



BENEATH the MONOLITH

By Monte Cook and Bruce R. Cordell



A fantastical landscape with floating monoliths and a waterfall. The scene is set against a soft, hazy sky with a gradient of purple and blue. In the foreground, a waterfall cascades down a rocky ledge on the left. The middle ground features several large, dark, triangular monoliths floating in the air, with a prominent one in the center. The background shows rolling hills and a distant horizon. The overall atmosphere is ethereal and mysterious.

BENEATH THE MONOLITH

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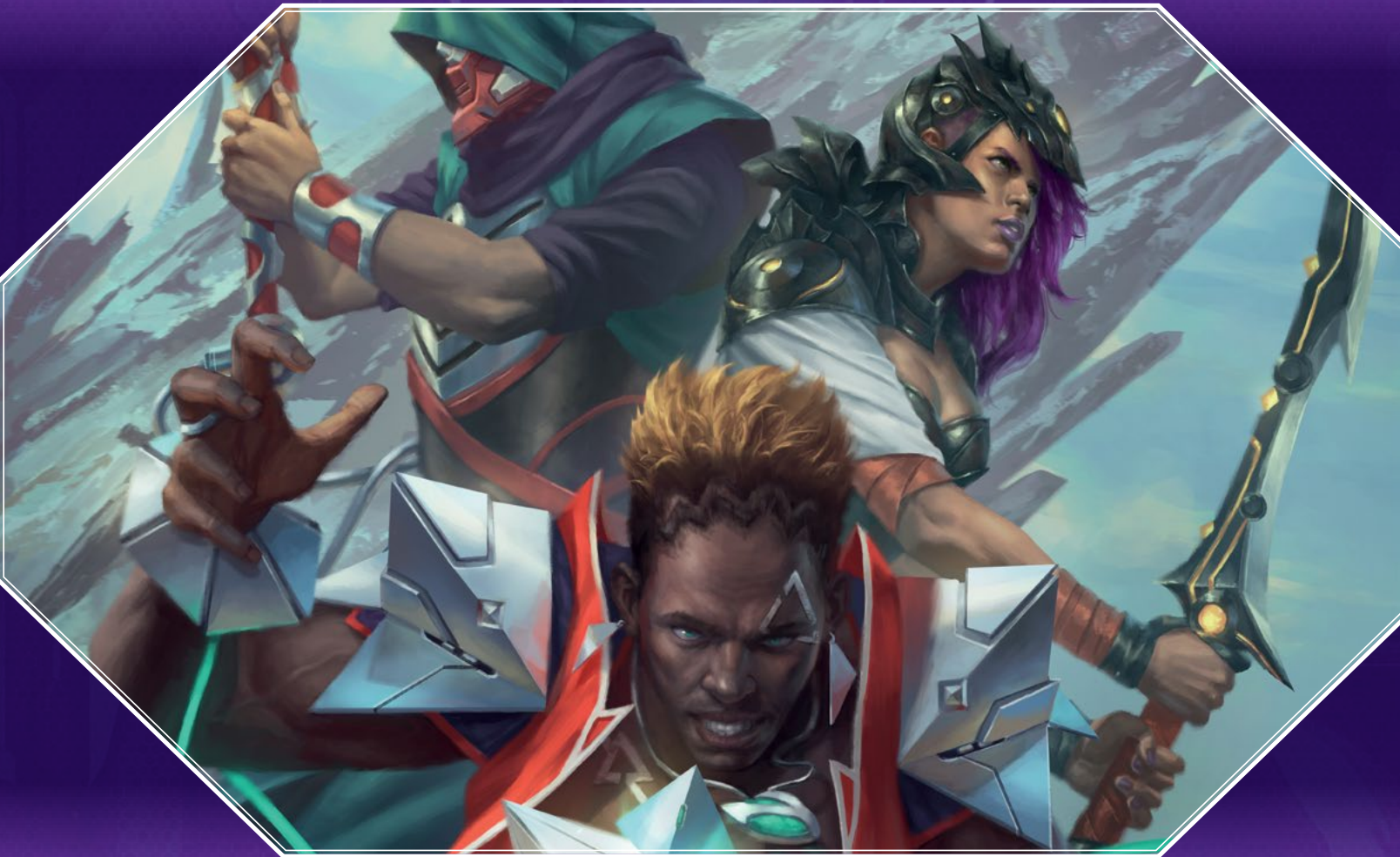
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PART 1: GETTING STARTED



Chapter 1: How to Use This Book

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

B*eneath the Monolith* is a 5E campaign setting based on the groundbreaking, award-winning, far-future setting known as the Ninth World, first presented in the standalone hardcover, *Numenera*.

To begin, read through this chapter. The material here covers a few high-level concepts related to bringing characters—or starting new ones—from a fantasy 5E setting to the science-fantasy setting of the Ninth World. This is relatively straightforward, but a little guidance can't hurt.

Next, turn to Chapter 2, which introduces the broad concepts of a setting located a billion years in Earth's future, replete with strange people, mysterious organizations, and feuding kingdoms surviving in a land formed by the remnants of multiple fallen high-tech civilizations.

Then it's on to Part 2: The Setting. Everything you need to run a campaign in the Ninth World is provided, from languages, equipment, and currency to descriptions of villages, kingdoms, and all kinds of weird locations, strange machines, and incomprehensible ruins that make up the landscape.

Part 3 offers a glimpse at the many people that inhabit the Ninth World, as well as a few creatures supplementing the array of those already described in *Arcana of the Ancients*.

5E CHARACTERS IN THE NINTH WORLD

Arcana of the Ancients and *Beneath The Monolith* provide a new world for 5E characters to explore. And by 5E characters, we mean characters created using the standard 5E ruleset. Players can roll up a wizard, fighter,



ARCANA OF THE ANCIENTS

To get the most out of this material, you'll need a copy of *Arcana of the Ancients*, which provides stats for the strange devices—including cyphers, relics, and iron flesh—plus many inscrutable Ninth World creatures. *Arcana of the Ancients* also offers a wealth of information on how to implement the material in adventures, and for creating a science-fantasy setting of your own.

Arcana of the Ancients, in turn, assumes you have access to the 5E ruleset, which you need to get the most out of this material. In both *Beneath the Monolith* and *Arcana of the Ancients*, terms occasionally appear in bold. These terms refer to relevant game stats that can be found in the 5E SRD or other source of 5E rules.

Sometimes you'll come across names like calterflies, splicer beetles, ester trees, and others without any additional explanation other than what's provided through context. Usually, that helps deepen the weird of setting. Plus, your personal interpretation is better than a lengthy digression for something that might be fairly minor.

rogue, or some other class normally, but keep the following caveats in mind.

Established 5E characters might discover the Ninth World through a portal leading into a parallel dimension. Alternatively, new characters can be created. In either case, refer to [Chapter 4: Equipment](#), specifically the sections [Shin to Gold Piece \(GP\) Exchange Rate](#) (shins are the basic currency of the Ninth World), [General Equipment Purchase](#), [Selected Starting Equipment](#), and of importance to the GM, [Acquiring Treasure: Shins and the Numenera](#).

HANDLING CHARACTER CLASSES

If player characters (PCs) are transferred directly from a 5E world, they'll probably still call themselves fighters, wizards, rogues, and so on. But if PCs make up new characters that are part of the world from inception, they may use the following terms instead (though the other terms are also sometimes used by people of the Ninth World).

