointed title **Elder Umbrele**. (The role is self-appointed as well, but few question him anymore.) Umbrele is an antagonistic, violent man with little patience for the pilgrims who come to town or anyone who challenges his authority.

Pool of Aasalmis: The water of this large natural pool at the center of Noreu has unique properties. Anyone who drinks it or bathes in it is healed as if he made a

recovery roll. It cures diseases and rids bodies of poisons and toxins if the affliction is lower than level 8. It also has been known to grant people the ability to speak a new language, see in the dark, or forgo food. However, the pool sometimes takes away memories, causes sterility, or makes a person more vulnerable to injury. These secondary effects seem utterly random (and occur in only 10 percent of people who use the waters).

The pool is always surrounded by dozens of pilgrims, many of them diseased or injured, looking for healing. Likewise, one can find all sorts of people providing charms, souvenirs, or mystical teaching on how to get the most from the pool's effects, all for just a few coins. Some con artists attempt to dupe ignorant pilgrims into buying passes to the pool or special items that "must" be worn to partake of the waters.

Castle Astele: Just outside of Noreu a few miles to the north stands a series of towers collectively called Castle Astele. The **Raverall noble family** dwells here, but few people ever see them because they're always embroiled in a personal conflict—trying to kill each other.

The castle has four towers, each built on a soaring outcropping of solid rock. These four peaks of solid stone are strange in and of themselves, because the stone can be found nowhere else in the world. In fact, some question if the foundations of the castle's towers are stone at all. The central tower is large, composed of a number of turrets joined together with sharply pointed rooftops. The other three towers are smaller and more narrow, with even more pointed roofs. All are joined by arched bridges of stone and steel. It is on these bridges that most—but not all—of the family's battles are fought.

The floors within the castle undulate and move, seemingly made of ropy, fibrous tendrils. The floors occasionally moan and groan with inhuman sounds. In each interior room, all doors close and lock (or open) on verbal command, if the commands are accompanied by the right

Characters who become more vulnerable to injury after using the pool suffer 1 additional point of damage every time they suffer at least 1 point normally.

Guardich Fome: level 2, matters of history or other lore as level 5

Raverall family member: level 6; stealth, perception, and deception as level 7; most have special protective gear and at least one particularly deadly weapon

Elder Umbrele: level 5, attacks as level 6; Armor 2; claymore deals 10 points of damage



The minds of the possessed humans are subjugated and subsumed within the brillimathis minds. Those who have been possessed since birth have never fully developed their own minds and would not be able to speak if their brillimathis ever left them.

Choropi: level 1

Narg: level 2; venomous bite inflicts 2 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor)

Braguon, page 225



Ravage bear,
page 254

Seskii, page 258

secret, whispered words.

No one knows why the family wages war, but the Duke and Duchess, as well as their three children and the Duke's brother, seek to murder one another through traps, deception, force of arms, or whatever means they can. The six nobles have various agents, servants, and mercenaries to help them. But the Raverals are as skilled at self-preservation as they are at deception and betrayal. Currently, uncle Ferrix and two of the children, Dero and Byrnna, have an uneasy alliance against the others.

THE FOREST OF THE NORTH

Three hundred miles (483 km) long, the Forest of the North is a mighty and cold wood of deciduous and coniferous trees. The forest is home to the tiny mammalian serpents known as **choropi**, the winged reptilian **nargs**, **ravage bears**, **seskii**, and more. In particular, the forest is home to

savage bands of **braguon**, who harvest poisons from the frogs that live beneath the revu trees. The braguon frequently set ambushes and traps on the roads and paths through the woods.

WELIOC

By all appearances, Welioe is a simple port town of about 10,000 people. The stone buildings are swept by cold winds off the Shavelin Sea and frequent rains and storms.

What most newcomers—and some residents—never realize is that about 75 percent of the population is possessed by incorporeal ultraterrestrial energy beings called brillimathis. The brillimathis arrived about forty years ago when someone excavated an ancient vault and opened a strange sealed flask within. The flask and its otherworldly contents were brought to Welioe, and one by one the brillimathis infected the people there. Some residents proved impossible to possess.

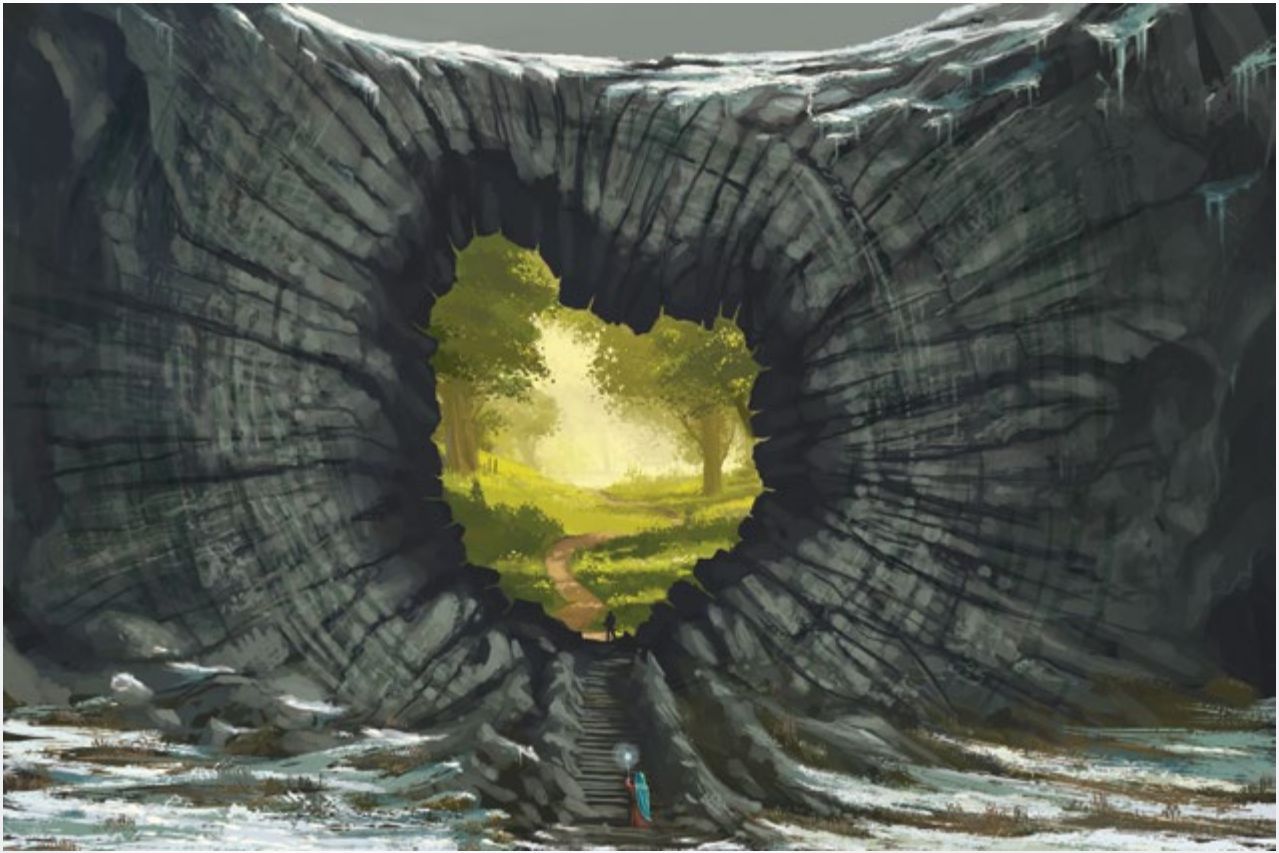
When a new baby is born in the city, its possessed parents bring it to the hidden underground chamber where the ancient flask is now kept. Exposure to even a tiny amount of the liquid causes the child to become a host for a brillimathis. The liquid is somehow a conduit between the worlds.

The brillimathis seem to want little more than to dwell on Earth in peace. They are content to live the lives of humans, fishing in the Shavelin Sea to eke out a tolerable existence. If their secret is threatened, however, they become violent.

The humans in the city who are not possessed suspect that something odd is going on. Some fear demons or witchcraft, while others imagine a more mundane, criminal conspiracy in Welioe. A few have stumbled closer to the truth and seek to free their fellow residents.

THE GREAT REACH

The Corao side of the Great Reach is a wooded wilderness in rugged terrain far from any villages, let alone a larger settlement. A small camp was established near the portal (which most people here call a tunnel). The camp consists of a garrison of soldiers who attempt (and usually fail) to



control who enters and leaves, plus a variety of merchants, thrill-seekers, and eager explorers who plan on crossing into the mysterious Steadfast.

The camp also provides a place to receive visitors from the other side, although these folk are not without their con artists and charlatans eager to sell faulty maps, bogus advice, or fake numenera.

TOLEMA

Tolema is a town of 8,000 herders and hunters in the wooded foothills of the Hidden Mountains. The city is surrounded by a massive stone wall 15 feet (5 m) thick and 25 feet (8 m) high. This wall was built almost one hundred years ago under the direction of Duke Uindreas II, a paranoid despot who is not well remembered. Tolema has never been attacked, and some credit the wall for keeping out bandits and dangerous beasts.

The current ruler of Tolema is **Duke Gurnant**, a young, handsome man who is newly married and has a young daughter. Gurnant is fair, but invested in the traditions

of the nobility that have weighed heavily on the people of Tolema and the surrounding lands for generations.

The Cathedral of the Transfiguration: The center of Tolema is a religious ceremonial site.

And on the sacred day, which recurs every 1,298 days, we call down the angel.

The glorious angel descends in a chariot of silver and light, awash in the fire of heaven.

The chosen one offers herself to the angel, who takes her, unites with her, and bonds with her.

Thereafter, she speaks the words of the divinity. Her soul is not hers alone but also that of the Transfigured God.

The Cathedral of the Transfiguration is a large, flat disk of stone upon which is built a circle of glass plinths. Within this circle, the followers of the Transfigured God hold a ceremony that involves a sort of human sacrifice who must mate with an angel that comes down from the sky. Some people who have seen the ceremony describe

Duke Gurnant: level 4

Bern's noisy, tiny, extremely maneuverable craft are an interesting counterpoint to the lumbering, gigantic, virtually silent soarcraft in the Coraoan skies.

Bern: level 4, numenera and repairs as level 5

Chunaldan: level 6, numenera as level 9; health 30; level 7 artifact staff creates a protective shield that grants Armor 4, warns of dangerous intent within long range, and allows Chunaldan to teleport a short distance.
Depletion —

Tremulan: level 2, Speed defense as level 3

it differently—some kind of intelligent machine descends from the sky and interfaces with the “sacrifice,” whose mind is taken over by cables and jacks that plug into her brain stem.

In either interpretation, the “chosen one” issues prophecies in her native tongue, only some of which make sense to listeners. She issues commandments that are generally followed by those participating in the ceremony, even though there seems to be little logic to them. The local nobility carefully watch what the chosen one says, and if she begins crossing their interests, they have her eliminated and fake a divine ascension. This usually includes stealing the body and leaving burnt remnants of clothing and a hole in the roof of the building she was in. Most chosen ones last only a few months at most.

The Resurrected Flyers: Long ago, a chosen one told the devout where a trove of ancient flying machines lay, long buried in the earth. Today a man named **Bern** is attempting to create a business restoring and selling these one- and two-person flying craft to wealthy

buyers. Bern is a friendly, skilled mechanic, but he could never have attempted this without the help of his friend, **Chunaldan**.

Chunaldan is a humanoid creature that stands almost 9 feet (3 m) tall with spindly, multijointed limbs and a wide head with four blue eyes. A mutant? An extraterrestrial? Chunaldan will not say. The genderless being carries a long staff and has an affinity for most numenera that far surpasses those around it. It has taught Bern everything he knows, but not even a fraction of what it knows.

The pair has sold three of the flyers, and they currently have two more to sell and eight more in various stages of repair. The cost is 1,500 Coraoan coins per craft.

THE PLAINS OF WREN

An expansive, flat grassland, the Plains of Wren are dotted with villages, but the region is mainly populated by nomadic bands. These bands follow the flocks of wild **tremulan** birds that move across the plains in great number. The four-legged flightless birds are almost the size of a human and are a source of food and materials. The





nomads make tools and weapons from tremulan bones, garments from their feathers, and more.

PHORTHUST

A large port city, Phorthust gets its name from the distinctive blue lime called “phorth” that is used to make the stucco of most of its buildings. Fifty thousand people dwell here, many working in the shipyards, on the docks, and in the soarcraft towers. Sailors from up and down the coast consider Phorthust to be one of the safer, more welcoming ports, and merchants use its access to the sea and to the wide Torels River to move goods without paying the higher shipping fees for using soarcraft.

Unlike most of the major regions of Corao, Phorthust is not under the purview of any noble family. Instead, the leader of the city is a gentry position appointed directly by the *Queen in Lilies*. The current appointee is *Mayor Andresta*, an extremely capable and intelligent leader who has held the position for a few years now.

Though married, Andresta is having an affair with a proxima named Marvus

Goellen. She would do almost anything to keep this relationship a secret, and as the leader of a major city, she has the power to do much.

THE BLUE WATCHER

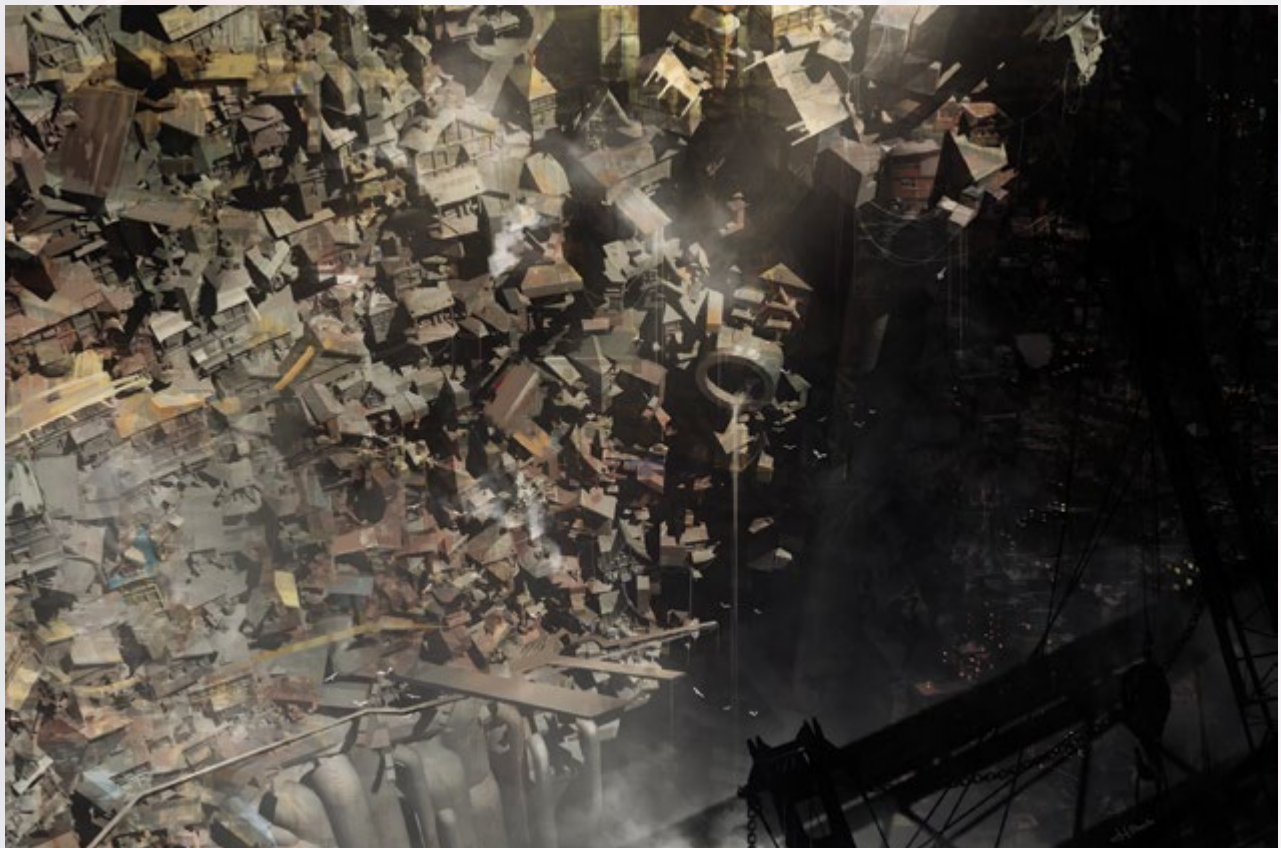
An enormous humanoid statue of unknown composition stands on the shore, looking over the sea to the east. The statue is almost 800 feet (244 m) tall and resembles a vaguely humanoid creature with four folded arms and birdlike facial features.

STORUI

Another major port city, Storui has a rougher, seedier reputation than Phorthust. Because of this, it is a rather easy metaphor to say that the city is literally a pit. Hundreds of years ago, the founders of the city found an artificial shaft along the coastal cliffs that went down to large sea caves below. They built Storui around the edge and down the sides of the pit, next to metal pipes, ceramic and synth conduits, and ancient metal scaffolding. At the bottom, where the shaft gives way to the sea caves, they built a series of piers

Queen in Lilies, page 188

Mayor Andresta: level 5, interactions and perception as level 6





CORAO HEARSAY

Conflict on the Horizon:

Tensions between Corao and Bruul are high and rising. Some people believe that war between these two states is inevitable, although neither is particularly prepared for a major conflict. Land engagements would involve crossing Zare territory, so it is likely that any war would be naval. However, conducting such a conflict in the Bay of Peyclin may draw the octopi into it.

Cloud Volii Nest: Reports have arisen that a cloud volii nest has been found, existing just outside our dimension in a small, enclosed, artificial universe. The egress point from the nest is in the southern portion of the Hidden Mountains, south of Tolema, high on a mountain peak. If a way could be found to close the opening to the nest, it would lift a great threat to the soarcraft in the southern part of Corao.

Unlike humans, octopi have maintained a continuous existence in the long history of the Earth, so their view of the numenera is different. They see it as technology, but not as leftovers of a prior age. Some octopi developments were copied or stolen from prior civilizations, but in general, their progress is their own. It's just very slow by human standards. Octopi lifespans are only fifteen to twenty years, which may account for some of the difference.

Alleichai: level 7; health 30 from force bubble; hovers up to 10 feet (3 m) off the ground; telepathy and mind control within 1 mile (2 km)

Octopus: level 3; stealth as level 5; all defense, perception, and knowledge- and Intellect-based actions as level 4; long movement in the water, immediate on land; creates a cloud of opaque ink in an immediate area in the water

Duchess Dustrum: level 4, numenera as level 6

THE WEIRD OF CORAO

Soul Hounds: Packs of hounds, not unlike broken hounds, roam the western wilderness. However, when one of these creatures opens its beaklike maw, a human face can be seen within it. Likewise, if a hound suffers an injury, a human eye or mouth emerges from the wound, as if it had grown just under the skin. If a hound is killed, its insides appear to be normal.

The Sun Eaters: A small cult in villages in the Plains of Wren calls itself Erastalom, or "the sun eaters." These people believe that humans do not need to eat to survive but can subsist on water and sunlight. Although the majority of the cultists cannot manage this (despite claims to the contrary) and are underfed and unhealthy, some of the "enlightened" leaders do appear to be able to forgo food altogether.

sheltered from, but providing ample access to, the Bay of Peyclin. Wooden stairs and ladders give multiple ways down to the subterranean docks.

The pit of Storui is almost 3,000 feet (914 m) across and about that deep as well. The clearance of the sea caves, even at high tide, easily accommodates the largest sailing craft. There is a single road in Storui, and it spirals down into the pit. Thus, it can become tight and congested at times, so people have rigged ladders, ropes, and makeshift staircases to get up and down more directly (but probably with a bit more risk).

Storui has a population of 40,000. Continuing the obvious metaphor, the lower one goes in the pit, the seamier and more squalid the town becomes. The lowest reaches of the city have few structures at all, being mostly ancient pipes and conduits.

The Ruler of Storui: **Duchess Dustrum** is the ruler of the city and head of a small

noble family. She occupies herself mostly with tinkering with machines and other numenera finds. The Duchess, however, is merely a figurehead. Dustrum's mind is currently controlled by a man named Alleichai.