SUGGESTED CLASS NAMES FOR NINTH WORLD

Ninth World	Other Worlds
Glaive	Barbarian, Fighter, Monk, Paladin, Ranger
Nano	Bard, Cleric, Druid, Sorcerer, Warlock, Wizard
Jack	Rogue



Throughout this book, you'll see page references to various items accompanied by this symbol. These are page references to *Arcana of the Ancients*, where you can find additional details about that rule, ability, creature, or concept. Often, it will be necessary to look up the referenced item to find information you need for gameplay. Other times, it's not necessary to look up the item, but doing so can deepen your experience of the game and the setting.

HANDLING PLAYER CHARACTER "RACE"

Generally speaking, standard character species in the Ninth World do not include the fantasy "races" common to 5E. So, elves, dwarves, halflings, and similar fantasy fare aren't viable options for starting new characters native to the Numenera setting. (If established 5E characters fall through a portal into the Ninth World, then of course PCs come as they are.)

Ultimately, humans are the default choice for PC character species. However, if new characters are being created, two additional new species options are available: [lattimor](#) and [varjellen](#).

MAGIC IN THE SCIENCE-FANTASY SETTING OF THE NINTH WORLD

The Ninth World is a science-fantasy setting, not a fantasy setting. The difference can be subtle. Like any 5E setting, the Ninth World seems to have magic, but unlike those settings, there's a technological explanation for the weird phenomena.

That said, the default for the Ninth World is that [magic and numenera are equivalent](#), because magic *is* numenera. So, to the extent that a PC-cast [dispel magic](#) spell would work on a magic effect in a standard fantasy setting, it would work on a numenera effect in the Ninth World.

Essentially, it comes down to how you verbally adapt specific descriptions of regular magic in a science-fantasy setting.

Magic Use by Characters and Creatures:

The default assumption is that "magic" has its source in the same fundamental extra-dimensional or cosmic energy that prior-world technology uses. So spells used by a wizard (or nano) in the Ninth World are manifestations of this same energy source that powers the numenera.

The same is also true of a cleric or warlock who believes they are channeling spells from a higher being. Though in some cases, they probably actually do; a character may call their patron a god or demon, but it

[Chapter 4: Equipment](#), page 22

[Shin to Gold Piece \(GP\) Exchange Rate](#), page 22

[General Equipment Purchase](#), page 23

[Starting Equipment](#), page 22

[Acquiring Treasure: Shins and the Numenera](#), page 23

[Lattimor](#), page 138

[Varjellen](#), page 134



Default Option: Magic and the Numenera Equivalence, page 252

The limitations of dispel magic remain in the Ninth World; dispel magic doesn't have any effect on the properties of a numenera item that don't specifically cast a spell, or on the non-spell abilities of a creature.

could well be an energy entity that orbits the world in a metallic satellite, connected via the datasphere and the microscopic nanites that suffuse most solids, liquids, and gasses of the Ninth World.

Technology Instead of Magic: In truth, the gap between fantasy and science-fantasy can be a distinction without a difference. And by that, we mean that 5E PC wizards in the Ninth World can still cast fireballs, clerics can cast healing, druids can speak to the land, and so on. The difference only becomes important if too much classic fantasy or myth comes into the picture; these should be avoided—at least by the GM—to stay true to the Ninth World’s particular setting. So, no dragons, no undead, no horns of Valhalla, etc.

Even if you’re a 5E GM new to science-fantasy, you may already have some experience in layering the odd bit of technology into standard fantasy. For example, maybe one of your characters once found a “sun sword” (actually a laser saber). To play in the Ninth World is to take this replacement of details further, mainly by changing appropriate device-related descriptions.

For example, a wizard casting a fireball in the Ninth World may be incanting equations and rely on a nanotech-manipulating device implanted in their flesh. A “golem” encountered in an ancient ruin has bits of metal and wires visible within its body. The ritual performed by the evil cult includes a series of passphrases and attempts to communicate with a machine guardian at a series of user interfaces on a vast alien relic designed to open a dimension into a parallel reality.

Chapter 10: Creatures,
page 142

5E Creatures, page 149

Once you start down the science-fantasy path, it becomes second nature. Though many non-player characters (NPCs) and even PCs may still just think of it all as magic, because it’ll forever be beyond their comprehension.

Magic Items in the Ninth World: *Arcana of the Ancients* provides a slew of cyphers, relics, and instances of iron flesh, filling the same role as magical items in a standard fantasy game. But the 5E ruleset contains a massive quantity of magic items. Should you make some of them available in the game? It’s up to you, but the answer can be yes, so long as the description or flavor fits, or you tweak the description or flavor to fit the Ninth World.

For example, there’s no reason some variety of flaming sword, like a “flame tongue” blade, couldn’t find its way into the Ninth World. However, retool it so the description for the item includes tiny mechanisms for triggering flame jets set along the blade, a tiny pilot light that always flickers, and rather than having to speak a magic command word to cause the blade to erupt in fire, the wielder must squeeze a handle-like lever on the hilt as a bonus action.

5E MONSTERS IN THE NINTH WORLD

Do standard 5E monsters live in the Ninth World? You might decide the answer is no, but you could consider the answer a qualified yes. Sure, there are no dragons and undead, as they are specifically defined, in the Ninth World. But in many cases, creatures found in a 5E bestiary are completely suitable for the Ninth World; it’s just that people of the Ninth World call them by different names. Bugbears and many goblinoids could be abhuman varieties. Fiends could be inscrutable ultraterrestrials. Dinosaurs could be an additional variety of megafauna of the type that thunders across the Ninth World already. Additional broad guidance and examples are presented at the end of Chapter 10 in a section titled **5E Creatures**.



CHAPTER 2

WELCOME TO
THE NINTH WORLD

The Ninth World is about discovering the wonders of the worlds that came before it, not for their own sake, but as the means to improve the present and build a future.

There have been eight previous worlds. You may refer to them as ages, aeons, epochs, or eras, but it's not wrong to think of each as its own individual world. Each former world stretched across vast millennia of time. Each played host to a species whose civilizations rose to supremacy but eventually died or scattered, disappeared or transcended. During the time that each world flourished, those who ruled it spoke to the stars, reengineered their physical bodies, and mastered form and essence, all in their own unique ways.

Each left behind remnants.

The Ninth World is built on the bones of the previous eight, and in particular, the last four. Reach into the dust, and you'll find that each particle has been worked, manufactured, or grown, and then ground back into drit—a fine, artificial soil—by the relentless power of time. Look to the horizon—is that a mountain or part of an impossible monument to the forgotten emperor of a lost people? Feel that subtle vibration beneath your feet and know that ancient engines—vast machines the size of kingdoms—still operate in the bowels of the earth.

The Ninth World is about discovering the wonders of the worlds that came before it, not for their own sake, but as the means to improve the present and build a future.

Each of the prior eight worlds, in its own way, is too distant, too different, too incomprehensible. Life today is too dangerous to dwell on a past that cannot be

understood. The people excavate and study the marvels of the prior epochs just enough to help them survive in the world they have been given. They know that energies and knowledge are suspended invisibly in the air. Reshaped continents of iron and glass—below, upon, and above the earth—hold vast treasures. Secret doorways to the stars and other dimensions and realms provide power and secrets and death. They sometimes call it magic; who are we to say that they're wrong?