Despite his true age (unknown, but advanced), **Alleichai** looks like an eight-year-old boy. He has the ability to speak telepathically with people within a mile and can attempt to control anyone his mind touches. With a device that Dustrum is currently making for him, he hopes to increase the range of these abilities by a hundredfold. Alleichai can also create a bubble of force around himself and make that bubble hover and fly above the ground.



THE BAY OF PEYCLIN

The Bay of Peyclin is home to a very intelligent and aggressive nation of octopi. The waters of the bay are very deep and cold, and the octopi are at home in these dark depths as well as in



the shallows near the shores. They have communities and underwater fortresses in both places. The octopi want to establish a foothold on dry land, but the initial step that would be required—creating a structure that could be filled with water to enable them to survive—proves difficult.

In the meantime, to explore dry land, the octopi use devices called niols, which are water sacs to let them breathe and keep their flesh moist. Without a niol, an octopus can survive for only a few minutes out of the water. But so equipped, they can last for two to three hours. Still, octopi move slowly and awkwardly on land.

To deal with this issue, the Peyclin octopi have engineered a creature called an **apricari**. This construct has almost no brain of its own, but instead has a place for an octopus to fulfill that role. Essentially, the octopus drives the apricari like a living vehicle, moving about on dry land. The apricari recycles water, so the octopus within can survive indefinitely.

The octopi raid ships and sometimes small coastal villages. Octopi warriors can affix devices called phlun to their mouths, envenoming their bite with a level 4 poison that inflicts 4 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor). Others wield spears or special underwater dart throwers.

The ocean floor holds as many numenera-filled ruins as can be found on dry land—perhaps more. The octopi explore and sometimes inhabit these places.

UNDERWATER LOCALES

The Scuttling City: An interconnected network of spheres made of coral, glass, stone, metal, and synth, the Scuttling City moves along the ocean floor by means of mechanical tentacles on the underside of each sphere, although at any given time, only about half the spheres are close enough to the floor to use them. The spheres shift and move, so the city is always changing in configuration. The octopi use it as a center for numenera research and craftwork of all kinds.

The Crystal Garden: A collection of natural crystals, ranging from gigantic shards at

least 50 feet (15 m) long to tiny slivers, lie scattered in a massive jumble in the middle of the bay. The octopi tend a collection of bioluminescent fish here, and the lights play in strange and amazing colors—particularly for those who wear special goggles developed by the octopi that transform the colors and lights into a mind-expanding experience. Participating in this experience may be the closest the octopi of the bay have to a religious ceremony.

Guhaquah: Made entirely of coral and stone, with a single metal sphere at its center, Guhaquah is the throne city of the octopi. They are ruled by a council of eight individuals that meld into a single **fugue entity** when together, wielding an array of powerful psychic abilities.

The interior of the sphere is filled with air, but it is also free of gravity. The octopi are extremely adept at maneuvering in a gravityless environment, doing so as easily as they move through the water.



BRUUL

The people of Bruul long ago overthrew their monarch, who

was a cruel and terrible tyrant queen named Garnea IV. Today, she is known as Garnea the Bloody. Once her head was on a pike, many attempted to sweep in and take her throne. All failed, however, because the people—angry and mistreated—would have no new monarch. The head of every claimant to Garnea's bloody throne ended up on a pike near hers within weeks.

That was when a woman named Halla proposed a new sort of government altogether, one where those in power were chosen by the people and served the people, rather than the other way around. Halla became known as the Mother of Bruul.

That all happened more than eighty years ago.

Today, the ruler of Bruul is called the Nominated. Under this position is a council of the Selected, each ruling a region of the land as well as conferring as a group and with the Nominated to make decisions for the people in a complex, interconnected system of checks and balances. The current

Apricari, page 224

Most of the Peyclin octopi carry pressure-powered dart throwers that can deal damage within short range. A few carry (and use) two or three of these weapons at once. The darts are often poisoned. These dart throwers can be used only by octopi, although extensive modification can adapt them for use by humans or other surface-dwellers.

Octopi fugue entity:
level 8, Intellect defense rolls as level 10; Armor 4 (telekinetic shield); telepathy with a range of 10 miles (16 km); telekinesis to long range; mental blasts deal 10 points of damage to up to eight targets in long range

As many as 8 percent of the octopi in the bay have a disorder that causes bifurcation or branching of their tentacles. These branched tentacles are fully useable and can effectively give the octopus twice as many arms or more. These mutants are often outcasts and sometimes bear even stranger mutations that allow them to control severed tentacles, fly through the air, control water around them, or breathe air indefinitely.



Filion Maruk: level 7, Intellect- and memory-based tasks as level 9; health 48; Armor 5; two built-in projectile throwers that inflict 10 points of damage to long range, can be used against the same or different targets as part of one action, and regenerate an infinite amount of ammunition

Tremulan, page 192

Cavisaurus: level 5, perception as level 6; health 21; Armor 2; bite inflicts 7 points of damage

Nominated is a man named Filion Maruk, who has fused himself with a machine and fitted it with repulsors so that it can glide over the ground. The machine body has great strength, additional mental storage and processing power, and a few weapons and protective devices. Despite his organic/inorganic nature—or perhaps because of it—Filion is quite popular among the citizenry.

The people of Bruul are known beyond its borders for their practicality and their no-nonsense approach to things. The cities of Bruul are not beautiful, but they are efficient and well designed. That is not to say that Bruul has no arts. Song, decoration, and poetry have their time and their place.

Perhaps the most common occupation in Bruul is tremulan tender. Many people have domesticated the flightless birds, keeping them in large corrals or herding them along the gentle hills. The biggest threat to the tremulan herds are cavisauri, giant quadrupedal reptilian predators.

CHALLISTER

The capital of Bruul and its largest city, Challister is a walled city at the top of a hill, overlooking an expansive plain. Rising above the heart of Challister is a titanic fibrous plant 500 feet (152 m) tall, from which clear white crystals sprout like ripening fruit. The Crystalas, as it is called, towers above every structure in the city.

Forty thousand people call Challister home. It is a center of trade and commerce, so much so that people use the term “under the crystals” as a euphemism for “doing business.”

The University of Mhorom: The largest school in Bruul, Mhorom is a sprawling university that offers all manner of academia, specializing in science and law. The latter field is ever-growing in Bruul, keeping pace with its expanding legal code. Five thousand people work at or attend the university most seasons.

The Yagmi: A monastic-style order called the Yagmi focuses all its time and attention



on the Crystalas. By tapping into the tree's essence with their minds, the members have learned to enter the tree, as if the bark simply absorbs them. The Yagmi then travel through the tree into the crystals. What they find there is a closely kept secret. The Yagmi have their own isolated, walled compound near the base of the tree.

The Mayor: The mayor of Challister is **Raela**, a woman with mech eyes and a mech prosthetic leg. She was elected three years ago and is a proponent of strict law enforcement. The city's lawkeepers are a large and well-trained force of constables and citizen soldiers.

DAEROCH

Daeroch is both a large town and Bruul's primary military fortress. The town—whose residents are mostly farmers and fisherfolk—mainly serves to support the military base. The military training grounds, fortress, and naval facility are home to about 3,000 professional soldiers and sailors, at the ready to match the forces of **Corao** in case the hostilities between the two nations heighten. For now, the military commanders use these forces to deal with bandits, abhumans, and other threats. Bruul

merchant ships, for example, now frequently have warship escorts when traveling through areas of Peyclin Bay known to be particularly threatened by octopi attacks.

XOME

The ancient site of Xome includes a tall tower of metal and glass that rises above the nearby rocky hills and peaks.

Xome means “The Second Sun” in the local tongue. This is because hovering high above the hills, not far from the tower, is a glowing sphere of heat and light. The so-called sun is a roiling mass of blue energy about 500 feet (152 m) across and almost 1,500 feet (457 m) in the air. During the day, its effects are subdued, but at night it provides far more light and warmth than would normally be expected.

Plants in the area are clearly affected by Xome. Trees, shrubs, and grass grow in odd, twisted shapes, sporting tumorlike cysts that seem to do them no harm but produce unknown saps and what the locals call “ichors.” These same people claim that the ichors have wondrous and hazardous properties.

The area around Xome is home to dangerous plants such as **parlous green** and creatures that look and act much

Some people say that the Yagmi have discovered that each crystal is a gateway to another location on a planet or moon in the solar system. Others believe that the crystals store the essence of creatures of the distant past who can be asked questions by the Yagmi.

Mayor Raela: level 4, perception as level 6; can see normally invisible objects and creatures

Corao, page 187

Parlous green, page 237





Travonis ul,
page 263

Kanthid: level 4, Speed defense and Speed-related tasks as level 3; Armor 3; 5 points of damage; foes struck three times in combat must make a level 5 Might defense roll or be paralyzed for one minute; see The Ninth World Bestiary, page 71

Tyth/Erall: each is level 4, Speed defense as level 3; they share a joint total health of 20

like *travonis ul* but appear to be masses of animate plant matter. It is also not uncommon to see *kanthids*, which look like horrifically mutated forms of other local creatures, but covered in gibbering mouths and poisonous spines.

The few explorers who have entered the nearby tower to the west report that it is filled with elaborate controls and monitoring equipment related to the second sun, but no one has been able to parse their operation.

KLAIN

The people of the small coastal town of Klain have a high incidence of conjoined twins. About one in three births are twins, and half of those are conjoined. Further, most of these twin pairings are human/proxima, which also gives Klain a much higher incidence of proxima than the norm.

The town's natural harbor is well sheltered from the sea to the east, making it an ideal spot for a variety of fishing and merchant vessels to find safety. This means that sometimes the wharf sees ships that are much larger than one might expect in

such a small town.

The office of Klain's mayor is jointly held by a pair of conjoined twins named *Tyth* and *Erall*. These young men are smart and efficient in their work. *Tyth* has a prosthetic arm made of translucent synth.

GORAH

Eighty years ago, an inspired group of geniuses resurrected powerful numenera devices within an ancient statue that granted the people of Gorah an amazing gift—immortality. At that time, all the residents of Gorah had their minds absorbed and stored in a huge spinning cylinder within the heart of the statue. The attached pods could then build new bodies for them as needed. If a body is hurt or killed, the mind returns to the virtual world inside the cylinder, and the body is discarded. The mind can then be placed in a new body grown for it, a process that takes two to three months. The statue, called the Keeper of Spirits, sits in the center of town.

Unfortunately, the procedure for storing new minds has been lost, so no one else can be added to the storage cylinder.





Knowing that they can't pass along their immortality, the people of Gorah have produced only a few children. Some of the people stored in the device act recklessly, while others have become listless. Many, however, are content to live what would appear to be normal lives. Today, about 4,000 of the 5,000 people in Gorah are permanently stored in the statue. The rest are either newcomers to town or the descendants of those who had offspring.

Many of those who are immortal prefer to keep the fact a secret and certainly don't talk about it openly with strangers. Those not blessed with such a gift tend to become resentful. Three years ago, a madman attempted to destroy the devices in the statue out of spite. Today, the statue is well guarded.

ARKALL

Arkall is a town of fisherfolk and hunters who specialize in large, aquatic game such as the **horned whales** that move in enormous pods of fifty to sixty individuals through the Shavelin Sea in the spring and autumn. Normally, 4,000 people live in

this town. The population swells threefold in the winter months, when a mysterious effect off the coast creates a bridge of solid light to a perfectly round island of synth that rises from the waves. For eight weeks or so, Arkall has access to the island's seemingly endless treasure-houses of food, supplies, and sometimes numenera devices, including cyphers, artifacts, and oddities. However, some of the discoveries bring unforeseen complications or horrors with them—weird maladies and what seem like traps or curses catch the unwary.

Ladsan, the mayor of Arkall, is a surprisingly young man who hails from a wealthy family. He is vapid but handsome, well liked in the town's bars if nowhere else.

Ladsan: level 2, pleasant interactions as level 4

THE FOREST OF RAZORS

Unique in the Ninth World, the Forest of Razors is a mass of metal shards of all sizes that have somehow been ripped from the grip of gravity, creating a low-hanging cloud of morbid danger. The smallest of the floating shards are tiny knife blades that must be avoided as one moves through the "forest." The largest rise 100 feet (30 m) tall or more.

Horned whale: level 5, perception as level 6, Speed defense as level 4 due to size; health 40; Armor 2; inflicts 10 points of damage and can overturn small boats



Those passing slowly through the Forest of Razors must attempt a level 2 Speed-based task to navigate safely. A new roll should be made every ten minutes or at any crucial moment chosen by the GM. Failure results in 2 points of damage. Moving at normal speed increases the difficulty by two steps and the damage by 2 points, and moving quickly increases the difficulty by another two steps (for a total difficulty of 6) and another 2 points of damage.

Vape: level 2, perception as level 4, stealth as level 6; health 10; attack ignores Armor and those struck lose an additional 2 points per round from bleeding; see The Ninth World Bestiary, page 131

The shards remain in place, unaffected by the elements. Small shards can be carefully brushed aside or pushed to the ground, but unless otherwise prevented, they always return to their original positions. Larger shards are impossible to move.

Strangely, the Forest of Razors is not without inhabitants. A few hermits or exiles dwell in small homes built precariously atop some of the largest shards. Small, agile animals dash about the dangerous forest, having adapted to the environment.

The nearly two-dimensional **vape** dwells in the forest as well, hunting birds and small game in packs, but attacking larger prey if it can find any.

Myths told by those in the area say that the forest was once a huge metallic structure that was destroyed in a great war of the gods, and the force of the blow that shattered the structure was such that the

pieces haven't been allowed to fall to the ground yet. Although this sounds like a tall tale, it is true that scattered amid the shards are valuable caches of numenera, as if the shards are the destroyed outer hull of a fantastic building or craft, and the technical guts of the thing spilled to the ground when it shattered. Much of the forest's numenera have been scavenged, but some portions, still attached to medium- or large-sized shards, remain. Of course, these are far more difficult and dangerous to obtain.

THE EMERALD MAGUS

The woman who calls herself the Emerald Magus has been a scourge upon the land of Bruul for decades. Some people say that it's been far longer and speculate that either she is not the human she appears to be, or she is ageless. Either way, she is an amazingly powerful nano-wizard, with a variety of strange powers and numenera artifacts.

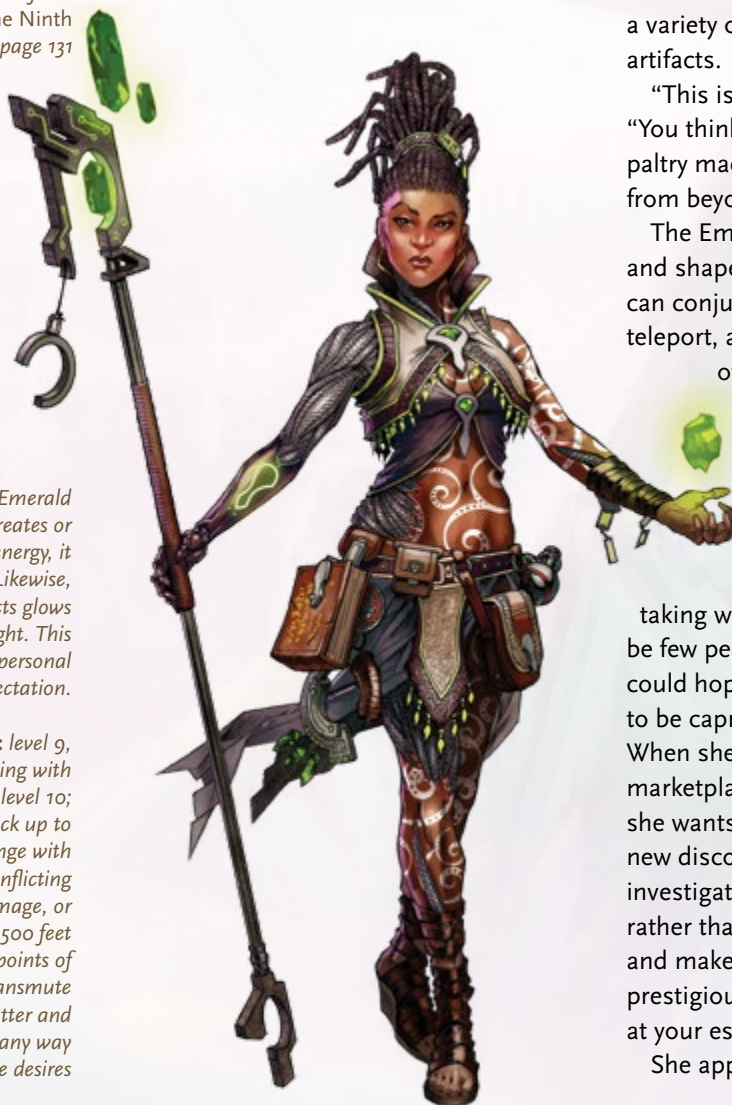
"This is magic!" she's been heard to say. "You think my power comes from some paltry machines? This power originates from beyond your understanding!"

The Emerald Magus can transmute and shape matter and energy, and she can conjure both as well. She can fly and teleport, and kill multiple foes with a wave of her hand. None of her abilities deal with psychic powers or telepathy—they are all overt and tangible.

The Emerald Magus comes and goes throughout the land as she pleases, doing and taking whatever she wants. There seem to be few people or preventive measures that could hope to stop her. Her whims appear to be capricious and often mysterious. When she is hungry, she teleports into a marketplace or restaurant and takes what she wants. When she is interested in a new discovery, she appears before it and investigates until she is bored. Sometimes, rather than oppose her, people welcome her and make the best of it. (It's actually quite prestigious to have the Emerald Magus dine at your establishment or visit your shop.) She appears to have no qualms about

When the Emerald Magus creates or manipulates energy, it is often green. Likewise, matter she affects glows with a greenish light. This is very likely a personal affectation.

Emerald Magus: level 9, all matters dealing with the numenera as level 10; Armor 5; can attack up to six foes at long range with a single action, inflicting 9 points of damage, or a single foe at 500 feet (152 m) for 12 points of damage; can transmute and shape matter and energy in almost any way she desires





BRUUL HEARSAY

Corsairs: Coraoan-sponsored corsairs have been raiding Bruul merchant vessels for some time. The Bruul Nominated has placed a huge bounty on the heads of the captains of these corsairs.

Amid the Razors: A band of *zarg* apparently live in the Forest of Razors, making raids on villages just outside its borders. Rather than adapting to avoid the blades all around them, the abhumans supposedly have some kind of minor magnetic fields that turn away metal. The fields could come from a device they discovered, a new variation in their species, or an ally with interesting powers.

THE WEIRD OF BRUUL

Propagating Man: A humanoid creature—said to resemble a tall, gaunt man—wanders the coastline. He stops now and then, kneeling for hours at a time. When he stands again, he has pulled a mass of his own substance from his chest and tossed it into the sand, where it burrows deep. Sometimes, six to ten months later, an identical version of the man emerges from the wet sand and disappears into the sea.

Serpent Conjurings: In a small village called Sevron, inanimate objects have begun metamorphosing into serpentine shapes. Once fully formed, the seemingly sapient creatures act like normal venomous snakes, building a nest somewhere warm and dark, eating small rodents, and attacking anything that threatens them. These snakes retain the consistency of the original material from which they were formed.

Zarg, page 250

using her power in murderous and destructive ways, but she is not cruel or sadistic. Murder and mayhem do not appear to be her goals.



ZARE

The Kingdom of Zare is a fertile land. The soil yields bountiful crops to the farmers that work it, and the fields present welcoming scenery to the flocks of red-haired borgoats tended by shepherds. But not all in Zare is as lovely as all that. The kingdom is ruled by a pair of kings from a long line of warrior-monarchs who have toiled and bled to drive the human-hunting forces of the *uraeyl* back into Majehm.

Zare is large, but years of grueling war have prevented them from prospering overmuch. At the same time, neither of their human neighboring states would ever think to cross them, for Zare is the wall that holds the devils at bay. Both Corao and Bruul benefit by having Zare where it is and keeping it militarily strong.

MYEUN PALACE

The two kings, *Desthyn* and *Heridol*, jointly rule Zare from this palace, levitating high in the air thanks to powerful numenera devices. The two carry on a long tradition of lovers who share the privileges and the responsibilities of the Zare throne. Although the structure is vast, the two kings dwell in the palace alone except for an automaton servant called *Gom*.