More often, however, when they find leftovers of the old worlds—the devices, the vast machine complexes, the altered landscapes, the changes wrought upon living creatures by ancient energies, the invisible nano-spirits hovering in the air in clouds called the **iron wind**, the information transmitted into the so-called datasphere, and the remnants of visitors from other dimensions and alien planets—they call these things the **numenera**. In the Ninth World, the numenera is both a boon and a bane. It makes life very different from any other time on Earth.

In a southern part of the vast, singular continent of the Ninth World lies a cluster of settled lands collectively called the **Steadfast**. Although each kingdom and principality of the Steadfast has its own ruler, a leader known as the **Amber Pope** guides the **Order of Truth**, an organization of **Aeon Priests** that commands great respect in the region. Thus, the Amber Pope is likely the most powerful ruler in the

"It is interesting that humans call this the Ninth World, but they have no idea how many prior 'worlds' actually preceded it."

—Visixtru, varjellen philosopher

Claves—small cloistered groups of Aeon Priests in the Beyond—can offer protection and resources for the communities that spring up around them. However, claves sometimes become so insular and focused on their work that they put the community at risk with their strange experiments.

Iron wind, page 21

Numenera, page 11

Steadfast, page 28

Amber Pope, page 128

Order of Truth, page 127

Aeon Priest, page 150

Steadfast even though he does not govern a single square foot of land. The Order of Truth reveres the people of the past and their knowledge on a quasi-religious level of adoration and faith. It is a religion devoted to science.

Beyond, page 72

Deeper in the wilds lies a region called the **Beyond**, where villages and communities are isolated and rare. Here, Aeon Priests still study the secrets of the past, but they do so cloistered in remote caves. These priests do little more than pay lip service to the Amber Pope, if that, and are not considered part of the Order of Truth. Like the regions in which they live, and the caves in which they work, they are isolated, islands unto themselves.

THE PEOPLE OF THE NINTH WORLD

In the youth of an age, people use the resources they have on hand, coupled with whatever understanding of their world they can master, to carve out a life for themselves. In the Ninth World, the resources are the numenera—the

detritus of the prior eras—and the people's understanding of these resources is crude and incomplete. The Aeon Priests possess just enough discernment and knowledge to suggest possible uses for things, but so much remains to be discovered. Even the creatures and plants of the Ninth World are strange by-products of the prior ages; the past left behind flora, fauna, and machines, some designed by lore or nature, others transplanted from distant stars or dimensions.

The people of the Ninth World clothe themselves in newly spun fabrics but weave the relics of the past into each garment. They forge armor, weapons, and tools from materials recovered from ancient structures and devices. Some of these materials are metals, but others are (or appear to be) glass, stone, bone, flesh, or substances that defy categorization.

Those who risk the mysterious dangers to recover remnants of the past provide a valuable service. Typically these brave souls—warrior glaives, science-wielding nanos, and wily jacks—bring their findings to the Aeon Priests, who use the remnants



to fashion tools, weapons, and other boons for the growing civilization. As time passes, more individuals learn to use the numenera, but it still remains a mystery to most people.

Who, then, are the people of the Ninth World? Most are humans, although not all that call themselves human truly are. There are likewise the **abhumans**: mutants, hybrids, genetically engineered, and their offspring. And then there are the **visitants**, who are not native to the earth but who now call the Ninth World home. They have no more understanding of the past (even their own) than anyone else.

THE NUMENERA

People with knowledge of the remnants of older worlds divide them into several types, including **relics**, **cyphers**, **iron flesh**, and **oddities**.

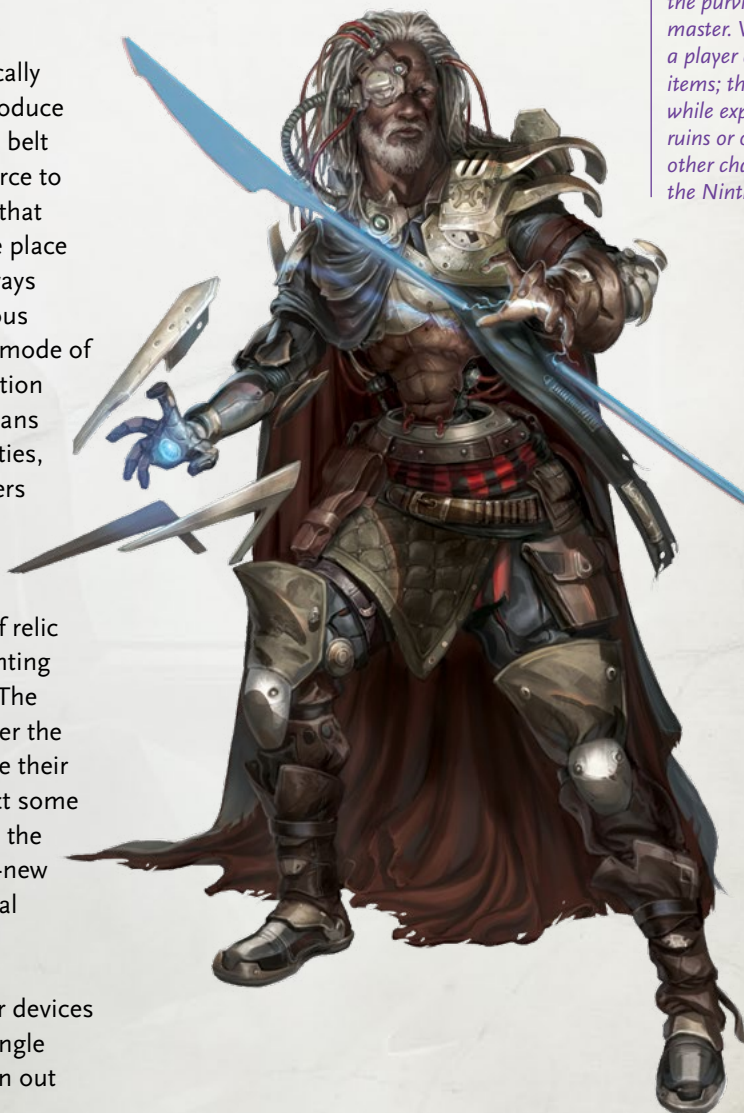
RELICS are large devices that typically can be used more than once to produce the same result. A relic might be a belt that creates a shield of invisible force to protect the wearer or a flying skiff that carries people and cargo from one place to another. The term is almost always used for an item that has an obvious purpose—a weapon, a defense, a mode of transport, a means of communication or learning new information, a means of obtaining food or other necessities, and so forth. Relics make their users more powerful, or they make life easier or better.

IRON FLESH is a special variety of relic that latches onto explorers, implanting them with a sparking iron device. The intruding object could slowly render the explorer to a fine powder, insinuate their mind with horrific images, or enact some other unwanted change. However, the implant could instead grant an all-new beneficial capability. Such beneficial implants are known as iron flesh.

CYPHERS are usually small, minor devices that most characters can coax a single effect from before the cyphers burn out

and become curiosities or decorations. They might include a quick injection able to repair physical damage in a living creature or a handheld object that, when manipulated properly, becomes a weapon that explodes with tremendous force. However, cyphers are dangerous when gathered together because they create radiation and harmonic frequencies that are inimical to human life.

ODDITIES are objects that serve no obvious purpose but have strange functions that are at least curious, if not downright entertaining. Examples include a piece of glass in a metal frame that shows peculiar images or a box with three bells that ring at unpredictable times. Not everything from the prior worlds can be understood. In fact, much of it cannot.