Desthyn is slight of build but has an infectious smile and welcoming eyes. He spends much of his days in the library, reading. *Heridol* is a warrior and built as one, but a warrior who uses speed rather than brute force. His hair and clothing are often disheveled and unkempt, for he has no eye for such details. Both are capable and experienced leaders, and when subordinates and advisors come to the palace for rulings and edicts, the two kings act decisively and always in concert.

Although they leave Myeun only rarely, when they must they do so on a flying

Desthyn: level 5, pleasant interactions and most cultural and religious knowledge as level 6

Heridol: level 5; attacks with a rapier, Speed defense, and military history as level 6

Gom: level 4, perception and cooking as level 6; health 20; Armor 3

Uraeyl, page 246



platform just large enough for the two of them, moving about 20 miles (32 km) per hour.

IMRICHE

“Golden Imriche, sparkling in the summer sun.” That is a line of a poem titled “Imriche,” but it is no longer an apt description. Perhaps in the past the land was a “glistening jewel on the rolling green hills of Zare,” but today it is a place of soot and grime.

Imriche is the closest city to the palace, which almost makes it the capital. Its populace numbers about 10,000, but in the city’s heyday, it had twice that number or more. Many buildings are now abandoned and have fallen into decay. Although the court of the two kings dwell here, along with their extended families and wealthy associates, most residents of the still-active city work in foundries and forges, making weapons and armor.

An Imriche woman named Kestra designed a steel-plated war wagon that can be pulled by draft beasts (usually armored themselves) or fitted with some kind of numenera engine. From within, soldiers can loose arrows or other projectiles while the wagon advances. The smiths of Imriche

have created a number of these wagons, and for the last two years they have been used on the border with Majehm. Kestra has since passed on from a respiratory ailment.

The War College: For years, military commanders have studied in Imriche to be good leaders and tactical thinkers. The school exists in a round, squat tower that bears the banner of every still-living graduate of the school—many hundreds of them—on the outside of the building. Today, however, like Imriche itself, the college is a poor reflection of its former glory. The conflicts with the uraeyl have changed, and generals leading huge numbers of troops into the field are not needed as they once were.

ULAE

Ulae is a frontier town filled with explorers, fortune-seekers, hunters, and others who continue to push the boundaries of the land ever westward. Tales say that somewhere to the west lies a land of great abundance, fantastic magic, and lives of harmony.

About 5,000 people live in Ulae, a town run by a woman people call **Grandma**. She is ancient but spry, with a shock of white hair and a walking stick that conceals a

Grandma: level 4, perception and Intellect-based actions as level 5, Might- and Speed-based actions as level 3; always has a number of useful cyphers and devices



number of numenera devices. She seems to know everyone in town by name and, although aggressive and dour, truly has the town's best interests at heart.

The market in Ulae caters to adventurers and travelers. It is an excellent place to buy explorer's gear, weapons, and armor. At the same time, it's not a bad place to find oddities and other discoveries—even some cyphers and artifacts—offered for sale by explorers returning from the wild.

JORTHEI

Jorthei is a many-towered fortress built on the shores of a lake. Most of the time. Sometimes, there is no lake. The inhabitants of the castle are a self-selected group of experienced explorers, warriors, and a few nanos and numenera experts. They work together directly now and then, but for the most part, they trade their most valuable commodity—information—for a prize that is just as valuable—security. These individuals find that they can relax and share information in Jorthei Castle, knowing that they, their possessions, and in some cases their work are safe. Most of them are people without families.

The longest resident (not the original

founder, for Jorthei has existed in its current state for generations) is a man named **Foroud Hul**, a glaive of some renown. Foroud ensures that all those in the castle keep the peace and abide by the very small number of rules. He is generally well liked.

The Vanishing Lake: The lake next to the castle sometimes disappears. It's not that the water merely drains away, but rather the entire lake—a bit more than a mile (2 km) across and in some places 75 feet (23 m) deep—vanishes, and a flat expanse of land with a small orchard takes its place. The fish and other creatures that live in the lake disappear as well. No trace of the lake remains, and it stays away for one to six days before reappearing.

The Maze: To get into the castle, one must pass through a maze of 12-foot-high (4 m) stone walls. The labyrinth is difficult to navigate and is patrolled by a variety of strange creatures and automatons that act as defenders. One must pass through the maze successfully to be considered as a resident. (After solving the maze once, those who come and go from the castle can use alternative, hidden entrances and exits.)

Foroud Hul: level 7, attacks and defends as level 9; health 30; Armor 4; attacks three times as a single action with his sword-staff

A device in the Ulae market monitors the area for dangerous radiation, disease, or other maladies that explorers coming in from the wilderness might bring with them. It sets off an alarm and communicates information directly to a receiver in Grandma's walking stick.

Characters looking for an interesting place to live may find Jorthei an option. Equipment and treasures left there are always kept safe, and there's little fear of enemies intruding on those who relax in this castle filled with powerful allies.



Entlan, page 228



Broken hound,
page 232

Callerrail, page 234

Yovok, page 267

Gartau: level 7, unarmed attacks and Speed defense as level 9; makes up to four attacks as a single action, inflicting 10 points of damage with unarmed attacks or 7 points plus an automatic minor special effect, such as disarm or daze

Those who study for a month with Gartau learn to deal 1 additional point of damage when fighting without weapons. Other special techniques are available for those willing to study and train longer.

THE LEVENAL WOOD

This sprawling forest on gently rolling hills is the home of the **entlan**, a fierce predator despite its diminutive size. **Broken hounds**, **callerrails**, and bands of **yovoki** also dwell in the forest. However, the Levenal Wood is best known for its gangs of criminals and army deserters, now living there as bandits. The forest is big enough to make it easy for a large group to simply disappear, and the region's reputation as the hunting ground of the **uraeyl** keeps most people away.

The Teacher: Deep in the wood, where there are no paths, lives an expert in the arts of unarmed combat. This man, **Gartau**, maintains a hidden teaching compound for capable students. The bandits steer well clear of his home, for he has single-handedly defeated large groups of them.

CHOSTAL

Chostal is composed of six huge domes of translucent synth that protect residents from weather and greater threats. What goes on inside them depends on the dome. Chostal's people live in an extremely striated society, with each class of people in a different dome. The lowest class, the

Felune, is crowded into a dome that has very little, while the few members of the highest class, the **Qualla**, live in luxurious homes built within the confines of their dome.

The Felune are almost slaves, forced to work at menial labor jobs for barely enough food to survive. Higher strata serve as merchants, overseers, and craftspeople, with the aristocratic **Qualla** above them all. Thanks to implants placed in them at birth, all members of the **Qualla** class are in constant telepathic communication. They have advances that grant them long, healthy lives, often at the expense of the lower classes. Most people of Chostal—even the Felune—think the system is just because the domes determine who is born into which class, or so the population believes.

There is no single leader of the city. Instead, the **Qualla** form a large council that makes all decisions. About 8,000 people live in Chostal; some 3,000 of them are Felune, and the classes get smaller and smaller on up to the **Qualla**, who number only about 90.



ZARE HEARSAY

Royal Impostors: Authorities are searching for two men who bear an uncanny resemblance to the kings and have been duping people throughout the kingdom. They are con artists and thieves but haven't caused any physical harm to anyone.

Uraeyl Hunters: To this day, crafty **uraeyl** sneak over the border looking for humans to kill or capture. Zare has a standing order to kill **uraeyl** on sight, without question or quarter.

THE WEIRD OF ZARE

Rotting Wood: There is a place deep within the Levenal Wood where organic matter disintegrates at an alarming speed. At the edges of this clearing (for obviously the area has no plant life), creatures feel poorly and age prematurely. Closer in, flesh dries and crumbles or sloughs off. Clothing and leather objects begin to dissolve. At the heart of the clearing, a creature turns to dust in seconds.

Mirror Door: A tailor shop in Imriche has a beautiful full-length mirror. On certain nights, for a few moments, the mirror becomes a doorway to a place in the northern reaches of the Hidden Mountains. No one knows why, nor can anyone predict when it will happen.



ERENUSH

Erenush is a tall, black structure of non-Euclidean angles and unknown materials. It is the only known dwelling of the enigmatic *philethis* in the Ninth World. No other creatures have ever entered Erenush. Some people speculate that inside is a vast storehouse of knowledge.

An old, disused road runs past Erenush toward the sea. A few tales call the ancient path the *Wandering Walk* and say that it stretches across the entirety of the Ninth World. Occasionally, people walk portions of the path, some starting from the west, and some going all the way to the Bay of Hannah. Supposedly, the Walk runs south along the coast to Kasmus Gol and the Land of the Tooth.



MAJEHM

Land of the *uraeyl*, Majehm is a queendom ruled and populated almost entirely by nonhumans. In some ways, this challenges some people's definition or outlook of the Ninth World, for many believe that it is meant for humanity. The *uraeyl* as a race are not

much older than humans, it would appear, but Majehm is considerably older than Zare, Bruul, or Corao. The *uraeyl* achieved a level of civilization faster than humans did, but already they stagnate, perhaps because they hold the *numenera* at arm's length, or perhaps because they have pitted themselves against humanity, whose power grows steadily.

Everywhere in Majehm are signs of decay and slow degeneration. Empty towers crumble, abandoned farmhouses have been taken over by flora and fauna, and once-tilled fields grow wild again.

The *uraeyl* monarch rules from the city of Ormanth, a place of horror for humans, for it is the last bastion of *uraeyl* culture that keeps significant herds of domesticated human cattle to be used as labor and food.

Fortresses and armed patrols mark the border that Majehm shares with Zare. Skirmishes break out frequently between what the *uraeyl* call "wild humans" and what the humans call "devils." However, there has not been a significant military advance on either side in more than two years.

Philethis, page 252

Wandering Walk, page 368

Uraeyl, page 246



Uraeyl have attempted to entreat the octopi of the Bay of Peyclin, seeking an alliance, but the octopi have no more love for the inhumans than they do for humanity.

Shum: level 2

Queen Yassamir: level 7

The southern region leading into Sor Rumnar is likewise heavily fortified and patrolled, mainly to keep out the more barbaric uraeyl that live there, as well as some of the abhumans and other creatures in that dread land.

ORMANTH

The capital of Majehm, Ormanth is a large city of 50,000 individuals. All around the walled city are farms and feedlots for human herds. Inside the walls, libraries, schools, theaters, and crafthouses fill the sophisticated city. The inhabitants are known for their fabulous cooking and their fabrics and textiles.

The Docks: The uraeyl have a small fleet of wide galleons and smaller, swifter coasters. They conduct no trade with other lands (no more than they would trade with birds or insects), but they fish and occasionally do a little exploring.

The Palace: The home of **Queen Yassamir** is a wide, sprawling ziggurat surrounded by a dozen stylized statues that are 30 feet tall (9 m). No male uraeyl are allowed in the palace, based on very old traditions, so the

queen's servants, advisors, and guards are all female. Trained humans of either gender can come into the palace.

The queen is young but wise beyond her years and extraordinarily talented in almost everything she undertakes, both physical and mental. Many see her as an almost messianic figure who will lead the uraeyl back to their former greatness. These same individuals usually hope that the queen takes action against the decadence of Aged Roual, but that does not appear to be part of her agenda.

SLATH

Slath is a uraeyl town of 10,000. Due to the lack of new stock available, the residents have begun experimenting with other herd animals to take the place of humans. So far, the efforts have produced mixed results. They have had some success with the swinelike beasts known as **shum**.

Slath is also known for its weapon- and armorsmiths. Black smoke from the war forges still turns the skies above Slath black year round.





AGED ROUAL

This uraeyl city is the exception to most, as it is a collection of ancient buildings now occupied by the normally numenera-averse creatures. The city lies on the shores of Gyra, a salt lake of some size. The buildings are tall, straight towers of metal and glass with sharp angles. Some numenera machines are present and active in the city, powered by lightning strikes from the almost impossibly high occurrences of electrical storms over the lake. These machines, located under the city, spew chemicals into the lake, making it toxic. However, the uraeyl find the water's acrid odors quite pleasant and have learned to all but ignore the storms. Meanwhile, the self-regulating machines provide hot and cold running water, lights, and internal elevators in the tall towers. All of these advanced luxuries are enjoyed by the 9,000 uraeyl that live in Aged Roual, which makes those living elsewhere think of them as decadent and corrupt in a "den of vice and impropriety."

The ruler of the city is a female named **Gyrathin**, or "woman of the lake." She is extremely old and feeble, carried about on a palanquin by twelve degenerate, mutant human slaves who serve as her mute **bodyguards** as well.

THE EMPTY

This strange site is marked on maps as a place to avoid at all costs. At its heart is a mote of pure nothingness that consumes all matter and energy that comes near. Around it is a bowl-shaped crater 1,500 feet (457 m) across and half that deep. Spreading out from there are 50 to 60 miles (80 to 97 km) of barren landscape where little lives. However, one occasionally comes upon an **Oorgolian soldier** or other automaton, wandering aimlessly and confused in the wasteland. A few people have reported strange fungi and lichens growing in the area around the Empty with odd properties that resemble sentience and sometimes suggest mobility and a hunger for warmth and energy.

Occasionally, the uraeyl throw objects or creatures they want annihilated into the heart of the Empty.

THE LAND OF THE TOOTH

This region is technically a part of Majehm, but in truth the queen barely controls it. Its uraeyl are mostly barbaric hordes not interested in sedentary or agricultural lifestyles. Sometimes these barbarians raid uraeyl villages, but for the most part they keep to themselves, often braving the Endless Mire to prove their mettle.

The center of the Empty is a singularity. Coming within about 250 feet (76 m) of it results in almost assured (and instantaneous) death.

Oorgolian soldier,
page 250



Gyrathin: level 2

Gyrathin's bodyguard:
level 3, attacks as level
5; health 20; 6 points of
damage in melee



MAJEHM HEARSAY

Mutation: Domesticated humans in the dwindling eastern herds are beginning to display more and more mutations. Although inbreeding might be part of the issue, it doesn't explain the problem fully. Still, herders will pay handsomely for new stock to introduce to their herds.

Incursions: The press of wild human packs from the northwest has been halted for years, but rogue elements continue to strike into Majehm. They seem intent on liberating captive humans from the domesticated herds. Generals on the border seek new recruits to help defend the land.

THE WEIRD OF MAJEHM

Spawning Spot: A **yellow swarm** hunts along the northern coast of the Land of the Tooth. If the swarm is destroyed or somehow removed, a new yellow swarm appears in a particular spot exactly twenty-seven hours later.

The Stars Are Wrong: The constellations as seen from Aged Roual are slightly different than when viewed from anywhere else.

Yellow swarm,
page 266

KASMUS GOL

This ancient tower stands on a rocky precipice jutting out into the Shavelin Sea in such a way that it appears as though the land around it has eroded away, leaving only the tower and its precarious footing. A strange structure of uneven curves and organic lines, Kasmus Gol is covered in thick growth, most of which is dripping wet moss.

The Surrounding Region: Approaching Kasmus Gol is difficult. There are no paths or roads, and no villages nearby. A few abhuman bands or uraeyl hunting parties might cross the area, but even they don't get too close to the tower.

Surrounding the structure is a level 5 invisible energy field that affects human minds (but, as far as can be determined, only human minds) in a physiological way. Those within about a mile of Kasmus Gol who fail an Intellect defense roll suffer 1

point of Intellect damage. Those within about a half mile of Kasmus Gol who fail an Intellect defense roll suffer 3 points of Intellect damage. Those within about a quarter mile who fail an Intellect defense roll suffer 5 points of Intellect damage and lose their perception of time. Sometimes these victims don't see events until a round after they happen. Sometimes a half hour passes and they are unaware, or a few seconds seem like an eternity. This condition can be removed when any Intellect damage caused by the field is restored.

The Exterior: It is impossible to know if Kasmus Gol was always this way, but today the exterior is lumpy and asymmetrical, almost like an upright, decaying corpse. The level 8 material looks and feels like stone, but it is extraordinarily hard. If someone manages

If a character attempts to climb Kasmus Gol, it is probably appropriate to require three rolls—the first two at difficulty 4, and the last at difficulty 5 due to fatigue.





to break off a piece, it immediately disintegrates into powder so fine that it virtually disappears. However, a great deal of earth and soil has gathered on the exterior after millions of years. Growing within this sediment are massive clumps of a brilliant green moss that can be found nowhere else. Climbing Kasmus Gol is a difficulty 4 task, but the real challenge is the distance of the climb.

Lantern Cages: Huge metallic spars jut out from the upper half of the structure, each more than 1,000 feet (305 m) long. From these hang what appear to be cages made of synth, each about 50 feet (15 m) high, glowing brightly as if it holds a powerful mote of light captive.

If anyone can reach one of these cages, it is clear that the glow actually comes from a trophy—a dead ultraterrestrial of almost pure energy surrounding what looks like a stylized, extremely large skull.

The Unblinking Eye: The entrance to Kasmus Gol is so named because when the tower was first discovered, it was thought to be a giant cyclops with a single, staring eye. The entrance is over 2,000 feet (610 m) from the base of the structure, so just getting to it can be an ordeal. The Eye is an oval opening 150 feet (46 m) wide and 200 feet (61 m) high that leads into a huge chamber 500 feet (152 m) across and just as high. However, the opening is covered by a level 8 force field that shifts from opaque yellow to translucent green. To pass through this field, a traveler must be unconscious or have his conscious mind shielded in such a way that no active thought patterns can be detected.

The Spine: A 30-foot-wide (9 m) shaft runs through the center of the edifice, connecting the levels.

The Statues: This circular chamber is 100 feet (30 m) high and about 500 feet (152 m) across. It is filled with hundreds of statues, all composed of an unknown

WHY GO TO KASMUS GOL?

Why would player characters want to go to such a place? Here are some suggestions:

- The characters need a piece of extraordinarily obscure information (the code for an ancient vault, the only means to defeat a dread destroyer, and so on). Clues in the datasphere suggest that it can be found in the Library of the Spheres in Kasmus Gol.
- The PCs wish to track down the **Emerald Magus** and learn that she has taken up residence in the Magnetic Gallery.
- A knowledgeable, experienced explorer tells the PCs that Kasmus Gol is filled with artifacts and cyphers, and thankfully free of anything still alive to stand in their way. The tower poses challenges, but a careful, intelligent group should be up to the task.

material similar to the exterior of the structure but brightly colored in an array of hues. The statues are of all sizes, each depicting a different creature, but nothing familiar to Ninth World eyes. Most of the statues are jammed in so closely with the others that it is difficult to see them in their entirety. At times, it is also difficult to navigate through the crowded room.

Library of the Spheres: This is an angular, low-ceilinged chamber over 400 feet (122 m) across. Colored spheres of all sizes fill the room, some resting on the floor or against the ceiling, but most hovering at different levels in the air. These spheres hold vast amounts of data on all manner of subjects, and all one needs to do is put a hand (or other body part) into them to access it. However, the information is neither translated nor contextualized. It's unlikely that Ninth Worlders can understand or relate to even one millionth of it.

*Emerald Magus,
page 200*

It is possible that the lantern cages are a more recent addition to the structure, but such a concept is relative. That is to say, if Kasmus Gol is three hundred million years old, the lantern cages might be only twenty million years old. Of course, no one in the Ninth World has any idea how old they are—or can even conceive of such great time periods.

Library tentacle: *level 7; Armor 3; if it suffers 21 points of damage, it withdraws and doesn't return for an hour*

Lingering in this room for more than a minute is dangerous. A huge translucent tentacle with toothy mouths where suction cups might normally be passes through the ceiling as if it wasn't there, attacking organic intruders.

The Magnetic Gallery: This tall room is 200 feet (61 m) across and appears empty. If a visitor deciphers and activates a level 6 control panel, tiny metallic dust of different colors falls from the ceiling. This dust is caught in carefully designed magnetic waves, creating intricate, artistic patterns throughout the room.

The potent magnetic fields have a chance to rob an explorer of a metal weapon or item, twisting and destroying it unless the character succeeds at a difficulty 6 Speed- or Might-based task.

The control panel, if dismantled, contains five random cyphers and three oddities.

The Labyrinth of Sound: This chamber absorbs light and is always dark. Normal movement here is impossible. Only by producing the right tones can you move in the desired direction. A high-pitched sound might allow you to move a few feet north, but a low note is needed to move to the east from there.

Buried within this strange maze is an illuminated oasis (unseen until entered) that contains an artifact called the

Nibresis. This awkward, oddly shaped device of synth and metal is about the size of a human head. When used, it transfers cellular mass from one organic target to another. The user chooses both targets, but they must be within short range. The creature losing mass suffers 8 points of damage, and the other is stunned for one round and gains a random mutation that lingers for about a week before the creature's body rejects the changes and returns to normal (depletion of 1 in 1d20).

The Exsiccation Pit: This room is nothing but a gigantic, bulb-shaped pit 800 feet (244 m) deep, filled with 91 feet (28 m) of dust. Anything in the pit is drained of all water in three rounds (characters in the pit move one step down the damage track each round).

Many inorganic items are buried deep in the dust, including an automaton long since depowered. If explorers find and revive it, they might figure out a way to communicate with it and convince the automaton to help them get at least some knowledge from the Library of the Spheres.

A metal walkway is at the top of the pit. A hard-to-find compartment in the ceiling above the walkway holds a level 4 artifact that creates a field around a living creature, making it immune to the effects of the pit (depletion 1 in 1d20).



SOR RUMNAR

For most people in the region, Sor Rumnar is more myth than reality. When they speak of it, they call it a place of devils and ineffable evil—Hell itself. And understandably so. The people who have been there relate stories of the twisted wastelands, the shadow-haunted mountains, the endless swamp, the disease-carrying insects, the horrific creatures, and more barbaric uraeyl than dwell in Majehm.

It is commonly accepted that Sor Rumnar is the scarred and torn remnant of a prior-

world battle so colossal and so terrible that its effects are still evident in the Ninth World. The ground here is often stark, twisted (often impossibly), and filled with chaotic and unexpected chasms and ridges. Earthquakes and weird weather are routine. These scars affect not only the terrain but also the very nature of reality and life in the region. Creatures found nowhere else haunt this dread land, and more familiar creatures are as perverted as the landscape, with extra limbs, eyes, or heads. Simple, normal animals found elsewhere are venomous and



aggressive in Sor Rumnar. Creatures that dwell here include the following:

Orange queen: A variety of serpent that dwells in the low branches of trees and attacks unsuspecting prey

Bordegn: A toothed hawk whose touch causes mammals to sicken

Dessic: A large beetle that can spit poison up to 10 feet (3 m)

Voroke: An ursine mammal that disrupts numenera

One of the most abhorred creatures haunting Sor Rumnar is the **kateraptis**, not only because it is a feared predator, but also due to the horrible transformations that these beasts cause.

Sor Rumnar teems with abhumans. **Yovoki**, **sathosh**, and **igothus** are present, but the most prevalent are the **zargs**. These vicious creatures terrify even the other abhumans in the region due to their numbers and ferocity, fearlessly attacking anything and everything they come upon.

What Sor Rumnar does not have is civilization. There are no towns or cities in this wilderness, and very, very few villages. The inhabitants of these settlements are either human or uraeyl (obviously, never both in the same location). These places are so isolated that they

have little concept of the world outside and have developed their own unique language, customs, religion, and so on. The wasteland also has the occasional lonely tower or castle built by those who are very interested in staying far, far away from others of their kind.

THE ENDLESS MIRE

A large portion of eastern Sor Rumnar is a fetid swamp of twisted plantlife, stinging insects, and bubbling mud pools. **Callerrails**, **travonis ul**, **scutimorphs**, and **slider beetles** dwell in the swamp, along with abhumans and uraeyl barbarian tribes. Also haunting the mire is a creature called the **slistovile**, a babbling maniac of a predator.

THE TENEBRE

A tall, foreboding series of mountains almost impossibly high and impossibly angular and pointed, the Tenebre have been compared to the blood splatter of a grievous wound sliced into the Earth, frozen in time. The peaks also look more like the jagged, broken teeth of a deep sea fish than a mountain range.

If it is possible to cross the Tenebre and reach the lands that lie farther south and west, no one on record has ever done so.

Orange queen: level 3, *stealth* tasks as level 5; bite inflicts poison that causes pustules to appear on the victim's flesh, which quickly grow thorny tendrils that wrap around the victim, holding him fast and inflicting 1 point of damage each round

Bordegn: level 2, attacks and *Speed* defense as level 3; touch causes mammals that fail a *Might* defense roll to lose their next turn due to vomiting

Dessic: level 2, *Speed* defense as level 4; *Armor* 2; spits poison in immediate range that inflicts 4 points of damage

Voroke: level 4; health 20; *Armor* 1; numenera devices of level 4 or lower within short range do not function

Kateraptis, page 232

Yovok, page 267

Sathosh, page 256

Igothus, page 231

Zarg, page 250

Callerrail, page 234

Travonis ul, page 263

Scutimorph, page 257

Slider beetle: level 5; *Armor* 3; attack against armored opponent forces foe to make a second *Speed* defense roll or his armor is destroyed; see *The Ninth World Bestiary*, page 117

Slistovile, page 243





SOR RUMNAR HEARSAY

Mixed Culture: Rumors say that deep in the wasteland is a village of the impossible—humans and uraeyl coexisting in isolation. Unaware that their people beyond the village hate (or eat) each other, they live in peace and harmony.

The Lost: A group of influential and wealthy individuals from Zare decided to undertake a quest and explore the unexplored. Their party disappeared months ago. Their families have jointly raised a considerable reward for information about their foolhardy loved ones.

THE WEIRD OF SOR RUMNAR

The Ongoing Battle: Legends say that a war of the gods created Sor Rumnar,

and some people claim that it rages still. They report sightings of titanic figures, a thousand feet tall or more, striding and fighting in the wilderness. These figures supposedly flash into existence for a few heartbeats at a time, and then disappear just as suddenly.

The Curving: Deep in the wilderness, there is a spot about a mile and a half (2 km) wide where straight lines are impossible. Crafted objects like swords or poles bend. Thrown objects curve in their trajectory. Falling objects scatter unpredictably. If a person attempts to walk in a straight line, the world around her seems to bend and twist, so even if it seems like she moves in a straight line, she does not. Even vision is curved, so that objects are often just a few paces off from where they appear to be.

PART 3:

CHARACTERS AND CREATURES



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CHAPTER 11

CHARACTER OPTIONS

Everywhere I go, I meet those who have clearly adapted to their environment—humans who have skills or knowledge that I myself do not possess. The woman for whom intense heat, a sear that made my skin feel like it was flaying from my bones, was no more than a passing occurrence, barely worth noticing. A man who stood in the freeze and orated, without a single shiver or clatter of his teeth, while my own tongue felt as if it were turning to ice with every breath. Those who move tirelessly, ceaselessly, through lands and languages.

How does one become such a part of the world that these things barely scratch the surface of your existence, that they become nothing more than a passing thought? If it comes from experience, then surely I must be nearing such a place myself.

~Naïnd Oreni, notes, possibly for Chapter 27 in “The Wonders of Our World: The Steadfast and Beyond.”

Not being able to speak to the rest of the PCs is fun for a little while, but keeping it up any longer than a single session gets old fast. If one character is from a location that suggests that she does not speak the same language as the rest of the group, come up with a way to overcome that or provide a story-based explanation for why it wasn't true in the first place.

As soon as the GM begins opening up some of the new regions revealed in this book, some players will want to have characters from these places. Whether that's simply because the locations are fresh and interesting, because a new character is needed while the group is in the new area, or because the GM decides that her campaign will begin in one of the new regions, it can be interesting to have character options tailored to the specific places.

This chapter presents new descriptors and a new focus that relate to many of the locations described in this book.





NEW DESCRIPTORS

Descriptors are the easiest and most obvious way to tailor a new character to a specific location.

CORAOAN

You come from the other side of the world, a place accessible to those in the Steadfast only through the **Great Reach**. Corao is a land of history, tradition, and complex customs. As an exemplar of this land, you are a student of history and the numenera, but you are also quick witted and light on your feet. The people of Corao sail the skies in their **soarcraft** and consider the sky their home as much as the land. To you, speed is more important than endurance. Movement is life.

You see yourself as the latest part of a continuous line that spans all of Earth's history. This gives you a deeper connection with the numenera, which is not the leftovers of a mysterious past, but your birthright.

You have the following characteristics:

Light: +3 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You are trained in all tasks related to the history of Corao and the surrounding regions.

Skill: You are trained in all tasks having to do with the numenera.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure:

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

1. You were in need of money.
2. You wanted to gain access to more numenera.
3. The rest of the group was new to your land and needed a guide.
4. You were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

DESERT-DWELLING

You hail from the dry wastelands of **Vralk** or somewhere equally arid and hot. You are experienced in looking for food and water where such things are scarce. You know how to avoid the heat from the sun and from the volcanic eruptions and ashfalls that come with them. Although you

are acquainted with the dangers of the arid wasteland from which you hail, you are likewise unfamiliar with places that are cold or wet.

Your clothing is probably designed to protect you from the heat and sun, and you likely have myriad pockets for stashing extra food, water, and other essentials.

You have the following characteristics:

Resistant: +4 to your Might Pool.

Long-suffering: You can go twice as long without food and water as another human.

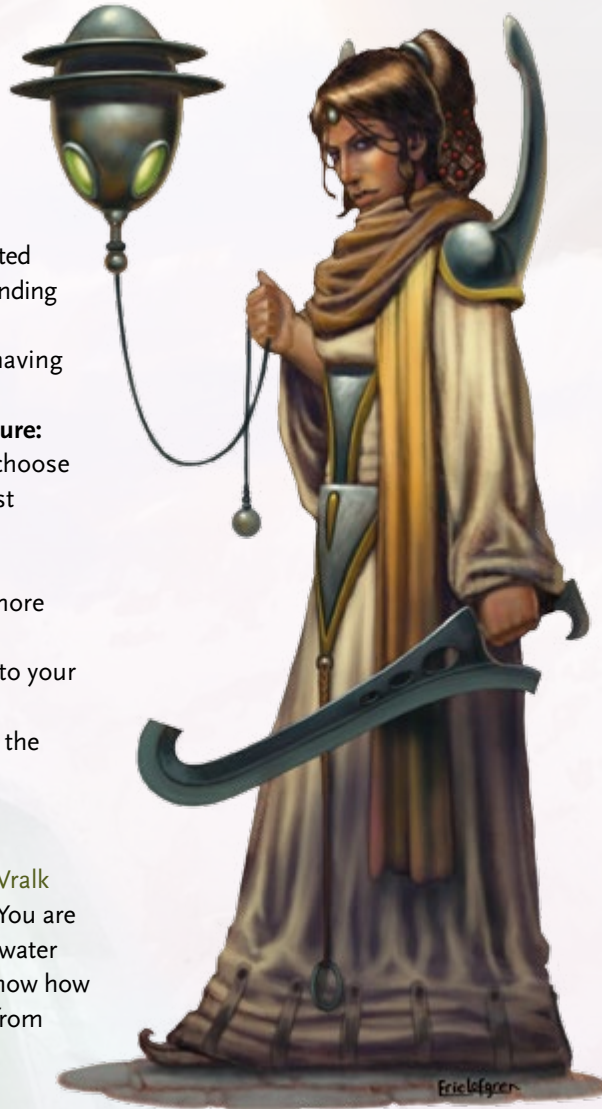
Skill: You are trained in any task involving resisting damage from heat, and you have +2 to Armor that applies only to damage from heat.

Skill: You are trained in any task involving finding food or water.

Great Reach, page 190

Corao, page 187

Soarcraft, page 187



Vralk, page 125

Both a Gaian animist and a Vralkan follower of the Red Gods could take the Devout descriptor, but the manifestation of it would play out very differently.

Most echryni, being very family and culturally oriented, stay within their communities. However, a lone echryni can easily adapt to a new group, adopting them as her new family.

Echryni, page 162

Rayskel Cays, page 155

Inability: You have an inability in any task involving resisting damage from cold.

Inability: You have an inability in any task involving swimming or handling watercraft.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure:

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

1. The others were inexperienced in the wilderness and needed a guide.
2. You needed help to learn how to get along beyond the borders of your desert home.
3. It seemed like the only way to survive.
4. The others had food and water.

DEVOUT

You are a believer in a religious faith or an important, all-encompassing philosophy. These beliefs help to shape the decisions you make and how you see the world. Your outlook gives meaning to your life and the things that happen to you. On the downside, it can blind you to thoughts and ideas that run counter to the beliefs of your faith.

You have the following characteristics:

Inwardly Focused: +3 to your Intellect Pool.

Steadfast: Your faith gives you the foundation to deal with stress. When something would alter the difficulty of your action to your detriment, you can negate one step of the modification. Once you use this ability, you cannot use it again until after your next ten-hour recovery roll.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure:

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

1. Your understanding of your religion's dogma suggested that it would be a good idea.
2. You had a dream or vision that guided you to this point.
3. A religious leader asked you to get involved.
4. Getting involved would advance your religion in an indirect manner.

ECHRYNI

You are an amphibious humanoid who hails (or whose ancestors hailed) from the Rayskel Cays. As an adult, you look slightly human, with strong legs and large webbed feet, adaptable lungs and gills, and winglike appendages, all of which make you equally suited for traversing land and water. You can breathe on land or underwater for up to 28 hours at a time, and then you must switch environments, if only for a few minutes, to clear out your delicate gill passages. Your lifespan is slightly longer than that of a typical human, and your gender is likely indiscernible to anyone other than yourself and those closest to you.

You can control and change the very structure of water—specifically saltwater—using an enzyme on your skin. This allows





you to turn water into a semisolid state while retaining most of its fluid properties. Your **waterwear** clothing, and perhaps much of your equipment, is likely something you created in this way.

You probably speak the Truth, and you also sing in a short, staccato language designed to carry for long distances underwater.

You have the following characteristics:

Gregarious: Despite your unusual appearance, your social skills charm even the most standoffish of creatures. You are trained in all tasks involving positive social interactions.

Waterwielder: If sufficient water is available, you can use it to craft **mundane items** that typically cost no more than 5 shins, such as standard weapons, armor, and equipment. Items must be no larger than what you can carry on your person, and they last up to 28 hours or until they are not in contact with you for more than a round. As a general rule, crafting a mundane object takes one to ten minutes, depending on its size and complexity. You cannot craft complicated items such as cyphers, artifacts, or special equipment.

Inability: If you go more than 28 hours without switching between water breathing and air breathing, you gain an inability in movement-related tasks, including running, jumping, and climbing. The inability persists until you make the switch between environments for at least a few minutes.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. One of the PCs is enamored of your ability to waterwield and invited you to join the group.
2. Some of the other PCs helped you find water to breathe when you needed it, and you owe them your gratitude.
3. Someone is hunting you, believing you to be a mutant, and you hope that the group will help protect you.
4. You are searching for a human who once assisted a member of your community.

ELYCHNIOUS

You hail from the **Black City**. As is typical for those of your kind, you are quiet, subdued, and calm. You tend to avoid wearing bright colors or adopt ostentatious appearances of any kind. Some people might mistake you for sullen or distant. You value learning, history, and lore, except for knowledge of powered numenera or the science behind such things.

You believe that demons dwell within stone and metal as well as in severe weather and storms. You prefer to be in high places rather than on the ground when possible, and you don't like being out in the open.

You have the following characteristics:

Studious: +4 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You are trained in tasks involving botany, zoology, or biology.

Skill: You are trained in climbing.

Inability: You have an inability in understanding or using powered numenera, including ray projectors, automatons, force fields, vehicles, and so on—anything requiring a nonliving power source.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure:

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

1. You needed to leave the city and discover the world.
2. It seemed an important way to combat the demons of the earth and air.
3. **Gallitaius** himself asked you to get involved.
4. You were exiled from the city for a past transgression.

FROSTBORN

You are from the region known as the **Frozen South**. You are tough, able to shrug off ice and cold that would debilitate others.

You have the following characteristics:

Stalwart: +2 to your Might Pool.

Skill: You are trained in any task involving moving (walking, running, jumping, or climbing) in conditions that would otherwise be more difficult due to ice or snow.

Skill: You are trained in any task involving resisting damage from cold, and you have +2 to Armor that applies only to damage from cold.

Black City, page 70

Waterwear, page 163

For examples of mundane items, see the *Weapons* list on page 80 and the *Other Equipment* list on page 81. *Waterwielding* can't be used to make *Special Equipment* items.

Gallitaius, page 73

Frozen South, page 77



Eurieg, page 229

Skill: You are trained in handling euriegs and driving a eurieg-pulled sledge.

Inability: You have an inability in any task involving resisting damage from heat.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure:

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

1. You needed to get somewhere warm.
2. You were exiled from your home for a past transgression.
3. The others were inexperienced in the frozen wilderness and needed a guide.
4. You needed help to learn how to get along beyond the borders of your frozen homeland.

GAIAN

You are from **Lostrei**, the Spiritlands. As a believer in the animism-based faith of your people, you see a unity in all things from the spirits that flow through the world. Thus, you love and respect animals and have a rapport with them.

Like most Gaians, you are egalitarian and can't abide the idea of slavery or a heavily classist society. Individual freedom is important to you—important enough that you'll fight for it.

You have the following characteristics:

Empathic: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Graceful: +2 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You are trained in any task having to do with interacting with, caring for, or training animals.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure:

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

1. It seemed a good way to uphold important causes like justice and freedom.
2. The spirits told you to.
3. You needed to get away from your home and see the world.
4. You needed money.

A Gaian in the Steadfast faces a great many challenges, as the people there have many misconceptions about the land to their north. Rather than make these challenges unpleasant and insurmountable, the GM should turn them into interesting plot hooks and twists.

Lostrei, page 100



PROXIMA

Your parents were human, but you are slightly different. No one can quite put their finger on it, but there's something odd about you. You, of course, don't see it at all, but you've encountered the stares and minor prejudices from "normal" humans all your life.

On the other hand, you are healthier than others, and you're told that *proximas* live much longer than is typical.

You come from the lands far to the east, beyond the Great Reach. If you travel to the Steadfast, you'll find even more surprised and strange reactions there, where people have never seen anyone like you before.

You have the following characteristics:

Healthy: +4 to your Might Pool.

Skill: You are trained in tasks related to intimidating humans.

Quick Recovery: Your ten-minute recovery takes only one action.

Inability: People find you somewhat off-putting. You have an inability with positive social interactions with humans.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure:

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

1. You found that the others in the group accepted you more readily than most.
2. Down on your luck, you needed money.
3. Tired of the way you were treated at home, you decided to venture forth into the world.
4. You had knowledge that the rest of the group needed.

RAYSKELAN

You feel most at home when surrounded by the smells and sounds of the ocean, when you can sense that the land doesn't go on forever, and when you know that at any time you are never more than a few hours' walk from the touch of the sea. Being inland, far from any connection to the sea, makes you feel ill at ease.

You probably worship the moon as your main god, believing that the sky is a second, larger sea that mirrors the one you love so dearly. To that end, you are not afraid of death, and in fact have prepared for it,

ensuring that someone close to you will put you under the waves for three days so that you can travel from your body to become a bioluminescent creature in the skysea.

It's likely that you speak a language known only to you and those of your hometown, as well as *Ayon* and whatever bits of the Truth you've managed to pick up in your travels.

Your clothing is probably designed to absorb little and dry quickly, letting you move between two worlds with ease.

You have the following characteristics:

Agile: +4 to your Speed Pool.

Pliant: You are at home on both water and land, adept at switching between the two. At the beginning of each day, you can choose to be trained either in running and jumping, or in swimming and sailing.

Additional Equipment: You carry a unique token that you found on the shore of your home island long ago, as well as a dozen *airels*.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure:

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

1. Against your better judgment, you joined the other PCs because you saw that they were in danger.
2. One of the other PCs is interested in languages and invited you to join them so that she might learn *Ayon*.
3. You have been away from your beloved islands for a long time, and one of the PCs reminds you of your home for a reason you can't yet put your finger on.
4. You were once a celebrated member of the *bonebreakers* who answer to *Trau Yad*, and you are trying to start a new life out of the spotlight.