Abhuman examples:

Chirog, page 154

Margr, page 197

Murden, page 204

Yovok, page 243



Relics, page 45

Cyphers, page 40

Iron flesh, page 49

Oddities, page 126

Visitants, page 134

Numenera items such as relics, iron flesh, and cyphers add capabilities to the player character's repertoire, but they are the purview of the game master. Very rarely does a player choose these items; they are discovered while exploring ancient ruins or overcoming other challenges of the Ninth World.

LOOKING AT THE NINTH WORLD FROM THE 21ST CENTURY

The Ninth World is a science-fantasy setting approximately a billion years in the future. The people of the world dwell amid the flotsam of impossible ultratech of eight prior civilizations and call it magic. Unimaginably huge machines lie beneath the earth, and satellites orbit high above, transmitting a web of data and free energy. Nanotech, gravitic technology, genetic engineering, spatial warping, and superdense polymers allowed the inhabitants of the previous worlds to reshape the planet. Mass and energy were theirs to command.

In many ways, the Ninth World is a medieval fantasy setting without the historicity. When people who haven't done a lot of homework on the dark ages run a traditional fantasy game, they often insert modern sensibilities or developments such as democracy, hygiene, or matches. But in the Ninth World, these things, and more, make sense. Characters can have rain slickers, ink pens, zippers, and plastic bags, all left over from the prior eras (or fashioned from leavings of the past). They can understand how illnesses are transmitted or how socialism works. They

can know that the earth revolves around the sun and be aware of other "anachronistic" bits of knowledge.

On the other hand, characters in the Ninth World don't refer to weapons as "guns" or to vehicles as "cars." The technology in the Ninth World is too advanced and too alien for such terminology to have endured. Using 21st-century terms for weapons and vehicles is as inappropriate as using medieval terms. The numenera is weird—much of it wasn't created by humans or for humans. It isn't designed or presented in any way that might be familiar to the players or the characters. Only through experimentation, player insight, and character skill can the player characters identify, and possibly use, what they find.

Perhaps even more important, the relics, cyphers, iron flesh, and oddities that characters use probably aren't serving their original purpose. The explosive cypher that a character tosses at an enemy might have been the power source for a vehicle. The force field the enemy uses to protect herself from the blast might have been designed to contain the radiation of the fuel rods in a miniature nuclear reactor.

Welcome to the Ninth World, where every discovery might save you—or kill you. But you won't know until you try.





PART 2:
THE SETTING



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LIVING IN THE NINTH WORLD

Planetary engineering is changing the climate and topography of a planet, and perhaps even its position in space.

Stellar lifting is moving a star, or changing the chemical composition or otherwise modifying the energy output of a star.

The Ninth World is Earth. But it is an Earth that has undergone multiple dramatic changes, for it is Earth approximately a billion years in the future. Over that nigh-incomprehensible span of time, nothing remains constant. Add in the rise and fall of civilizations so great that to us they would seem, again, nigh incomprehensible, and anything is possible.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF CHANGE

When attempting to grasp the Ninth World, keep in mind two complementary shaping forces. First is the vast amount of time. Even if Earth were left completely alone, the drastic changes of celestial mechanics, continental drift, erosion, mass extinction, and evolution would render our home unrecognizable.

The second force is that of intelligence. Over the billion-year span, Earth has been home to at least eight civilizations that have arisen (or arrived), flourished and advanced to incredible power, and then either declined or left, never to return. Although we know little about these civilizations, we do know the following:

- At least one was the center of a galactic (or perhaps intergalactic) space-faring empire.
- At least one wielded the power of **planetary engineering** and **stellar lifting**.
- At least one had knowledge of the fundamental forces of reality and could alter those forces as they wished. The very laws of physics were theirs to play with, like toys.
- At least one filled the world with invisible, molecule-sized machines called nanites (or nanomachines) that could deconstruct and reconstruct matter and manipulate energy.
- At least one explored the multiverse of other dimensions, parallel universes, and alternate levels of reality.
- At least some of these civilizations were not human.



THE WORLD AS IT REMAINS

Most of the land mass has once again joined to form a gigantic supercontinent, leaving the rest of the globe to the mercy of a single ocean dotted with islands. The moon is smaller than we are accustomed to because its orbit is wider. Due to the effect this has on the planet's rotation, days are now 28 hours long. The year's length has not changed, however, so a Ninth World year has only 313 days. Words like "week" and "month" retain their meanings, and for the sake of understanding, this book also uses terms like "second," "minute," and "hour," although the inhabitants of the world probably use different terms, perhaps with slightly different meanings.

The people of the Ninth World don't realize it, but at its current age, the sun's luminosity should have increased to a point where life on Earth (as we know it) is impossible. And yet it continues. Something happened millions of years in the past to prevent life from disappearing. Most planets in the solar system remain, although their orbits have altered somewhat. The planet we call Mercury is long gone. (Ninth Worlders don't know it ever existed, so they don't wonder why it's absent.)

THE PEOPLE OF THE NINTH WORLD

People are clever about using what they find in their environment no matter the eon they live in. For humans in the Ninth World, those resources are an amazing array of weird technology stretching back through several prior lost ages. Even though this technology once allowed its users to command their environment with unparalleled capacities, it's mostly broken, malfunctioning, and in some cases meant for creatures wholly different than humans. Which is why people regard much of it as magic. Still, they use it as they can.

For instance, **Aeon Priests** collect knowledge in hopes of mastering this numenera—the scattered tech of the previous ages—to advance the quality of life, but also simply to understand what's come before. Despite all their years of study,

they possess only a surface knowledge of the devices they commonly use and deploy. Lots more remains a mystery.

That doesn't stop people from using whatever they can find in every conceivable way. They wear clothing composed of weird fabrics and half-working devices. They wear armor and wield weapons that almost certainly had some original different use a million years ago. Though wood and stone are commonly used, the scrap piles of the prior worlds offer lots of additional options including weird metals, glass-like solids, living substrates, and some that are even difficult to describe.

But who or what are the people of the Ninth World? Most are humans, although not all that call themselves human truly are. Is an engineered 8-foot (2.5 m) tall person with mechanical limbs and biocrafted brain implants still human? In the Ninth World, the answer is very likely yes, but some people will eagerly debate the point.

Perhaps an even better question is: After a billion years, why does Earth still have humans at all, in shapes and forms that we—the people of the 21st century—can recognize? This might seem particularly curious once you consider the fact that many of the prior worlds were distinctly nonhuman.

Ninth Worlders don't have that specific perspective, but they do wonder where they came from. They have a sense that Earth was once theirs, and then it wasn't, and now it is again. How can this be? Perhaps one day they'll find the answer.

Beyond the humans are the **abhumans**: mutants, hybrids, genetically engineered, and their offspring. How is it that some engineered or mutated beings remain "human" while others become "abhuman"? It has more to do with mindset than physical form. Abhumans are once-human creatures that rejected humanity to become bestial, murderous, and degenerate. In other words, they (or their forebears) chose to be abhuman.

And then there are the **visitants**, who are not native to the earth but who now call the Ninth World home. They have no more understanding of the past (even their own) than anyone else.

Abhuman, page 11

Aeon Priest, page 150

Visitants, page 134



Qi, page 38

LIFE IN THE NINTH WORLD

The life of a Ninth World human isn't all that different from the life of a human around the year 1000 AD. Farmers till fields, herders tend flocks, hunters and trappers provide meat and skins, weavers create clothing, woodworkers build furniture, authors write books, and so on. Meals are cooked over fires. Entertainment comes from a lute player, a group of singers, or perhaps comedic thespians.