VRALKAN

You hail from *Vralk* and fit the stereotype of the typical *Vralkan*—you follow the Red Gods, see violence and intimidation as the answer to most of life's problems, and were never introduced to concepts like compassion and mercy. You value hunting and physical challenges (particularly combat), and you delight in seeing the blood of your defeated enemies spilled on the ground.

Ayon, page 156

Proxima, page 184

Airel, page 159

Bonebreakers, page 159

Trau Yad, page 157

You have the following characteristics:

Steely: +4 to your Might Pool.

Bloodthirsty: If you are fighting a wounded foe, you deal 1 additional point of damage.

Skill: You are trained in any task involving finding food or water.

Inability: You do not see much value in diplomacy or charm. You have an inability in all pleasant social interactions.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure:

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

1. Blood and glory were involved.
2. You were ordered to join the group by someone of a higher class.
3. You decided to infiltrate the enemy lands.
4. You needed to leave Vralc and see the world.

NEW FOCUS

The new focus described below is particularly appropriate for characters who want to explore some of the areas described in this guidebook.

LIVES ON THE ROAD

You are a traveler. Experienced travelers are rare in the Ninth World because of the hazards involved, but you are up for these challenges. You thrill to the idea of exploring new places. Wanderlust makes you grow anxious if you stay in the same place too long.

Being on the road means you're adaptive. New situations don't bother you (in fact, you thrive on them). The road is a dirty, dangerous place at times, but you're resilient and resistant to harm and disease.

Travelers wear tough, practical clothing and often a wide variety of gear. Because you're always picking up new things as you visit places, your clothing and equipment are a hodge-podge of different cultures and styles.

Jacks in particular take well to living on the road, as they are very adaptable. But truly, anyone who walks the long and winding paths (or blazes whole new trails) that cross the world is a fellow traveler, regardless of their other skills.

Connection: Choose one of the following connections.

1. Pick one other PC. The character has been your longtime traveling companion. You know many of each other's foibles, preferences, and secrets.
2. Pick one other PC who is not from your hometown. Not only do you know where she is from, but you seem to know more about that place than she does.
3. Pick one other PC. Whether it's true or not, you feel that character always seems to need your help in whatever he does.
4. Pick one other PC. You have taught her a smattering of one of the languages you know.





Additional Equipment: You start with an explorer's pack. If you already have one, you can instead take an extra change of clothes, rations for two more days, and two minor glowglobes.

Minor Effect Suggestions: Your action impresses those around you. People who were unsure of you are now willing to at least listen to what you have to say.

Major Effect Suggestions: As you succeed, you say precisely the right thing, and the difficulty of all social interaction tasks pertaining to one person who can see and hear (and understand) you is decreased by two steps permanently.

Tier 1: Hardy. You add 4 extra points to your Might Pool. Enabler.

Multilingual. You are fluent in an additional language of your choice. Enabler.

Tier 2: Survivor. You are trained at finding food and water in places where such things are difficult to find. This doesn't just mean out in the wilderness. On the streets of an unfriendly city without any shins, you still might be able to find enough sustenance to get by. Enabler.

Multilingual. You are fluent in an additional language of your choice. Enabler.

Tier 3: Tireless. You can walk, swim, or otherwise travel for half again as long as most people. Enabler.

Sharp Eyed. Because you must always keep an eye out when you're on the road, you are trained in all tasks related to perception and navigation. Enabler.

Tier 4: Polyglot. You are so adept at languages that after hearing any language spoken for a few minutes, you can pick up a few words. It doesn't take long for you to be able to (crudely) make yourself understood, and to understand what's being said around you. Enabler.

Tier 5: Resilient. In your travels, you've been exposed to all sorts of dangerous things and are developing a general resistance. You gain +1 to Armor and are trained in Might defense tasks. Enabler.

Tier 6: Adaptor. Living on the road long enough, you learn to do a little of everything. Anytime a circumstance (such as weather, inability to see, terrain, and so on) would increase the difficulty of a task for you, you can ignore the modification. Further, anytime you take your ten-hour recovery roll, you can choose one skill to be trained in. This lasts until your next ten-hour recovery roll, at which point you choose a new skill (or the same one again). Enabler.

Lives on the Road GM Intrusion: *The dangers of the road are many. The fatigue of travel can cause even the hardest of travelers to make mistakes.*





CHAPTER 12

CREATURES

The creatures presented in this chapter can be found in the specific places described in this book, as well as in various additional locations throughout the world. As always, the diversity and weirdness of the Ninth World are so vast that this chapter only begins to explore the types of creatures that characters might encounter in their explorations.

The most important element of each creature is its level. You use the level to determine the target number a PC must reach to attack or defend against the opponent. In each entry, the difficulty number for the creature or NPC is listed in parentheses after its level. The target number is three times the level.

A creature's target number is usually also its health, which is the amount of damage it can sustain before it is dead or incapacitated. For easy reference, the entries always list a creature's health, even when it's the normal amount for a creature of its level.

For more detailed information on level, health, combat, and other elements, see the Understanding the Listings section in the *Numenera* corebook.



Understanding the
listings, page 228



CREATURES BY LEVEL:

Braguon	2
Duronator	3
Glittergar	3
Igothus	3
Zarg	3
Apricari	4
Entlan	4
Eurieg	4
Lagliard	4
Narborasham	4
Nchalsik	4
Shantag	4
Uraeyl	4
Mnethashi	5
Quaaen	5
Silverwing	5
Slistovile	5
Spawn-warrior of Ochramaris	5
Tusked gorthas	5
Vro	5
Kateraptis	6
Parlous green	6
Shoun	6
Angled One	7
Vulun	7
Yfilk	7
Cloud volii	8



ANGLED ONE

7 (21)

The people of *Antre* tell more “ghost stories” about the Angled Ones than factual accounts. This is because so few—in fact, perhaps almost no—encounters with the enigmatic creatures have ever left anyone alive to tell about them.

The Angled Ones are invisible and intangible when they move, traveling at right angles to normal reality, and they are most often moving. When they stop, they warp space, creating temporary angles where formerly there were none. This means that corporeal creatures and objects abruptly change position and orientation or, if moving, trajectory. Introducing suddenly warped angles within a creature or object inflicts immediate and devastating damage. Although a few people have suggested that harm caused by the Angled Ones is accidental—presupposing a complete ignorance of the nature of matter and life in this universe—most believe they are bloodthirsty sadists that delight in killing. The truth might be more complex. It is possible that their interaction with matter and life in this universe has meaning to them beyond the obvious, overt results. Perhaps it is ritualistic. Perhaps it involves a physiological need. Perhaps they see it as self-defense—that would explain why the Angled Ones have killed only many dozens of victims, rather than thousands.

In the brief moments when they are visible, in the rare instances when they do not move, they appear to be nothing more than a strange angled lensing effect. If killed, they shatter like glass.

Motive: Violence and sadism

Environment: Anywhere

Health: 21

Damage Inflicted: 12 points

Movement: Long

Modifications: Speed defense as level 9.

Combat: The Angled Ones attack, usually with surprise, by suddenly appearing in the same space as their victim and inflicting upon him impossible angles that slice through him like razors. It is impossible to harm or affect the Angled Ones while they move—and it is very difficult to do so when they remain still. A damaged Angled One will usually attempt to flee, and as it can pass through matter as easily as through empty air, escape is usually simple.

Interaction: If the Angled Ones have a language or thought patterns discernible by creatures from our world, it is entirely unknown and likely unknowable.

Use: The Angled Ones are the Ninth World equivalent of “hungry ghosts.” They are almost impossible to find until it is too late, their existence shown only by what they leave behind.

Loot: Pieces of a shattered Angled One sometimes form a cypher in the hands of someone with a lot of skill and knowledge.

Antre, page 89

GM Intrusion: *The impossible angles created by the Angled Ones cause the floor to bend in such a way that the character falls into or through it.*



*The Bay of Peyclin,
page 194*

Deep in the Bay of Peyclin, below dark waves, lie deeper breeding pits where octopi forge living things the way humans might forge a tool or a sword. Apricari are some of the most successful spawn from these pits, brought to the surface in shining white egg-sacs and released on the shore.

Octopi of the Peyclin Bay (and perhaps elsewhere) engineer these biomechanical beasts so they can operate on dry land. The apricari are somewhat like mounts and somewhat like vehicles. Octopi crawl inside the beasts—for octopi can seep through extremely small spaces—and control them from within. Left alone, an apricari is as docile as a herd animal, and likely far stupider.

Motive: Subservient to an octopus

Environment: Near the shore

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Perception as level 3, Might defense as level 5.

Combat: Slow and clumsy, apricari operate as though designed by creatures unfamiliar with moving on dry land—because they were. Still, in combat they have a mouth full of sharp teeth and sharp hooves as well. More important, they are usually controlled by crafty and devious octopi.

A bit like an octopus, an apricari can spray a stream of black ink at any target within short range. The octopi devised this ability as a means of escape, but it had a wholly unexpected (but not unwelcome) result. The ink affects humans in a strange way: a target sprayed must make an Intellect defense roll or suffer 6 points of Intellect damage and suddenly hate the one thing she values most. It might be wealth, food, a loved one, success, violence, beauty, or anything else. This effect lasts until all 6 lost Intellect points are restored. Once affected by the ink, humans become immune to the effect thereafter.

Apricari do not see well. It is up to the octopus in control to use its (excellent) vision.

Interaction: Either apricari are controlled by an octopus and have no ability to interact, or they are near-mindless animals that are almost too stupid to be frightened by danger or enticed by food.

Use: Apricari were developed by octopi just recently, and their use is still experimental and exploratory. One day, however, an entire invasion of octopi-mounted apricari might thunder into human coastal lands.

Loot: Within the workings of an apricari are 1d6 cyphers and one or two oddities.

*Well before an encounter
with apricari, GMs
should ask players what
their characters value
most.*

GM Intrusion: The apricari not only bites the character but tramples her as well, inflicting an additional 4 points of damage, knocking her prone, and trapping her beneath the beast.





BRAGUON

2 (6)

Green skinned like the forests and jungles they call home, these abhumans are somewhat less aggressive toward humans than others of their kind. They are more isolationist in outlook, but like all abhumans, they are brutish and bestial. Braguon gain status among their own kind through strength and intimidation. If approached by others, they react poorly, usually attacking or fleeing immediately, their weird hoots and whistles fading into the forest that they know so well.

These abhumans roam the forest, hunting, scavenging, and generally living short, shallow lives. Though they live in the woods and know its secrets, they have no love for it or its inhabitants. They kill and destroy for pleasure.

Motive: Hungers for blood; belligerence and fear

Environment: Forests and jungles in bands of four to ten

Health: 8

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Perception and stealth as level 3.

Combat: Typical braguon warriors are relatively weak. They rarely use weapons, relying instead on their claws. Their attacks are uncoordinated and somewhat clumsy. They never wear armor.

However, the process of giving birth toughens a braguon, so sometimes an older female who has had multiple children rises to a position of power in a band. Her greater size and strength makes her a tougher opponent.

Interaction: Braguon mouths are strange fluted things that couldn't produce humanlike words if they wanted to. The abhumans communicate through a series of whistles and pops. They react to the actions of others with violence or terror, disappearing into the trees.

Use: Some of the weakest of all abhumans, braguon are less effective as an overt threat and more useful as a way to show the truth of abhumans in general: even those who do not raid human settlements or ambush travelers are still unpleasant and awful.

Loot: Very, very occasionally, a single braguon will have a cypher.



Older female: health 15; Armor 1; attacks for 6 points of damage

GM Intrusion: Four more braguon, previously unseen, drop down from the trees or slip out from behind the bushes.

Enormous predators of the air, cloud volii descend from above to attack an entire village at once with long, translucent tentacles that carry a terrible sting. From far away, one of these biomechanical creatures looks like a hazy spot in the sky. Closer, it becomes clear that it is a mass of hundreds of slowly churning arms waving about a central dark core. The floating beast is 100 feet (30 m) across.

Soarcraft, page 187

Corao, page 187

Most infamously, cloud volii attack the soarcraft of Corao, ripping them open to get at the fleshy parts of the ships as well as the creatures within. No one knows exactly how the volii fly, but nothing seems to ground them. Even a dead specimen floats in the air where it died.

Motive: Hungers for food

Environment: The sky

Health: 60

Damage Inflicted: 12 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Long

Modifications: Speed defense as level 6 due to size.

Combat: The touch of a cloud volii's tentacle paralyzes an organic creature that fails a Might defense roll. The victim goes limp for one minute, during which time it is probably pulled into the central core and devoured. As a single action, a cloud volii can attack all creatures within short range with a tentacle. Alternatively, it can stretch outward and attack up to three creatures within long range.

Interaction: If the cloud volii are more intelligent than simple animals, they hide it well.

Use: The PCs are traveling aboard a majestic soarcraft when an alarm sounds and all the personnel inside begin running frantically about. They are under attack! The craft lurches as a hole is torn in the hull, and tentacles begin worming their way in.

Loot: The core of a cloud volii contains 1d6 organic cyphers and perhaps an artifact, suggesting that they are not natural creatures at all, at least in origin.

A cloud volii might move into a flock of flying birds and devour them all, or lower itself into a forest or lake and grab all the animals or fish it can in one terrible moment.

GM Intrusion: *The character's attack on the volii severs a tentacle, but suddenly two more immediately stretch toward him and attack.*





DURONALOR

3 (9)

These hairless, mammalian quadrupeds have a pair of large horns on their head to defend themselves. The males, in addition, bear a set of green frills. Duronator herds wander across much of *Lostrei*, particularly the southern regions. A herd can sometimes reach more than one hundred individuals but usually consists of ten to twenty.

Motive: Protecting the herd

Environment: Plains

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short (but see below)

Combat: A duronator can charge, moving a short distance and finishing with a melee attack that inflicts 2 additional points of damage. Alternatively, starting in a round after a round in which the duronator uses its action only to move, the creature can move a long distance in a burst of speed for up to five consecutive rounds.

Rather than making a physical attack, male duronators can exhale a puff of poisonous gas at a single target within immediate range. If the target fails a Might defense roll, one of the following effects occurs, dictating the victim's actions each round until he makes a successful Might defense roll (making a new roll each round):

01–10	Target believes that duronators are friendly and intelligent, and attempts to interact with them as such.
11–50	Target cannot perceive duronators in any way, no matter what happens.
51–80	Target believes he is a duronator and will fight to defend others of his kind.
81–00	Target believes he has achieved perfect awareness and contentment, and he takes no actions.

Interaction: Duronators are no more intelligent than most animals. They are fiercely protective of each other (particularly the young) and, unlike other herd animals, they are not willing to allow predators to cull individuals without a fight from potentially the entire group.

Use: A merchant in the *Cloudcrystal Skyfields* is willing to pay 50 shins for each poison-producing duronator gland delivered to him, but of course this involves traveling to the far north, into the Gaian lands.

Loot: Although duronators are hunted for their meat and their skin (which makes excellent leather), males are more prized than females for two reasons. First, the green frills are desirable for many decorative uses. Second, and perhaps more important, the gland that allows the creature to produce the gas is sought after as a source for powerful, mind-altering drugs.



Lostrei, page 100

Cloudcrystal Skyfields, page 174

GM Intrusion: *The character is in danger of being trampled by the entire herd of duronators. If she cannot get out of the way in time (probably involving a difficulty 5 Speed defense roll), she suffers 10 points of damage and is knocked prone, and the difficulty of any action taken in the following round is increased by one step due to the choking dust and general confusion.*

Although mistaken at a distance for a bird of some kind, the entlan is a reptilian predator that hunts in small packs. They are eyeless, but their senses of hearing and smell are extremely acute, and they use sonar-sensing organs all around their head with great efficiency. Overall, their senses are better than a human's.

Entlan stand about 3 feet (1 m) tall. They constantly emit various high- and low-pitched sounds, so it isn't hard to know they are coming. Their red coloration suggests that they have no need for stealth. Instead, they use their great speed and their subsonic mental scrambling to aid them in bringing down prey, including creatures far, far larger than themselves.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Anywhere

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Long

Modifications: Perception as level 5, Speed defense as level 5 due to size, stealth as level 3.

Combat: The entlan enjoys attacking in small groups. If there are at least three entlan within short range of each other, as an action on all their parts, they can generate a subsonic field that affects the minds of non-entlan in immediate range of any of the three. Targets that fail an Intellect defense roll suffer 3 points of Intellect damage and have their mood altered to one that can only be described as terrible loss. The feeling is akin to losing a child, a sibling, or a close friend. The effect is that for one round, the character is stunned and unable to take actions, and afterward, the difficulty of all tasks is increased by two steps. This latter effect lasts until the lost Intellect points are restored.

Once their prey is weakened, entlan move in to attack with their bite.

Interaction: Entlan are more or less animals.

Use: Entlan are exotic predators and make for a good wilderness encounter. They might also be interesting as trained hunting beasts for a more intelligent creature (one wise enough to steer clear of their subsonic mood alteration when they use it).



GM Intrusion: Before or during combat, the character makes an unexpected noise, causing multiple entlan to turn on him.



EURIEG

4 (12)

Eurieg, sometimes called “ice scuttlers,” thrive in the mountains of the south called the Maternal Mountains, climbing sheer, icy cliffs as easily as walking across the ground. These creatures look part lupine and part arachnid, and prey upon smaller animals like the tiny mammals called *skitter ogs* or the white feathered *jallis* that nest in rocky outcroppings. Humans in the region have domesticated the eurieg to use as guard animals and to pull heavy sledges across the ice with surprising strength and speed.

A eurieg’s eight paws are covered in sharp hooks to grip ice and stone. Their bodies are covered in fur of white and grey, and their large heads are usually dark grey to black. A typical individual is about 8 feet (2 m) long.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Cold wasteland

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 12

Movement: Long

Modifications: Climbs, jumps, and crosses difficult terrain as level 6.

Combat: Eurieg pounce on foes when they enter combat, using bites as well as the curved hooks on their paws. As a single action, they can move a short distance and attack.

The difficulty of defending against this leaping attack is increased by one step, and the attack inflicts 8 points of damage. After this initial pounce, they fight with their teeth.

Interaction: Wild eurieg are intelligent animals, but they are still just hungry predators.

However, the beasts are easily domesticated if raised by humans from the time they are pups. They are loyal companions and eager to please as long as they are well fed. Two eurieg can pull an ice sledge loaded with two people and up to a ton of supplies and cargo. Sledge drivers use whips to spur the eurieg to go faster, but smart humans know that mostly, they can just make the cracking sound of the whip to motivate the beasts.

An abused eurieg usually turns on its master.

Use: The enemy the PCs have pursued across the tundra unharnesses the eurieg pulling her sledge and commands them to attack.

Maternal Mountains, page 92

Skitter og: level 1

Jallis: level 1

If the terrain allows it (the interior of an icy cave, for example), eurieg drop down from above with their pounce, likely attacking with surprise as well. They can fall up to 50 feet (15 m) and land safely, suffering no damage.



GM Intrusion: The eurieg scuttles backward and makes a second pounce attack on the character immediately after making its normal attack.

Swimming in warm salt waters, the glittergar is a menace to both organic beings and mechanical devices (or, of course, mechanical beings or organic devices). This large, armored fish attacks creatures in small packs, but it is even more drawn to powered numenera devices, which it feeds off of as well.

A glittergar is typically about 4 feet (1 m) long and is characterized by a number of bioluminescent spots on its armored flesh. These spots continue to sparkle and glow for up to six months after the creature dies, so fresh glittergar flesh commands a nice price from craftmakers who use it to decorate armor, shields, or almost any other object (particularly impermanent ones).

Motive: Hungers for flesh and energy

Environment: Any aquatic

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Long

Modifications: Swimming as level 6.

Combat: Glittergars attack with a powerful bite. If they act in concert against a single foe, three to five glittergars can attack as a single level 5 creature and inflict 6 points of damage.

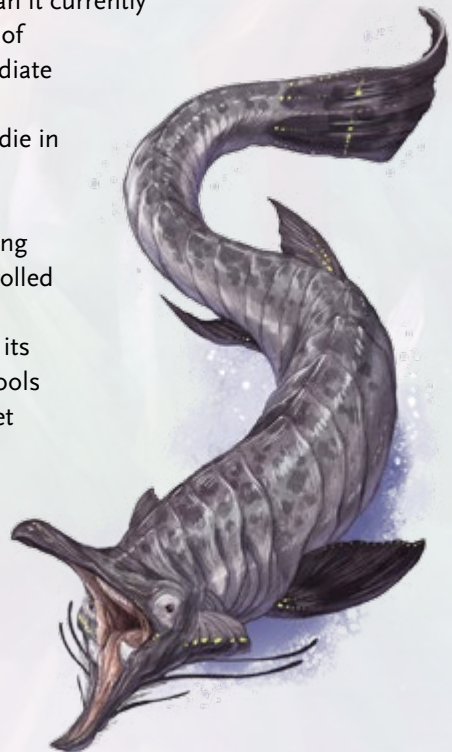
If the tendrils around a glittergar's mouth even brush against a powered numenera device of level 3 or lower, the device is automatically drained of power and the fish gains 3 points of health. This requires no action on the part of the glittergar. Simply swimming by an unattended, immobile device or successfully biting a foe that has the device in her possession is all that is needed. The fish can drain more powerful devices, but this requires an action on its part as well as a successful attack against the device, and the glittergar gains health equal to the level of the device.

If a glittergar absorbs more health in one drain than it currently has, it explodes, killing it and inflicting 1 point of ambient damage on all creatures within immediate range. This fact does not deter the fish from attempting to drain power, and many of them die in this way.

Interaction: Glittergars are as intelligent as other fish, but they can be trained more easily by using minor powered devices (like oddities) or controlled jolts of energy in the water.

Use: An ancient citadel now lies deep underwater, its still-functioning turbines drawing swirling schools of glittergars by the dozens. The fish cannot get through the structure's armored hull to drain energy, but they starve trying. The PCs, needing to get into the sunken citadel, must first figure out how to get past all the ravenously hungry glittergars.

Loot: Not only is glittergar flesh valuable (5 shins per fish), but within each one's brain is an organ that can serve as an organic battery to power small devices if removed and used by someone with great skill.



GM Intrusion: The glittergar accidentally unleashes the power of a device on the character's person into the water, inflicting 5 points of damage on her and stunning her for one round if she fails a Might defense roll.



IGOTHUS

3 (9)

The desert is a harsh place, and creatures adapted for its harshness are usually . . . harsh. Igothus are no exception. They are abhumans able to go long periods without food or water. When they do find prey, however, they fall upon it with reckless and savage abandon. They don't just kill to eat—they enjoy it. They are cruel sadists and awful murderers, and pain and hunger are all they understand. As a group, they have no hierarchy and keep no semblance of order. They are more akin to a swarm of insects than a band of humans or even a pack of hounds.

Igothus eat anything organic. They generally do not kill each other, but they eat their dead if given the opportunity.

Motive: Hungers for flesh; murder and cruelty

Environment: Hot, dry areas

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 4.

Combat: Igothus are fast and agile, savagely attacking with claws and teeth. They never use weapons or armor, and they prefer swarm tactics. A group of five igothus can attack as a single individual of level 5, inflicting 8 points of damage.

Igothus seem to be utterly fearless and fight with a savage bloodlust to their dying breath.

In the moment in which it is struck down, an igothus can often make a single, final attack if it has the opportunity.

Interaction: Igothus do not have their own language, typically speaking just enough of the predominant language of the surrounding area to communicate basic concepts to each other: "Look, meat!" "Many foes."

Use: In Vralk, people capture and enslave igothus, turning them into weapons of war. Typically, Vralkans keep the abhumans in pits or inside cages on wagons, loosing them upon the enemy when the moment is right.



Vralk, page 125

GM Intrusion: The character's attack on the igothus may have been successful, but the savage creature immediately throws a handful of its own blood in her face, momentarily blinding her for one round while it makes its own attack.

These avian predators are reviled by virtually everyone. Many people think them hell-spawned demons rather than beasts. Brightly plumed, they stand almost 12 feet (4 m) high, and although they do not fly, they leap about with surprising speed and agility. Kateraptises sport a crownlike mass of fleshy protuberances on their heads.

Kateraptises generally live and hunt alone, mating only once to produce a clutch of three or four eggs. They hide their nests in high caves or other spots that are difficult to reach without a mighty leap. Their terrible, shrill cries send other creatures in their habitats running.

Legends call these creatures “mother-makers” due to their strange power and attribute the existence of all manner of odd and horrific creatures to them. This, however, likely stems from a misunderstanding of what a kateraptis actually does.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Coastal areas

Health: 25

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Jumping as level 8; perception as level 5.

Combat: The kateraptis attacks by leaping to a position near its prey. In the following round, the protuberances on its head emit a mixture of chemicals and radiation that has a unique effect on creatures that range from the size of a human child to something the size of a kateraptis (although they are immune). All such creatures within immediate range that fail a Might defense roll collapse in pain, unable to act. In the next round, the cells in the victim's body replicate at an astonishing rate, and he still cannot act as his flesh grows and twists into a new shape. In the third round, the growth separates from the victim, and the victim moves one step down the damage track. The naked, hairless growth, flopping and writhing on the ground, has the vague appearance of the victim, though covered in bloody goo. In effect, the kateraptis forces its victims to reproduce asexually.

The kateraptis then attempts to eat the mindless, helpless spawn. However, if the original victim fails an Intellect defense roll, he cannot help but feel a kinship to the spawn and fights to defend it. But this is rather futile, as the spawn will die within a few minutes even if saved from the kateraptis.

The kateraptis attacks and eats anything with its wide beak and powerful talons, but it greatly prefers to feed upon the spawn it induces.

Interaction: Kateraptises possess the intelligence of a typical animal predator.

Use: A kateraptis encounter is potentially one that will never be forgotten, disturbing and terrifying all at once.

Loot: The head protuberances of a kateraptis can be used to create a cypher or two by someone knowledgeable in the numenera (particularly biotechnology).

It is possible that by using powerful numenera devices, a victim's spawn could be kept alive. In such a case, it is also possible that it would become an initially mindless clone of the victim after two to three months.

GM Intrusion: The character's spawn does not automatically die, and manages to hang on long term. The character is still compelled to protect it as if it is an actual child. However, it cannot fend for itself at all, and perhaps never will.





LAGLIARD

4 (12)

Plant or animal? The lagliard makes the determination difficult. It is an inhabitant of the hot deserts of Vralk (and perhaps elsewhere) that somehow subsists on ash. Desert dwellers know it to be a significant source of food and fresh (and surprisingly clear) water. They also know it can be very dangerous.

If left alone, a lagliard remains motionless for days, weeks, or months at a time, waiting for nearby volcanos to erupt and send it clouds of ash. It can go dormant for years until an eruption, but that's rarely necessary in Vralk.

A lagliard is 5 to 6 feet (1.5 to 1.8 m) tall and almost 3 feet (1 m) across at its widest. It has five eyes and five tendrils, which can extend up to 4 feet (1 m).

Motive: Self-defense

Environment: Hot, volcanic deserts

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Immediate

Modifications: Speed defense as level 3 due to quickness.

Combat: If a lagliard senses an approaching creature, the first thing it does is release a powerful stench. The smell is noticeable at great distances, but all creatures within a short distance of the lagliard must make a Might defense roll or the difficulty of all their tasks is increased by one step. Next, if approaching creatures do not flee, the lagliard releases a chemical into the air that affects anything within immediate distance. Those failing an Intellect defense roll feel utterly sated—no matter what their actual condition, they do not feel hungry or thirsty, and in fact the very thought of food or drink makes them feel queasy, such that they would fight if someone attempted to force them to eat or drink. This sensation lasts for 28 hours, so those affected who are already in need may not survive their next day in the desert.

The stench and the chemical might be enough to drive off a threat, but an intelligent predator might continue to attack. At the cost of 2 points of its health, a lagliard can churn the ash in its gullet and blast a cloud of hot ash at all creatures in immediate range, inflicting 5 points of damage to those who fail a Speed defense roll (and 1 point of damage to those who succeed). The lagliard can also lash out with small tendrils to defend itself, but this is a last resort.

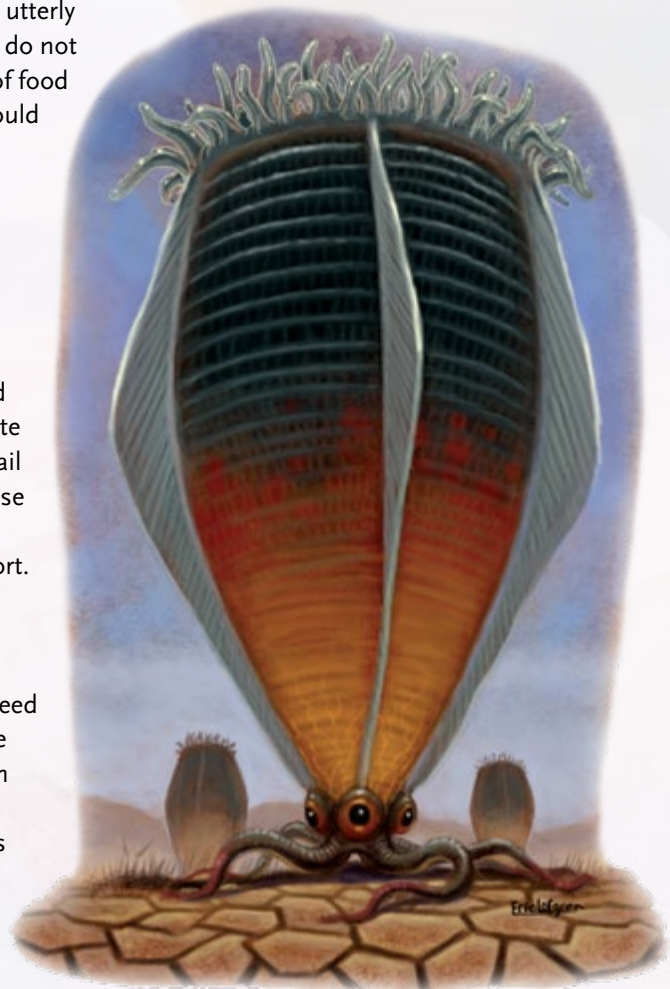
Interaction: A lagliard has the intelligence of a large insect.

Use: A lagliard isn't a predator and won't come after explorers in the desert. However, characters may need to attack the lagliard for food or water. The creature offers enough of both to sustain a human for seven days (or seven humans for one day).

Loot: In addition to food and water, a lagliard's innards contain a chemical that can be made into a level 4 poison that inflicts 4 points of Intellect damage.

Vralk, page 125

GM Intrusion: The lagliard topples in the middle of combat, falling on the character, who must make a Speed defense roll or be trapped beneath the creature.



Vralk, page 125

Arachnoid humanoid amalgams with cruel claws, mnethashi may have extraterrestrial origins, but their kind has dwelled on Earth for as long as the Ninth World has existed (and probably much longer). As they cannot abide the sun, mnethashi dwell underground in militaristic societies dominated by strength and the capacity for cruelty and betrayal. Although there are exceptions, such as in *Vralk*, the mnethashi see humanity as something to be conquered and enslaved.

A mnethashi stands about 5 feet (2 m) tall.

Motive: Domination

Environment: Anywhere, often in the company of enslaved humans or other creatures

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Stealth and deception as level 7.

Combat: Mnethashi claws drip with a powerful acid that also runs through their blood.

The damage they inflict includes 3 points of acid damage. Further, if they are struck in melee, the creature striking them suffers 2 points of acid damage from the blood spray.

Mnethashi are experts in stealth. Beyond moving quietly and slipping into shadows, they can cloud the minds of other creatures, implanting confusing or false images. Those failing an Intellect defense roll cannot help but be confused by or even believe in these psychic illusions.

Mnethashi have mental powers that they can use offensively as well. A target within short range that fails an Intellect defense roll suffers 6 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor). A character reduced to 0 Intellect in this way loses much of her will and obeys any command or suggestion sent to her telepathically. This condition lasts until her Intellect Pool is completely restored.

Mnethashi often use cyphers or artifacts, usually as weapons.

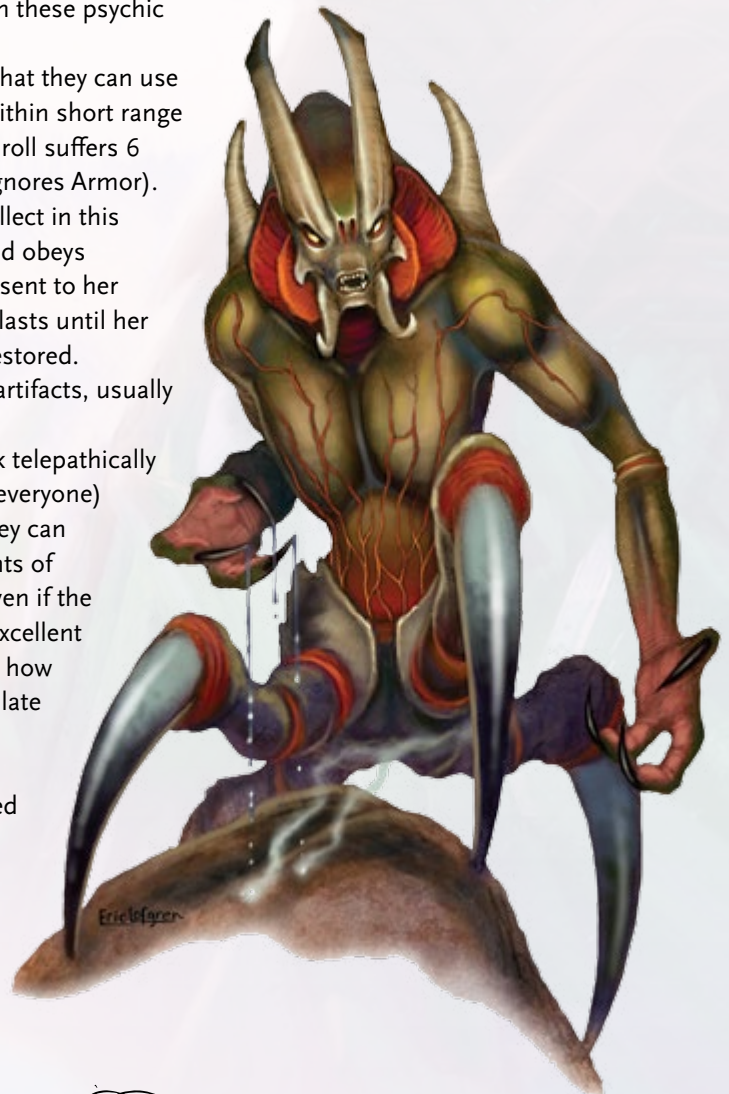
Interaction: Mnethashi can speak telepathically to anyone (and, if they wish, everyone) within long range. Further, they can read the basic surface thoughts of anyone within short range, even if the target is unwilling. They are excellent liars and have learned exactly how to best influence and manipulate humans.

Use: A small cadre of mnethashi assassins has been dispatched by the characters' enemies to find and eliminate them.

Loot: A mnethashi typically carries a cypher or two, and perhaps an oddity.

Mnethashi use their powers to ensure that their slaves never fully restore their Intellect Pools.

GM Intrusion: The mnethashi disappears into the shadows immediately after making its attack. The characters have no idea where it is.





NARBORASHAM

4 (12)

From the warm waters surrounding the Rayskel Cays to the frigid shores of the Frozen South, narborasham—sometimes just called narbors—hunt on both land and sea. But they do so very differently depending on where they are. In the water, these large, muscular creatures can project powerful sonic vibrations that stun prey. On the surface, they can spew forth a tiny symbiotic creature that flies about (but cannot breathe underwater).

Narborasham are 9 feet (3 m) long, not including their tail, but a few people have seen “behemoth” versions of the creatures that are twice that size or more.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Coastal regions

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short (long underwater)

Modifications: Swimming as level 5; stealth on land as level 3.

Combat: Narborasham are extremely strong, and thus despite their bulk they move quickly.

They are expert swimmers but lumber about adequately on land. They attack with teeth and tusks, inflicting grievous wounds, but before they get that close, they have a ranged attack.

Underwater, they let loose a concentrated burst of sound that forces all within short range to make a Might defense roll. Those that fail and are in short range are dazed for one round, which means the difficulty of all actions they attempt during that round is increased by one step. Those that fail and are within immediate range are stunned for one round, making it impossible for them to act.

Above the surface, narborasham have an even stranger tactic. With a bellow, they release from their mouth a separate creature that lives inside them. This level 1 symbiote, called by some a shammer, flies a long distance each round and makes Speed defense rolls as level 5 due to its swiftness and size. It looks a little like a pale, phlegmy bat. The shammer makes no attacks, but it harasses foes and aids its master, modifying all of the narborasham’s attack and defense rolls by one step in the creature’s favor.

Interaction: The narborasham relates to the world as a typical animal predator. The shammer is likewise an animal, one that grows from a tiny egg already in the narborasham at birth. Basically, the shammer of the mother narbor lays the egg in the developing embryo while it gestates. If the shammer is ever slain, it can never regain a new symbiote. A rare few narbors are host to two or even three shamblers.

Use: The PCs ready a small boat to cross from one island to the next when suddenly the vessel overturns—a narborasham has decided to make a meal of one or more of the characters, if it can.

Behemoth

narborasham: level 5, attacks and makes Might defense rolls as level 6; health 30; Armor 3; inflicts 8 points of damage

GM Intrusion: The weight of the attacking narborasham knocks the character off her feet, and if she does not succeed in avoiding it, she is trapped beneath its bulk.



Xakarl, page 67

Huge insects, nchalsik at first appear monstrous to human eyes. Only a savvy explorer realizes that they are very intelligent creatures that live and work in a sophisticated society. A large community of nchalsik lies in the Beyond in a city called **Xakarl**, but it's likely that more live elsewhere. Nchalsik hunt animals (and sometimes humans) for food, but their main source comes from farming plants and fungi. They also tend herds of other creatures, usually various insects and arachnids, some of great size.

The nchalsik “wear” other, smaller insects (or, more rarely, other creatures) as a sign of status or accomplishments, like finery or earned medals. Such embellishments are called **scutan** and are still alive when stitched to the nchalsik, squirming and struggling but gaining sustenance from the host like a conscripted parasite.

Nchalsik are quite knowledgeable regarding the numenera (at least as much as humans, if not more). They sometimes construct sophisticated automatons called **shiksil** and perhaps other devices as well—weapons, vehicles, and more—but only things that have a practical use for them and their society.

Nchalsik follow the commands of their royalty (usually two queens and a king). Other than the royalty, all nchalsik are divided into two castes: workers and warriors. Workers are level 3 but otherwise use the same stats as warriors.

Motive: Hungers for flesh, self-defense

Environment: Usually dry areas

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Short

Modifications: Climbs as level 5.

Combat: Nchalsik are tough and strong, usually attempting to grab and incapacitate a foe.

This often requires teamwork. A foe held relatively motionless by one nchalsik is subject to an attack from another for double the normal damage (8 points rather than 4).

Nchalsik coordinate their actions well and move into battle as a phalanx. Sometimes one protects the warrior next to it rather than attack (increasing the difficulty to attack the protected warrior by one step) or aids its fellow's attack (increasing the difficulty to defend against the attack by one step), whatever is most efficient. Warrior nchalsik fight to the death without compunction.

Interaction: Nchalsik have their own language, but a few speak the words of other creatures as well. They are highly intelligent, but most think only in terms of what is good for their entire society. The exceptions are older individuals, who over time gain a bit of an ego. These creatures value prestige and self-aggrandizement.

Use: The characters encounter a hunting party of nchalsik. Can they convince the insects to see them as anything other than food?

Loot: About one in six nchalsik carries a useful cypher.



GM Intrusion: *The character is swarmed by all the nchalsik nearby (requiring no action by the insects), knocking him prone and keeping him from taking actions other than trying to get away.*



PARLOUS GREEN

6 (18)

“Seems funny to say so, but one of the things I fear the most out here is not an animal or an automaton or anything like that. Nope, it’s a plant. These dangerous little things are bloodthirsty, tenacious, and hard as all hells to kill. Plus, they move . . . well, I can’t even figure it.”

Parlous green are aptly named carnivorous plants that tend to attack with surprise like serpents, or at least like serpents with mesmerizing, thought-stealing eyes and flesh-dissolving tentacles instead of teeth. They live in swamps, bogs, and rainforests. Drawing their mass from the plant material and water around them, they usually start just a bit smaller than a human, but they grow to twice that size or more over the course of an attack.