Throughout the Ninth World, couples of all orientations join together in commitment ceremonies. However, because traditions, religions, and cultural norms vary widely, the ceremonies and resulting relationships take vastly different forms from place to place.

Parents typically raise children, although in some places extended families are common. Many children attend some kind of school until the age of about twelve, when they learn a craft. Some students, usually those in larger cities, go on to higher learning.

Most people live in small, agrarian villages, but some settle in larger towns or

cities. The largest city in the Steadfast, **Qi**, has a population of 500,000.

Life expectancy varies wildly, but those who survive to the age of thirty can expect to live to at least sixty. It's rare but not unheard of for someone to live to be ninety or even one hundred. Those fortunate enough to be rich or to live in a locale where the Aeon Priests have discovered secrets of longevity might live twice that long—or longer.

The dead are buried or cremated.

CLASS

Generally speaking, humans in the Ninth World are aristocrats, peasants, or slaves. In some places, a “middle” or “merchant” class arises from the ranks of the peasants, populated by those who have wealth but not nobility. True feudalism exists only in certain locations, and as might be expected in cases of land ownership, the nobles usually own the land and the peasants usually work it. A peasant likely earns a few shins per day, whereas a merchant could earn a hundred times that. Aristocrats rarely bother using coins at all except when dealing with the peasantry.

Only the nobles own slaves, which are usually taken from conquered enemies or their descendants and are considered property. (The children of slaves are born into slavery.) Sometimes criminals are consigned to slavery as well. Slaves toil as manual laborers, house servants, and guards. A few nobles prefer to use abhuman rather than human slaves, and some own both kinds.

RELIGION

The religions of the Ninth World are varied and many. With the exception of the **Order of Truth's** quasi-religious veneration of the past and the understanding its inhabitants had of the forces of the universe, no religion is widespread—they're local affairs. An explorer coming to a new town or village will find that the inhabitants have their own specific gods and religions. Some of these are based in local myths and stories, while others are more grounded in reality—creatures or other weird aspects of the world are often explained using the trappings of religion. For example, a village might worship a machine intelligence left over from the prior worlds as a mysterious deity.

In some places, religion is vital and fervent. In others, it's casual. And in some locations, the people have no concept of religion at all.

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

LANGUAGE

Language is a complex topic for a 21st-century reader trying to understand a civilization a billion years in the future. In a fantasy or pseudo-medieval fictional setting, it's typical for everyone to talk in a vaguely Shakespearean British manner. This style of speaking probably isn't appropriate for Numenera. The Ninth World is filled with words that—while not strictly modern—aren't medieval or Shakespearean either.

And, of course, no one in the Ninth World actually speaks English. Words like “pope” and “synth” and other real-world terms are just English approximations of words used by Ninth Worlders. “Pope” means “father” but implies more, and the word has an association with Medieval Europe. “Synth” isn't a word used by Medieval Europeans, but its meaning—and, just as important, its sound—suggests something wholly artificial yet simple, common, and acceptable to our 21st-century ears. Those terms and hundreds like them were chosen because they convey the right ideas.

So what languages do Ninth Worlders speak?

The Truth: The Aeon Priests teach a language based on rationality and intellect. Because of its name, it means something different in the Ninth World to say, “She speaks the Truth,” but that subtle double meaning is intentional on the part of the priesthood.

The language's rules are simple and straightforward, easy to teach and easy to learn. The Truth is the predominant language in the Steadfast, where it's spoken by about 80 percent of the people; in cities, that number is closer to 100 percent. In the Beyond, about 60 percent of the people speak the Truth as their primary language, but many isolated villages have their own specific tongue.

Shin-Talk: This is a crude and simple language used only for trade and related tasks—counting, assessing quality, and so on. Shin-Talk is older than the Truth but not as widely used.

Order of Truth, page 127

*Ceremonies may be public or private and can take the form of handfasting, feasting, the exchange of gifts, and proof-of-love conquests (see *The Fields of Frozen Flowers*, page 113).*



Aldeia, page 20

Beyond, page 72

Aeon Priest, page 150

"I've seen machines that melt flesh into new shapes, beasts that skip in and out of time, and places that break the rules of how I thought the world worked. Our world is full of wonders I'll never fully understand, and I seek them out like I have a hunger for them."

~Chiemeka Neyth



Snow lopers, page 234

For more details on the types of creatures that crawl, fly, and otherwise move through the Ninth World, see Arcana of the Ancients, Chapter 4: Creatures (page 140). Also look for the bestiary, Beasts of Flesh and Steel.

Other Languages: At least 500 (and perhaps far more) completely distinct languages are spoken across the Ninth World. It's not unusual for a traveler to discover an isolated village—particularly in the Beyond—and be unable to speak to its few hundred residents because they have their own language. Fortunately, this is a common problem, so people are used to struggling through interactions without relying on words.

LITERACY

Many people in the Ninth World cannot read. The Steadfast has an average literacy rate of about 50 percent. Although almost everyone can recognize a few written words of the Truth, genuine literacy—the ability to read a contract or a book—is uncommon. Reading is more common in cities, where up to 70 percent of the population might be literate. In small towns and villages, the number is closer to 40 percent, and in very rural, isolated villages, it falls to 10 percent or less.

In the Beyond, literacy rates are about 50 percent in cities and 0 to 20 percent in the

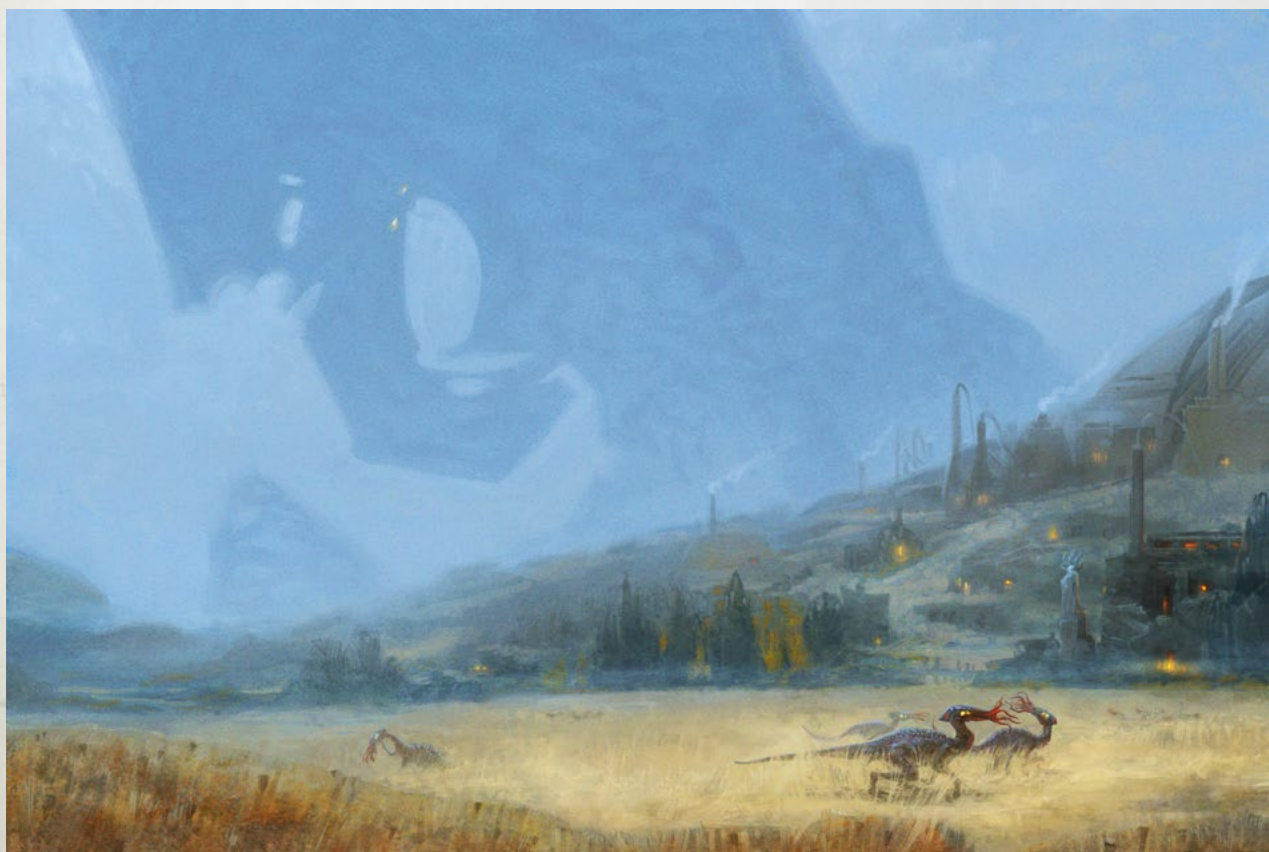
aldeia. (An aldeia is a village in the Beyond centered around a clave of *Aeon Priests.*)