Parlous green reproduce by devouring the flesh and the intellect of other creatures. Within their roots, they grow pods in which some of these nutrients (as well as thoughts and memories) are transferred. Over time, a new parlous green develops in a pod, a plant saturated with animal biological matter and intelligence. Typically, the new one immediately attacks its sire, and a pitched battle occurs, sometimes entirely beneath the ground. Inhabitants of regions where parlous green live know that a distant but feverish rumbling beneath one’s feet, or a stirring in the shallow waters of the swamp, might mean that such a battle is occurring. And they know that means it’s time to run. It’s dangerous to get in the middle of such a struggle, and it’s worse to be the first prey for the new parlous green that emerges.

Motive: Hungers for flesh and brain waves

Environment: Wetlands and damp forests

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 2

Movement: None (but see below)

Modifications: Perception as level 7; hides as level 9 in murky, wet areas with plantlife.

Combat: A parlous green appears suddenly, rising from the muck in which it dwells, and all within short range who see it must make an Intellect defense roll. Those that fail take 4 points of Intellect damage and stand motionless, staring at the parlous green’s tri-lobed eye. (Victims can take only mental actions or make recovery rolls.) The effect lasts until the Intellect damage is restored or the parlous green is no longer within range or within sight. Worse, characters standing motionless lose 1 Intellect point each round they are transfixed as the plant literally drains their thoughts. Those who succeed on their initial Intellect defense roll become immune to the transfixing effect for the rest of the encounter.

The parlous green attacks with its acid-coated mouth tendrils, which inflict an additional 2 points of damage on a target without Armor.

Once the parlous green is in attack mode, it draws biological matter and water from the ground around it, gaining 5 points of health each round. This can heal damage it has sustained, but the plant can also exceed its normal health total. It grows in proportion to its increased health. If a parlous green is 5 feet (1.5 m) tall at health 18, it is 7 feet (2 m) tall at health 25 or so, and 10 feet (3 m) tall at health 35 or so. The creature cannot sustain an attack longer than ten rounds and must feed or flee by the end of that period. When its attack ends, it loses its additional health and mass.

If it needs to move, the parlous green can sink down into the mire in which it grows and emerge in a location within 1 mile (2 km), as long as that location is suitably wet and

A parlous green decides when and where its attack will occur, and it is almost impossible to find when it doesn’t want to be found. Due to the way its abilities function, the GM should note the beginning and end of its attack. If a parlous green retreats, for example, it loses its extra health and its transfixed victims can act again. If it returns a few rounds later, everything starts again—it begins to gain health, and its foes must try to resist its transfixing eye.

Braguon sometimes worship parlous green as demon gods. They usually get eaten for their trouble.

Swamp folk know that although parlous green are dangerous, when they sink into the ground, they leave behind a growing mass like a fleshy fruit that can be harvested. This is called a toothsome husk and is quite nutritious and tasty.

verdant. This movement requires the parlous green to spend two rounds (one to sink in its current location, and the other to rise up in the new one) and to lose all additional health gained during the attack.

Interaction: A parlous green is crafty but no more intelligent than an animal predator. It can't be reasoned with.

Use: In the fetid mire of ancient residues mixing with water and plant matter, the parlous green is a perfect surprise for a group of explorers.



GM Intrusion: The character is so surprised by the initial attack of the parlous green that she is knocked backward into the mire. A full action is required to get up and right herself, assuming she is not transfixed.



QUAAEN

5 (15)

Flying reptiles that come in a variety of striations, spots, dapples, and stripes, quaaenit have been bred and biomodded to serve as mounts for the bonebreakers of the Rayskel Cays. Quaaenit can carry up to two humans at a time and can travel up to 100 miles (161 km) without resting. Two natural eyes provide a quaaen with a wide vantage, while an implanted third middle eye provides long-range telescopic viewing. This third eye is connected to the quaaen rider's brain via an implant device, allowing him to adjust the zoom and scan the ground below or the sky in front.

Additional biomods include a natural harness structure beneath each of a quaaen's four wings. Riders use the harnesses to equip their mounts with elaborate devices, including flight enhancers, electric weapons, lights, and more.

Named after the sound that they make—a long croak that carries for miles—quaaenit are difficult to ride and even more difficult to control and guide. On average, they live only about a year.

Motive: Loyalty, protection, training

Environment: Islands and anywhere there are large bodies of saltwater

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Long

Combat: Quaaenit are as combative as they've been trained to be and fight in a variety of styles. The basic quaaen attack is a gouge with its curved horns that does 5 points of damage.

Most quaaenit are equipped with some type of additional weapon:

Stun Disks: Four disks filled with crackling blue light can send streams of electricity into a group of creatures within short range of each other. Any living thing hit by the light suffers 5 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) and is *stunned*, losing its turn for one round.

Wing Darts: These pump-operated rapid-fire weapons are mounted under each wing. When a quaaen flaps its wings rapidly in a specially trained movement, the weapons go off, raining darts down in a 50-foot (15 m) circle within long range. A single dart deals 5 points of damage, but in many cases, a creature is hit by more than one dart at a time.

Poison Rain: A few quaaenit carry their weapons in their skin. Typically easy to spot because of their unique green and dark purple coloring, these quaaenit release a poison rain from their skin, dealing 5 points of damage. Anyone affected by the rain must make a level 3 Might defense roll for the next two rounds, taking an additional 3 points of damage for each failed roll.

Interaction: A well-trained, smart quaaen communicates through body language, such as chattering its teeth, blinking, and feathering its wings. The creatures appear to be intelligent but rarely talk to anyone other than their rider, unless they're threatening someone.

Use: If anyone crosses one of the laws of Trau Yad (the man trying to establish rulership over all of Rayskel Cays) or even seems to, it's likely that a bonebreaker on a quaaen arrives, demanding that he confess or pay the fine.

Loot: One or two cyphers can be scavenged from a dead quaaen's biomods and weapons. Its harness may also have 2d6 aircels, a watergun, and an oddity.



Bonebreaker, page 159

Stunned, page 95

If a bonebreaker falls from his mount to his death, either in combat or for some other reason, his quaaen follows him to the ground, eats him, and takes to the sky, never to return. No amount of training, breeding, or biomodding has been able to stop the quaaenit from doing this.

GM Intrusion: *The quaaen dives low to the ground, attempting to knock prone any characters in its path prior to its next attack.*

Strange, leather-skinned beasts with apelike forelimbs, shantags nonetheless walk on all fours most of the time. Possessed of vicious horns and teeth, trained specimens are as deadly on the battlefield as their riders, if not more so. When used as mounts, it is almost always by warriors and very skilled riders and animal handlers, for shantags can be willful and dangerous beasts—they're not for the casual, recreational ride. Nor are they of much use to someone who wishes to cross great distances at speed, as the creatures need frequent rests and a great deal of food. Shantags can also be used as beasts of burden, particularly because they have grasping forepaws.

Their forelimbs also make shantags excellent climbers. It's not uncommon to see one perched on a high, rocky crag in the wilderness surveying the countryside or waiting to leap down in ambush upon prey. Shantags prefer to chase down small prey, but they will eat almost anything to survive and are not above operating as scavengers.

Vralk, page 125

Shantags are found primarily in Vralk, but small, wild herds have been spotted in the northernmost reaches of the Beyond as well.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Deserts and wastelands

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Long

Modifications: Balancing, climbing, and Might defense as level 5.

Combat: Although they have forepaws that are essentially hands (with opposable thumbs), shantags do not use weapons or tools. In a fight, they slash with their prominent horns or bite with their surprisingly large teeth. Shantags can move a short distance and attack as a single action. This is true even if they carry a rider, potentially allowing them to move a short distance as a unit and then both make attacks.

Alternatively, a rider trained in riding can elect to have the shantag offer an asset to any melee attack or Speed defense roll she makes while mounted.

Interaction: If captured while very young (or born in captivity), a shantag can be trained to be a mount or a beast of burden. However, these creatures react only to dominance and intimidation. Treating one with kindness is a sign of weakness and will likely result in being attacked. They are about as intelligent as most animals.

Use: Most of the time, PCs will encounter a shantag as the mount for a warrior, but a herd of wild shantags would be a dangerous encounter. The beasts would not hesitate to make a meal of any humans they come across.

GM Intrusion: After striking the character, the shantag grabs her with its powerful forelimbs, holding her fast. If she does not get free, the shantag's attacks in subsequent rounds will be automatic.





SHOUN

6 (18)

Shoun are part of a superheated subterranean ecosystem that includes both much larger and much smaller creatures, all of which rely on the symbiosis of an energy-phase organism known as vil. In return for hosting vil colonies (which are visible as fleshy blisters filled with tumbling blue sparkles), shoun can withstand extreme temperatures near active magma chambers.

Shoun gain nutrition directly from eating the flesh of other creatures, and indirectly through their vil-filled blisters after periods of exposure to intense heat. On the whole, shoun prefer meat to heat, and they are amazingly quick for their bulk, which can reach up to 30 feet (9 m) from snout to tail.

Motive: Hungers for flesh and heat

Environment: Subterranean chambers associated with volcanic activity

Health: 21

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 5 due to size.

Combat: A shoun's main attack is a spiked tail lash at a single target or made as a spinning attack against each target in immediate range that deals 4 points of damage.

Additionally, a shoun can attack by willing one of its vil-filled blisters to burst. When this happens, up to two creatures standing next to each other within immediate range of the shoun must succeed on a Might defense roll or suffer 4 points of ambient damage as the blue lights burrow into their flesh. Such victims are infected by a vil colony.

Establishing long-term symbiosis with colonizing vil is dangerous even for organisms bred for that purpose because vil colonies that are native to one creature naturally fight vil colonies infesting another creature until equilibrium is established. For a character from the surface, a vil infection manifests as a disease that deals 4 points of ambient damage each day until she succeeds on a difficulty 6 Might defense roll to throw off the infection. While so infected, she enjoys +5 to Armor against heat and fire damage.

Attacks against a shoun that normally deal heat or fire damage instead restore the same number of points of health to the creature.

Interaction: A shoun is a predator that rarely turns up a chance to eat fresh meat.

Use: A journey through a magma chamber near an ancient numenera installation is interrupted by the appearance of a hungry shoun.

GM Intrusion: The vil infecting a character takes up residence in his eyes, which makes his eyes glow but partly blinds him. The difficulty of all actions requiring sight is increased by one step.



“When a silverwing wants to make an entrance, the buzz of its wings smashes through the air like repeated punches to the face. But it’s not wings a fellow needs to worry about—it’s the stingers, full up with venom pretty as glowin’ quicksilver. But pretty doesn’t make it good. The sting of a silverwing is worse than a body can imagine, and leaves behind a pain that don’t ever go away. Survivors are sometimes driven mad by the phantom pain, and end up doing themselves in months or years later to escape it.

“Silverwings ain’t dumb animals. Some folks make friends, friends that’ll carry passengers on their backs without stinging them to death for the affront. The trick to knowing which silverwings are feral and which are friendly is by watching their wings. You’ll know it if you see it.”

Motive: Hungers for flesh; loyalty (for some)

Environment: Anywhere warm

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Long (flying), immediate (on land)

Modifications: Speed defense as level 4 due to size.

Combat: A silverwing attacks with its stingers. A victim hit by a stinger takes 6 points of damage and must succeed on a Might defense roll or take 4 additional points of Speed damage.

A victim of silverwing venom feels a constant burning pain afterward, reflected by an inability to completely restore the final 2 points of Speed damage by normal means.

Only extraordinary methods (including using cyphers, such as antivenom or rejuvenator cyphers) allow a victim to restore those 2 points of damage.

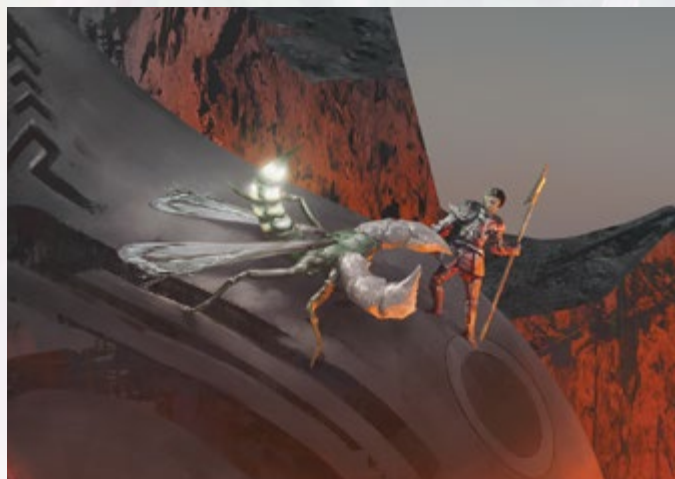
Once per hour, a silverwing can beat its wings so disruptively that it creates a sonic pulse that affects all targets within short range. Targets who fail a Might defense roll take 6 points of damage and are deafened for one minute.

Interaction: Silverwings communicate by beating their wings at a particular frequency that creates the optical illusion of a blurred solid surface, on which they can form images.

Silverwings that serve as companions to other creatures can form stick-figure drawings and even words and short sentences in whatever language the other creature speaks.

Use: A silverwing companion of a missing nano seeks out someone to help it recover its lost friend.

GM Intrusion: When the silverwing is killed, a fountain of venom sprays the nearest character.





SLISTOVILE

5 (15)

A living extension of the horrific swampland from which it rises, the slistovile is animate plant matter growing over the skeleton of a living creature whose flesh has been transformed to fibrous, slimy material. In this state, the slistovile hungers for blood and flesh, hunting the swamps for anything it can kill and eat.

Slistoviles vary in shape and size based on the original creature's base form, but for the most part they are about the size of a human and walk upright, sprouting vinelike tendrils as needed. The squealing roar of a slistovile's hunger is said to be so chilling that one never forgets it, for the sound reverberates down one's spine, rising only occasionally to haunt one's dreams.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Swamps

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Modifications: Moves through water or swampy land as level 8; Speed defense as level 6.

Combat: A slistovile attacks with its horrific bite. It is also adept at using its many tendrils to fend off attacks, making it difficult to strike.

Those bitten by a slistovile must make a Might defense roll or succumb to a rotting disease called "slistrocy" by many. The victim of this terrible affliction immediately collapses to the ground in pain, unable to take actions. He suffers 1 point of damage per round as his flesh rots from his bones. If the victim is in a swamp (which is likely), the swamp water and plant matter get into the wounds, transforming the rotting flesh to a spongy green fibrous material. Essentially, the victim is being transformed into a slistovile. If he dies, his body arises as a slistovile.

Slistrocy can be arrested if the victim's Might Pool is restored to full before he dies. If this happens, he still requires hours of rest, but he gets no worse and eventually recovers. Something like a catholicon cypher can cure the affliction immediately.

Interaction: Occasionally, a slistovile retains some degree of its original mind and memories. Such creatures can speak, and one might even be able to reason with them. However, doing so is difficult if the slistovile is hungry—hunger drives it to act violently no matter what else is going on.

Use: Deep in the Endless Mire of Sor Rumnar is a slistovile that once was a learned servant of a wealthy woman. The woman recently passed away, and only she and her servant knew the secret location of her fortune. Finding the servant in his transformed state will be difficult, and getting him to talk might be even harder.

Catholicon,
page 282

Slistoviles don't care about turning victims into creatures like themselves. They would rather eat them.

Endless Mire, page 211

GM Intrusion: *The character's weapon is wrapped by one of the slistovile's tendrils and yanked from his hands. Getting it back requires an attack roll and a Might-based roll to pry it free.*



Ochramaris, page 112

Though they crouch and slump most of the time, the spawn-warriors of Ochramaris are about the size of hulking human men. The furry, apish creatures are literally born for combat. The spawn-warriors defeat the enemies of Ochramaris and watch over their master, its territories, and its subjects. They appear to delight in subjugating others, pushing and striking subjects even when it is not necessary, chortling with deep laughter afterward. They seemingly have developed no more sophistication than that.

If somehow removed from the relative proximity of its sire, a spawn-warrior would go catatonic for a few days. Eventually, however, it might develop its own capacity for free thought and self-determination. But that's just a theory.

Motive: Obeys Ochramaris

Environment: Never more than 10 miles (16 km) from Ochramaris

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Modifications: Climbing, jumping, and Might defense as level 6.

Combat: The spawn-warriors are tough, agile fighters that inflict horrible wounds with their muscular hands, but that is the least of their inherent dangers. Their tails are barbed and envenomed, inflicting 1 additional point of Speed damage when they strike. Even worse, however, is the touch of their bizarre tongue to organic flesh. Those struck by this attack suffer no immediate damage, but their flesh, where touched, transforms into a brief mist of crystalline fragments after one round. At this time, the victim suffers 5 points of damage. If the spawn-warrior is still within immediate range, it can inhale some of the fragments and draw energy from them, adding 1 point to its health (even if undamaged).

Each round, a spawn-warrior must choose one of its attacks to use as its action.

Interaction: The spawn-warriors receive frequent telepathic messages from their sire, and they can likewise reply (however, they cannot initiate the communication). Thus, if Ochramaris is alert and inquiring among its spawn, it can coordinate their actions effectively and can communicate through them. The spawn-warriors can speak in a halting, guttural manner, but only if their master tells them what to say.

Use: In the city of Seavel in Lostrei, Ochramaris rules, and its spawn-warriors are its guardians and enforcers.

Seavel, page 112

GM Intrusion: The spawn-warriors appear to receive a new command from their sire, and suddenly turn all of their attacks on a single creature.





TUSKED GRORTHAS

5 (15)

"I don't know why we call them tusked grorthas."

"Do you have eyes, girl? Did you see the tusks?"

"Certainly. But it's not like we're trying to distinguish these grorthas from some others that don't have tusks."

Thick brown fur, bulky, muscular forelimbs, and massive tusks are the hallmarks of the tusked grorthas. These creatures roam in small bands in the icy wilderness, always on the move. A nomadic band is always centered around an individual with potent special powers.

Bands of grorthas are always rival competitors, and conflicts between them are frequent and violent, but not necessarily ruthless. Defeated individuals might be welcomed into the victorious group, but defeated leaders that lose their entire band are exiled.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Cold regions

Health: 25

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Climbing and jumping as level 7; Might defense as level 6.

Combat: Typically, a tusked grorthas attacks with its tusks with great strength. If a ranged attack is needed, they hurl surprisingly large stones up to short range. (If possible, they attack from above and hurl the stones downward at their foes.)

The pack leader—and only the leader—always has three psychic abilities:

- The ability to loose powerful motes of energy at long range that can explode with destructive force, inflicting 6 points of damage in an immediate radius
- The ability to restore 10 points of lost health via touch (only once per subject every 28 hours or so)
- The power of instant teleportation/apportation, moving itself (or another creature or object of its size or smaller) up to a long distance. This does not require an action, nor is it limited to the grorthas's turn. Thus, it can move itself or another instantly out of harm's way. The grorthas can use this ability only a few times in its life, and never more than once per 28 hours, so it does so sparingly.

Interaction: Grorthas have their own language, which is a combination of sounds and hand signs. If approached with respect, a grorthas can be reasonable and peaceful, or it can decide that you're food.

Use: An explorer is lost in the wilderness, and only a group of tusked grorthas might know where she is. But they are in conflict with another band.

Loot: A tusked grorthas leader often has one or two cyphers.

Some people speculate that tusked grorthas were abhumans who are evolving out of their bestial, brutish ways. This could mean that they are intentionally devolved humans who are now re-evolving into . . . something else.

GM Intrusion: *The grorthas uses its apportation ability offensively and sends the character high into the air or over a long drop.*



Uraeyl are intelligent and sophisticated inhuman creatures. They walk on three legs, have hairless, wrinkled flesh, and speak in a series of moans and clicks (although they sometimes learn human languages). Their round heads are ringed with beadlike eyes that see all the way around, but not quite as far or as clearly as a human. Overall, their perception is better than that of most humans, but not dramatically so.

Majehm, page 205

Uraeyl have their own land, *Majehm*, which they rule in a manner not unlike that of the nearby human regions. They raise crops and fashion tools and crafts from stone, wood, and metal. Despite some of the similarities with human civilization, however, uraeyl see no kinship with humans. Instead, they see humans as a source of food.