In communities that have a predominant language other than the Truth, literacy varies wildly.

ANIMALS AND CREATURES

A billion years in the future, all the animals we know in the 21st century are long gone. However, animal types—mammals, reptiles, insects, birds, and so forth—remain. Again, it's a language problem. The text (or the GM) might talk about rats, deer, flies, or ravens, but the beasts being described are at least slightly different than the creatures we think of today. However, the words are still valid because they convey the proper general meaning. Wholly different creatures, such as *snow lopers*, are described because they have no 21st-century analog.

Of course, the Ninth World also has creatures that are nothing like animals. Mutant beasts, engineered creatures (or their descendants), automatons, biomechanical blends of organism and machine, extraterrestrial and ultraterrestrial beings, creatures of energy, and stranger



I stood in Yrkallak Tower and watched as the cloud of orange and red passed across the landscape in the distance. Through my spyglass, I saw the formation of a hillock that had not existed before. Atop that rise grew polyp-like blue trees that then wavered and died. The field of grain that had grown nearby became a cacophonous mixture of glass, green vapor, and writhing serpents. An aneen tried to run as the iron wind approached, but its legs became tiny fluttering wings, and it collapsed. Its back sprouted a thousand insect legs, but its head had turned to a coppery metal, and it was dead.

Further horrors I witnessed, I shall not describe, for I wish that I had not seen them. They shall haunt my dreams forevermore. Truly this was a storm born in Hell, carried on the backs of invisible demons of madness and misery.

~The journal of Lady Charalann

entities roam the planet. In one way or another, all of these things are results of the influence of the numenera.

NINTH WORLD HISTORY

To the people of the Ninth World, recorded history began about 900 years ago, with the work of learned scholars who organized themselves into what would later become the Aeon Priests. Before that time, humans lived in tribes and isolated farming villages.

No one knows how much time passed between the fall of the previous civilization and the rise of the Ninth World. Likewise, no one can agree on where Ninth Worlders came from. It's clear that many residents of the prior worlds were not human, but perhaps some were.

The first Amber Pope organized the Aeon Priests into the Order of Truth about 400 years ago. At this time, the kingdoms of the Steadfast began to take the form that they have today, although wars, upheavals, and changes have come and gone since then (and more changes are likely in the future).

In the end, to scholars and broad thinkers, the petty squabbles and changes that took place during the last few centuries seem as nothing compared to the vast, unknowable past of Earth. This is likely part of the reason why people of the Ninth World don't care much about history.

GAZETTEER OF THE NINTH WORLD

The Ninth World is the backdrop of a young civilization that has grown up amid the ruins of very old, very advanced forebears. A billion years from now, we'll be long gone, as will the civilizations that evolve and rise (and fall or leave or transcend) after us. A billion years is a long, long time—far lengthier than the span between the 21st century and the dinosaurs.

In the time of the Ninth World, the landmasses have rejoined to form a vast supercontinent surrounded by seemingly endless seas with perilous storms. But did the Earth come to be in this configuration because of natural forces through the march of time, or did a prior civilization design it to be so? Certainly, the ancient inhabitants of the previous worlds had the ability to shape their planet, and likely other planets, as they saw fit. Proof of this is everywhere; “impossible” landscapes are a normal part of the topography. Islands of crystal float in the sky. Inverted mountains rise above plains of broken glass. Abandoned structures the size of kingdoms stretch across great distances, so enormous that they affect the weather. Massive machines, some still active, churn and hum. But for what purpose?

Along the western coast lies the **Steadfast**, a collection of kingdoms and principalities with little in common except for a unifying religion. This religion, called

Steadfast, page 28

Order of Truth, page 27

by its adherents the **Order of Truth** (and by all others the Amber Papacy), reveres the past and the knowledge of the ancients as understood by the enigmatic Aeon Priests. By decree of the Amber Pope, the Steadfast and the Order of Truth wage war with the lands to the north, believed by many to be enthralled by a secretive and mysterious cult called the Gaians. Nobles in the Steadfast are called to the Crusades, making war against the infidels with ever-stranger weapons discovered or devised by the priesthood.

Beyond, page 72

Outside the bounds of the Steadfast lies the **Beyond**, a vast wilderness punctuated by very occasional, very isolated communities. The Beyond also has Aeon Priests, but they're not linked by an organized network, and they don't answer to the Amber Pope. Instead, these priests dwell in sequestered **claves**. Around these **claves**, small villages and communities known as **aldeia** have arisen. Each **clave** has discovered and mastered various numenera items, giving every **aldeia** a distinct identity.

*An aldeia is a village in the Beyond centered around a **clave** of Aeon Priests.*

In one, the inhabitants might raise unique bioengineered beasts for food. In another, people may pilot gravity-defying gliders and

race along the rooftops of ancient ruins. In still another **aldeia**, the priests of the **clave** may have developed the means to stop the aging process almost entirely, making the residents nearly immortal, and some are no doubt willing to sell the secret—for a staggering price. Because the **aldeia** are remote and separated by dangerous distances, trade of these discoveries is occasional and haphazard.

But not every village or tribe in the Beyond has a **clave** to help guide them amid the dangers of the past. Some of these communities have tried to use the numenera to their peril, unleashing horrors, plagues, or mysteries beyond comprehension. Travelers might find a village where the residents have been transformed into flesh-eating monstrosities, or one whose populace works as slaves for a machine intelligence left over from an earlier era.

Outside the **aldeia** and other settlements, the dangers multiply. Amid the ruins of the past lurk tribes of vicious abhumans that are as likely to kill and eat an explorer as talk to her. Clouds of tiny, invisible machines called the iron wind scour the wilderness, altering everything they touch. Monstrous predators, ancient death machines, and stranded extraterrestrial or transdimensional beings (also called ultradimensional beings or ultraterrestrials) also threaten the uncharted reaches of the Beyond. But so too can a careful, capable explorer find awe-inspiring numenera that can accomplish anything they might imagine.