Although it is not known for certain, it's likely that the uraeyl developed a bit ahead of humans, so before humanity formed anything akin to a civilization, uraeyl hunted humans and captured some to domesticate into herds. Now, centuries—or perhaps millennia—later, despite the advances made by humans, uraeyl still can't see them as anything more than animals, and they have developed quite a taste for human flesh. So they still hunt humans, and somewhat more rarely keep enslaved herds of humans like cattle. Humans, in turn, think of uraeyl as devils and usually kill them on sight.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Any non-arctic

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Perception as level 5.

Combat: Uraeyl fight with weapons—often long battle staves, halberds, or spears of their own design. *Warriors* wear light or medium armor.

Interaction: Despite what most humans believe, uraeyl are not inherently sadistic, bloodthirsty, or cruel. They simply prefer the taste of human meat and find it difficult (if not impossible) to see humans as intelligent, sapient creatures. To them, humans are crafty, cunning, and dangerous prey. That humans seek to establish their own society, develop their own technologies, or consider themselves on par with uraeyl is almost inconceivably ridiculous—similar to what a human herder in the Steadfast might think of the idea of her gellen suddenly forming a society and using tools and weaponry.

Use: Uraeyl are utterly inhuman, but at the same time they have a culture that is not so unfamiliar. They are not abhumans, but neither are they visitants. They evolved on Earth on their own, and were it not for humans, the uraeyl might be the dominant intelligent race. As foes—for they almost certainly must be foes of human characters—they provide an alternative take on “bloodthirsty inhuman creatures.”

Loot: Uraeyl very, very rarely have cyphers or oddities. Most, however, carry 2d6 items that could be used as shins, as well as exotic tools and weapons, although they were not designed for human hands.

Uraeyl warrior: level 4, defend and make attacks as level 5; health 18; Armor 1 or 2; deals 2 additional points of damage

Most uraeyl are not adept with using numenera devices and mistrust them in general.

GM Intrusion: During the battle, 1d6 more uraeyl show up to help their friends against the humans.





VRO

5 (15)

Silent, houndlike, and swift as the wind, vro are weird predators that haunt the Lands of the Dawn. These long-legged quadrupeds have a hard carapace that covers their torso, particularly their front half, where it forms an almost spearlike projection below their head. Vro possess no mouth, absorbing blood from prey through porous openings all over their flesh. However, each has a bony, crescent-shaped growth on its head that might be mistaken for a mouth from far away. This growth somehow generates energy that gathers particulate matter around the creature over time and compresses it into a small, ultra-dense mass held in weightless stasis until the vro launches it as a projectile weapon. Even though the mass is the size of a pebble, it might weigh as much as half a ton.

Vro are about 4 feet (1 m) long, but they often take on prey much larger than themselves and then gorge on blood. By doing so, they need to hunt and feed only once a month—plenty of time to build up a new projectile to use for their next attack.

Motive: Hungers for blood

Environment: Live and hunt in mated pairs in any climate or terrain

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Long

Modifications: Running and Speed defense as level 6.

Combat: A charging vro rams into an opponent with its front spike in the hopes that it pierces flesh and draws blood for it to absorb. The real threat, however, is the compacted mass that the beast creates. When armed with a pea-sized mass, the vro can project it outward at a target within short range, inflicting 12 points of damage. Vro pellets have been known to penetrate the armor plating of a war machine from the prior worlds. Once the vro looses its pellet, it takes one to two weeks to create a new one. Being fairly smart, vro sometimes set ambushes along paths where potential prey is known to frequent.

Interaction: Vro are smarter than typical animals but have no ability to communicate, use tools, or perform tasks that one might normally equate with intelligent creatures.

Use: A sudden shriek cuts through the air as the characters explore the wilderness. They might think they are being shot at by someone with a numenera weapon, but instead it is the salvo of a vro's weird—and deadly—attack. Vro make an interesting encounter in that depending on the success of their initial pellet attack, the rest of the battle can be very dangerous or just moderately so.

Loot: The head of a vro contains chemicals and structures that can be used to concoct various biological cyphers.

*Lands of the Dawn,
page 181*

*Vro make dens in caves
or in otherwise hidden
and secluded spots. If
need be, they dig a pit in
the ground to construct
their den.*

GM Intrusion: *Even
though the vro missed
the character with its
projectile, the pellet
struck a nearby tree,
ripping right through the
trunk. Now the character
must avoid being crushed
(and trapped) beneath
the falling tree.*



"Ice demons in the Southern Wall? I told you, I don't care. They can cover all the Ninth World in a glacier, for all I care." ~Artilus Flevant, Lord of Arxil

A vulun is a living automaton grown of metallic ice. Each vulun is part of a larger group-mind composed of several individuals.

Vuluns are often humanoid in shape, a result of their particular method of procreation. A humanoid victim of a vulun sometimes gradually crystallizes with metallic ice from the inside out. When the skin cracks and falls away, what remains is a fresh vulun, one that shares a mind and personality with the vulun that created it.

Motive: Maintain mountain-sized machines that chill the climate

Environment: Anywhere cold

Health: 45

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Armor: 4

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 6 due to icy stiffness.

Combat: A vulun can pummel a foe with its fists.

A vulun can also choose to spend 8 points of its own health to rapidly fire metallic ice projectiles from its body to attack up to three targets as one action. Targets who take damage must also succeed on a difficulty 4 Might defense roll or take 1 point of ambient damage each round; the ice projectiles catalyze a reaction in the target's blood (or similar plasma, if any), causing it to begin a runaway crystallization event. Recovery (as from a recovery roll) or healing from any source halts the crystallization, as does a successful difficulty 4 Might-based task by the victim. If a victim dies while the crystallization process is active, a new vulun steps free of the corpse a few rounds later.

Vuluns are vulnerable to heat or fire and have only half their Armor against attacks that rely on high temperature. They are also vulnerable to sonic assaults and cannot take actions except to move away from sound intense enough to cause damage.

Interaction: A vulun may talk to living travelers and even negotiate with them, but it still believes that most life forms are no better than vermin. Their warm blood is part of the problem vuluns wish to fix.

Use: A ruin filled with the numenera was recently overrun by vuluns. Within a month, the ruin begins blanketing the nearby region with ice and snow. If someone shows up to put things back to normal, the vuluns take a dim view of it.

Loot: A defeated vulun partly melts, leaving behind three cyphers composed of metallic ice (which function like normal cyphers but melt within a day if not kept chilled).

GM Intrusion: A character damaged by a vulun is frozen in place until she can succeed on a Might-based task. The stuck character can take actions, but she can't move her feet.



YFILK

7 (21)

The yfilk are artificial beings composed of thousands of tiny metal spheres and particles that flow and interact in such a way that the yfilk seem to have solid bodies about the size (and often the shape) of humans. Yfilk float through the air, usually hovering about 4 feet (1 m) off the ground. They can produce limbs as needed and can alter their shape in any way they wish, even becoming almost two-dimensional.

Yfilk appear to exist for one reason: to disrupt systems. Whether it be the system of a numenera device, the system of a society's civilization, or the internal system of a living creature, yfilk thrive on causing disorder and inefficiency in that system.

Motive: Disruption of order

Environment: Any

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 9.

Combat: Being made of thousands of separate particles, yfilk are very difficult to harm physically. When they attack, they do so with a simple touch that sends a shock through a creature's nervous system or a machine's internal workings. Alternatively, they can touch a numenera device like a cypher or artifact and make it unusable for 28 hours.

Stranger still, yfilk are able to steal the senses of all beings within long range, seeing through another's eyes, hearing through their ears, and so on. The targets can be creatures, of course, but also machines with any kind of sensory ability. What's more, yfilk can force this ability on anyone within long range. Thus, they can give anyone within range the senses of anyone else also in range. In a single round, they can sow havoc and confusion in a small army.

Interaction: The yfilk have a form of telepathy in that they can create a link with another creature's mind when they steal its senses. They can also create this link between two others, allowing the two to communicate mentally. Yfilk seem to thrive in chaos and are very difficult to have a conversation with. If a creature approaches them with the right goals in mind, they can be convinced to do something that spreads disorder. A wise character remembers, though, that betrayal is a form of disruption.

Use: Two yfilk have found their way into a large town and are causing utter anarchy. The town's defenders can't even find them, let alone drive them off or kill them. The townsfolk beg the characters to help.

Loot: The particles of a yfilk can be reformed into 1d6 cyphers. The yfilk does not need to be dead for this to happen, and a yfilk can form a cypher to give to someone else, if it so desired.

The difficulty of all actions attempted by characters sensing through someone else is increased by two to five steps, depending on the situation. If sensing through an ally standing right next to you, for example, the modification might be only two steps. If it is someone randomly placed in a confusing melee involving lots of activity with no ability to coordinate or communicate, it might be five steps.



GM Intrusion: While seeing through someone else's eyes, the character attempts to use a cypher but activates the wrong one.

Zargs are abhumans that worship a dark god they call Haru, Lord of Murder. They revel in killing and glorify the moment of death. They revere a concept they call “haruplas,” which has no easy translation into the Truth but essentially means “the one who kills the most before dying, wins.” Zargs are hermaphrodites that look at sex and childbearing as necessary evils, incorporating both into their elaborate religious rites. As a part of these rites, one member of a clan is chosen to be the “yumag,” a word that means something very close to “avatar.” The yumag is fed copious amounts of a mysterious concoction of herbs and animal parts that causes it to bloat to obscene size in a matter of weeks, unable to move. The yumag then lactates and produces an oil called “yumagal” that the other zargs use to coat their bodies.

Zarg mystics moderate the extensive and foul rites of Haru, and through their advice they assist the warriors (the word for which is closer to the Truth term “murderers”) in killing to honor their god.

Motive: Religious fervor and murder

Environment: Any wilderness

Health: 10

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Stealth as level 5.

Combat: Zargs use a wide variety of ranged and melee weapons and wear armor made of various skins. They sometimes make use of strange devices called shorm that resemble serpents made of metal and wood. Shorm are one-use items that spray a stream of caustic, toxic liquid at a target in short range. The liquid inflicts 3 points of damage and, if the target fails a Might defense roll, 3 additional points the next round.

Zarg warriors coated in yumagal gain protection. The oil grants them +1 to Armor (for a total of 2) and enhanced strength that gives them 2 additional points of damage with melee weapons (for a total of 5 points). Zarg mystics coated in yumagal claim to receive the words of Haru. Whether they do or not, it is certainly true that they gain an uncanny ability to find living, intelligent, non-zarg victims to attack and kill within 1 mile (2 km).

Interaction: Zargs have their own complex language, and—particularly for abhumans—an intricate, highly religious culture. As that culture centers around murder, cannibalism, debasement, mutilation, and even darker things, relations with zargs are difficult.

Use: Zargs are best used in campaigns that have no reservations about disturbing content, so the true extent of their depraved veneration of Haru can be displayed.

Loot: Zarg leaders often have a cypher, or at least an oddity.



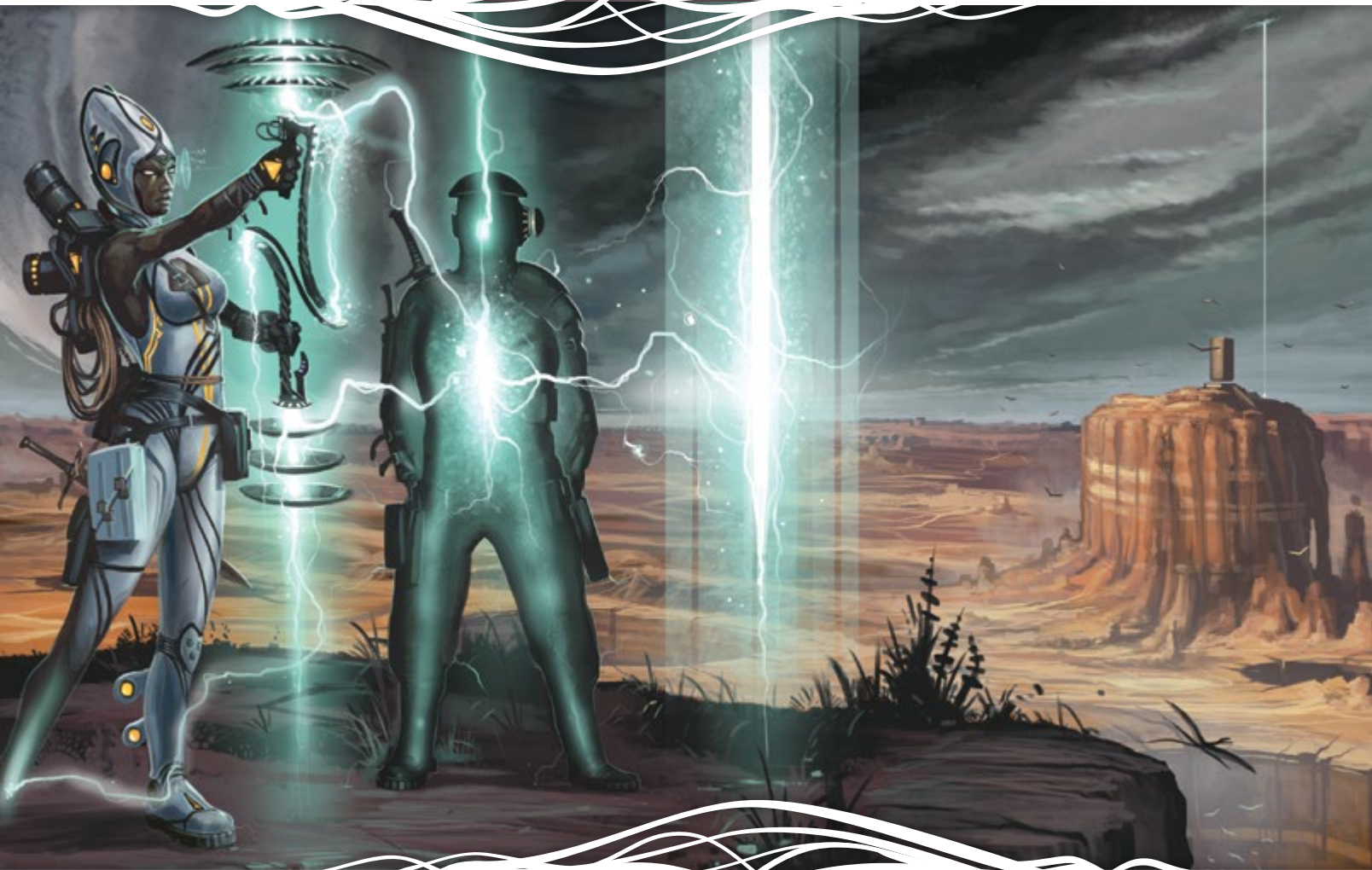
Zarg mystics make shorm in long religious rituals. They also have foul rites for creating poison for their other weapons. This poison is level 4 and deals 1 point of Speed damage each round until the victim makes a successful Might defense roll.

GM Intrusion: *The zarg, which appeared dead, actually still has 1 point of health. It rises up and attacks the character with surprise.*

PART 4:



BACK MATTER



Glossary: Talk Like a Ninth Worlder

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GLOSSARY: TALK LIKE A NINTH WORLDER

Most of these phrases are in the language of the Truth, but the general sentiments would certainly translate to many other languages as well.



*Aeon Priest,
page 269*

Beyond, page 174

Brehm, page 163

Calaval, page 6

Jaekel, page 169

Cragworm, page 236

Iron Wind, page 135

Chirog, page 235

Navarene, page 137

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*Tusked grorthas,
page 245*

GREETINGS AND FAREWELLS

ladace (pronounced yay-da-cee): A shibboleth that is used among Aeon Priests as a sign of shared understanding, namely to mean, "I am one who understands, and I recognize that you are also one that understands." It is also commonly used when a traveler comes upon a village or encounters a stranger on the road. Sometimes as a greeting, but also later in the conversation if you suddenly suspect the person that you're speaking with to be an enlightened mind. It can also be used as a farewell.

May your cyphers never malfunction: A common farewell that is used to denote goodwill and safe travels.

Look to the future, forget the past: A lesser-known farewell that is mostly used in the Beyond. The phrase is also sometimes used as a condolence for those who have experienced recent death or other tragedy.

CURSES AND INSULTS

Brehm-brained: Someone or something that is dull or stupid. "Did you see that? That brehm-brained guard just fell off the wall!"

Calaval's eyes! A common curse or exclamation of surprise, often used when something is particularly scary or dangerous.

Jaekels take you!/Jaekels take him! A commonly used curse to express anger, disdain, or disgust, particularly at someone's actions.

COMMON EXPRESSIONS

Fierce/Temperamental/Belligerent as a cragworm: Something that is strong, ferocious, or otherwise tenaciously tough.

Iron-winded: When something has been expectantly changed or dramatically altered, often for the worst. "Looks like you got iron-winded in that last fight; I can barely recognize you."

Trips your cypher: Something that makes you happy, excited, or otherwise is good for you. "You attack a hundred chirogs if that's what trips your cypher, but I'm staying right here, where there's warm dinner and a drink."

Tusked like a grorthas: Used when some part of a creature, structure, or building is ridiculous, overly large, or otherwise doesn't seem to fit with the rest of it.

Wealthy as a Navarene merchant: Someone with great amounts of money (or sometimes power). Also used sarcastically to mean someone who has nothing but acts as though she is rich.

You slying seskii: A show of respect (sometimes reluctant) for someone who pulled off something particularly scheming or underhanded. Occasionally used as a congratulatory statement for a job well done.



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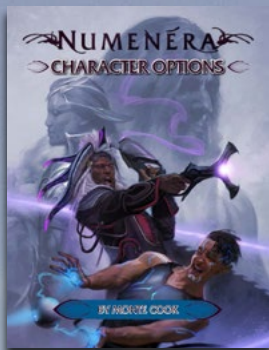
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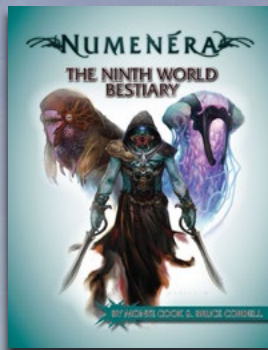
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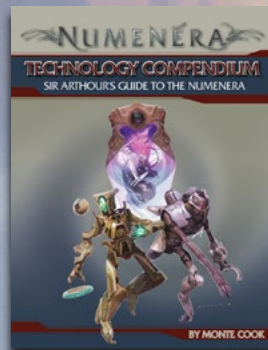
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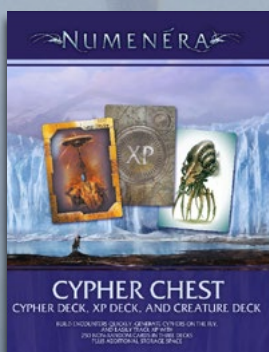
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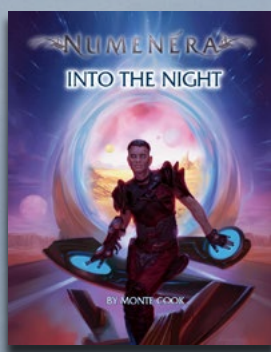
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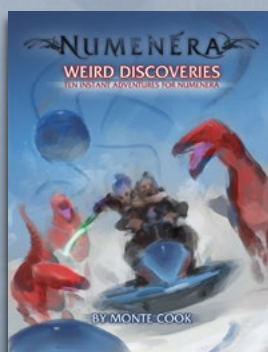
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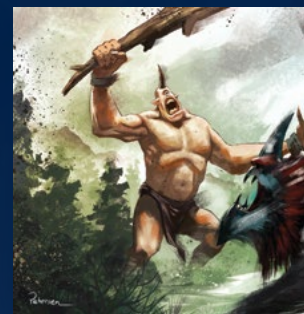
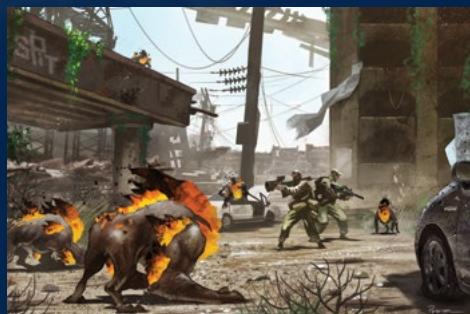
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