In the Ninth World, the numenera is both the risk and the reward.

WEATHER

The numenera has changed the environment of the planet many times over. The inhabitants of the prior worlds reshaped not only land and sea but sky as well. Even the weather of the Ninth World is influenced by the numenera.

In the Steadfast and the Beyond, it grows colder as you travel south. The southernmost lands of the Steadfast, for example, have cool summers and harsh

DATASPHERE

The term "datasphere" describes the worldwide wireless network that connects a wide variety of devices, satellites, and other machines to store and exchange data. A number of such networks might exist in the Ninth World (and beyond—some of these networks could be connected to interplanetary, interstellar, intergalactic, or interdimensional sources).

The category also encompasses artificial intelligences, unique NPCs that are sometimes almost like spirits or gods. Their power is limited only by the technology that they can still access. Artificial intelligences could live within the datasphere itself or be confined to unconnected devices or machines. They might use holograms to project a presence into the real world or build automated bodies to interact in a physical state. (Or they could find both of those options ridiculous or abhorrent.)

winters. The central and northern portions have warmer summers, but even the southern edge of the **Cloudcrystal Skyfields** sees snow and frost in the winter. The mountains of the **Black Riage** have long, oppressive winters, with the southernmost passes open for only a few months.

Overall, the climate is dry, and with a few exceptions (along the coast, for example), rain is uncommon and accompanies terrible storms. Rumors say that particularly harsh or strange storms are either the result of a harmful numenera effect or the slow degradation of a beneficial one. Either way, storms with dangerous winds, hail, and lightning grow more frequent each year. Other storms—still thankfully very rare—bring oily black rains that kill crops rather than nourish them, or weird magnetic fluctuations that bend matter and disrupt minds. But even these pale in comparison to the most terrifying weather effect in the Ninth World: the iron wind.

THE IRON WIND

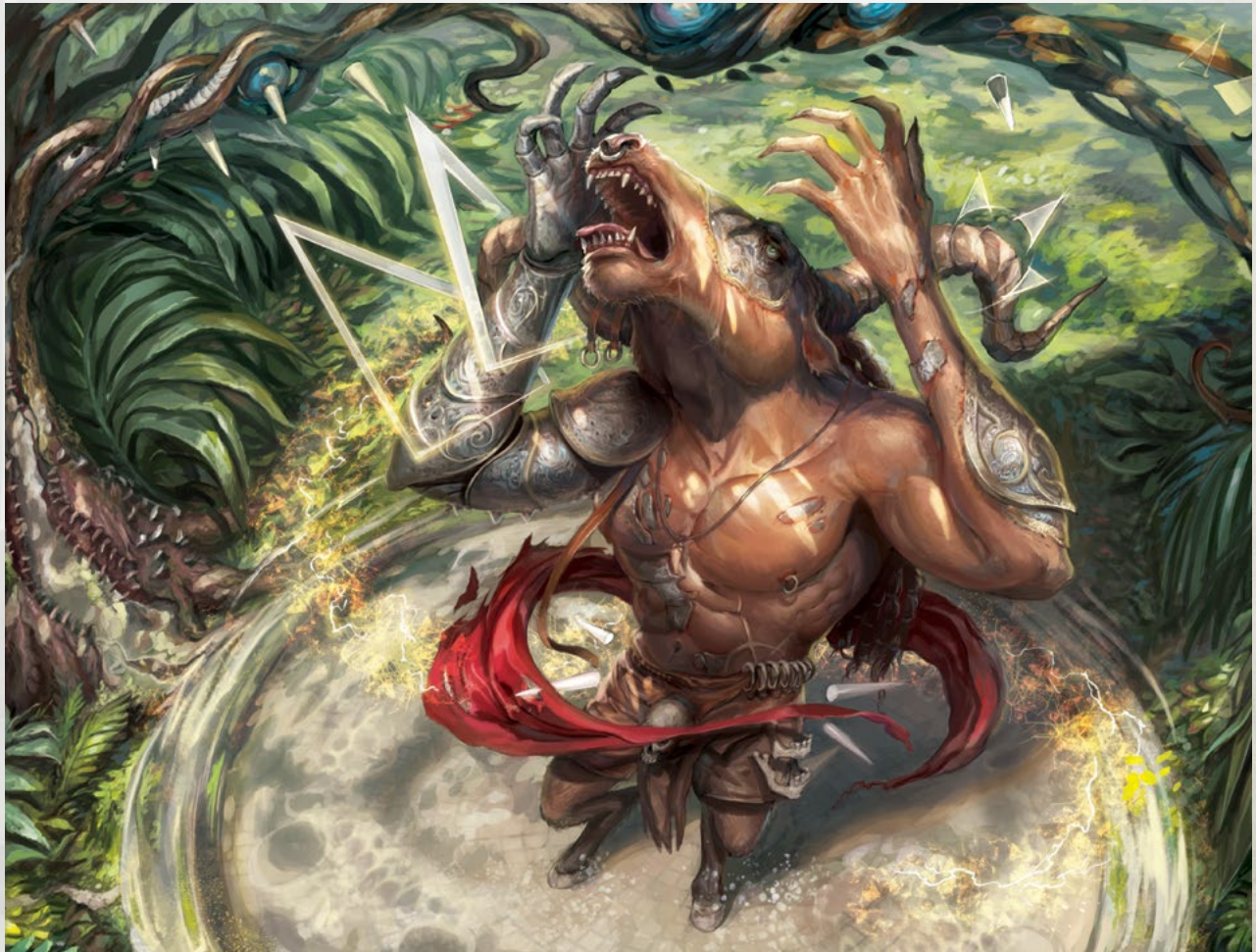
The iron wind is the Ninth-World term for clouds of dangerous nano spirits (also called nanotech by the more learned). Malfunctioning machines that are far too tiny to see, travel across the landscape in terrible clouds borne by strong winds. These machines warp everything they touch, transmuting all matter. An iron wind storm twists the ground, turns rock into clouds of vapor, and creates new features out of thin air. And woe to any living thing caught in its passing. Trees become rocks, pools of water, or unrecognizable lumps of pulsing, living substance. The iron wind tears apart creatures only to rebuild them in bizarre, seemingly random shapes. Flesh is transmuted to nonliving substances, ropy tendrils, or even more alien configurations or textures. Nine times out of ten, this transformation results in the death of the creature—sometimes a long, painful death as it tries to cope with its new form.

“My oath is to preserve and protect our civilization from beasts of the prior worlds, abhumans who have forsaken their humanity, and the northern cults who oppose the will of the Amber Pope. I search for the gifts of prior worlds so the Aeon Priests may unlock their secrets and build a better future for us.”
—Klendii the Evangelist

Cloudcrystal Skyfields, page 72

Black Riage, page 75

Different instances of Iron Wind often have wholly different effects, strengths, and outcomes, meaning every encounter is potentially unique.



EQUIPMENT

While some materials can readily be found in various parts of the Ninth World, others are more unique to a particular area.

Culat is a particularly hard wood that is favored by the Horges of Castle Sarrat (page 40).

Goldgleam and silster are decorative elements harvested from insects in the Slant Milieu (page 78). Redstone is a brick-colored stone quarried only in the village of Redstone (page 108).

Mineral rarity is not an issue in the Ninth World, so gems and jewels are not intrinsically valuable. People still prize well-made jewelry and art objects, but real "treasure" comes in the form of oddities or relics of the prior worlds.

The Ninth World is a dichotomy of past and future, of the primitive and the extremely advanced, of limitations and limitlessness. Nowhere does this dichotomy become more evident than in the tools the inhabitants use, the clothing they wear, the weapons they wield, and the gear they carry. This section looks at currency, materials, and gear in the Ninth World.

Although some equipment and materials described in this section are products of the distant past, actual cyphers, relics, and oddities are not listed here; they're covered in *Arcana of the Ancients*.

CURRENCY

Thanks to the mining and metallurgy of the prior worlds, and their ability to create anything they wished (or so it seems, anyway), no metal is rarer than any other. People in the Ninth World have no concept of gold, silver, gemstones, or even diamonds as being valuable due to their scarcity. Such materials are valuable based on their beauty or usefulness alone. Most civilized societies use generic coins commonly referred to as shins.

SHINS

Shins are usually metal but can be made of glass, plastic, or substances that have no name. Some are jagged bits of interesting material or small, coinlike objects (such as highly decorative buttons from a machine), and others are properly minted and stamped, with writing and images. No minted coin in existence today comes from a prior world—no coins survive from the ancients, if indeed they used such currency at all. Some regions of the Ninth World only

accept coins that were minted in that realm; others accept all coins, regardless of origin. This custom varies from place to place and society to society.

Because shins are from the Ninth World, they rarely turn up in old locations. Occasionally, explorers of ancient or forgotten sites find a smattering of items—buttons or doodads—that can be salvaged as shins.

SHIN TO GOLD PIECE (GP)
EXCHANGE RATE

The rules for 5E character creation include starting equipment, which is either a combination of equipment based on class and background, or an amount of currency based on your class. In either case, it's important to know how gold pieces translate to shins: **3 gp = 1 shin** (round up, minimum 1 shin). For example, if a character in a setting using the gold-piece standard has 125 gp, in the Ninth World they have 42 shins.

SELECTING STARTING
EQUIPMENT

You gain the equipment indicated for your class selection and background. If any gp are leftover, convert them to shins.

Alternatively, you might choose to gain a lump sum of currency based on your class. If so, you have a couple options.

Option one is to use your lump sum in gold pieces to buy equipment from the tables provided in the 5E ruleset, priced in gp. Then convert any remaining gold pieces to shins, and check the equipment provided here.

Option two is to convert your lump sum of gold pieces to shins immediately. This also requires you to convert all gp prices in the 5E ruleset equipment list to shins.

For example, if you want a set of smith's tools, the converted price would be 8 shins. This is more cumbersome, but allows you to peruse the equipment in this chapter of *Beneath the Monolith* on an equal footing with the 5E ruleset equipment, with all your funds at your disposal.

GENERAL EQUIPMENT PURCHASE

After you've created your character and explored the Ninth World a little, it's likely your character will accumulate more shins, and want to buy more equipment. Refer to the equipment provided here and the equipment provided in the 5E ruleset; in the latter case, convert the 5E ruleset equipment price to shins to know what your buying power is (i.e., divide gp by 3, minimum 1 shin).

ACQUIRING TREASURE: SHINS AND THE NUMENERA

Player characters can acquire shins and devices of the ancients through several means, including being paid for services, stealing them, salvaging them from machines and devices, and looting them from defeated foes, creatures, and ruins.

The number of shins and numenera devices gained during the course of an adventure is a function of the base rules presented in the 5E ruleset for random treasure and the **treasure hoard tables**, with some caveats.

First, if any individual treasure table indicates a value in currency, convert it to shins (possibly first converting to gold pieces, then converting shins). Gems and art objects may be found, but convert their value to shins as necessary for resale in the Ninth World. For instance, if a 25-gp art object is indicated, its value in the Ninth World is 8 shins. Speaking of gems and art objects, the particular items found may indeed be exactly as described, though you could also make Ninth World-appropriate substitutions, such as the following examples.

Gems: Instead of finding an 8-shin ruby, a PC might find a small piece of weird material, like azure steel or stronglass (see Materials), worth 8 shins.

Art Objects: The art objects found are likely not to have been fashioned by human hands, which means they will seem very weird and alien. For instance, a blob of glass-like material that constantly evolves its curves and planes would make an interesting and valuable sculpture for some collectors.

Second, if an individual treasure table indicates that a magic item is found, a numenera device is found instead. Refer to the appropriate table in *Arcana of the Ancients*, **Appendix B: Arcana by Rarity**.

Third and last, as the GM, keep an eye on the characters' progression. If you feel like they would benefit from having what would be the equivalent of a +1 magical weapon or +1 magical armor or shield, you have the power to make it so. Refer to **Default Option: Magic and the Numenera Equivalence** in *Arcana of the Ancients* for more on how numenera items are treated as if magical, as well as **Magic in the Science-Fantasy Setting of the Ninth World** in the first chapter of this book.

MATERIALS

Most objects built in the Ninth World are made of wood, leather, cloth, stone, glass, or metal. Smithies and forges can produce high-quality steel objects, but they generally work in iron or bronze. However, plastic (called "synth" with a default AC of 16), organic stone or steel, exotic crystal, and even stranger materials are not unknown. Items made of those substances are left over from the prior worlds, so many people are familiar with them, although very few know how to produce more. Unlike gold or gemstones, some of these materials are indeed recognized as being rare, but none are valuable for their rarity alone. Ninth Worlders are too practical for that. Such materials include (but are not limited to):

Adamant Silk: This fabric is five times as strong as regular silk and extremely resistant to stains and dirt. (AC 13)

Azure Steel: This bluish metal is not steel and may not be from Earth at all. While somewhat lighter than steel, it is at least ten times harder and tougher. (AC 23)



Appendix B: Arcana by Rarity, page 297

Default Option: Magic and the Numenera Equivalence, page 252

Magic in the Science-Fantasy Setting of the Ninth World, page 7

Confusingly, sometimes synthsteel is just called synth when the context makes it obvious that it is very strong, such as with synth armor.

Molded Foam: This substance has the mass of soap foam but has been molded firmly into other shapes, such as dishes, boxes, or other common objects. Most kinds of molded foam are brittle, but some types are more durable. (AC 11)

Organic Stone: Although it has the appearance and strength of granite (or sometimes other minerals, such as marble or quartz), this material is grown rather than quarried. Some varieties of organic stone are half as light as normal stone, but other types are just as heavy—if not heavier. (AC 17)

Pliable Metal: This material retains the strength and durability of steel but is pliable enough to make bags, boots, or similar objects. Sometimes pliable metal temporarily molds to the shape of whatever is pressed against it, similar to 21st-century memory foam. (AC 19)

Shapestone: Like stone out of precise molds, shapestone has the durability of granite but is actually ceramic. (AC 17)

Strongglass: Despite how this material looks, feels, and is worked like glass, it has the strength of steel. (AC 19)

Synth: This is a Ninth World name for any of a number of materials similar to various plastics common to 21st-century Earth. They are durable, but not particularly strong. (AC 16)

Synthsteel: Similar in appearance to normal synth, this somewhat misnamed substance is harder and tougher than synth, making it stronger, yet far lighter than steel. (AC 20)

EXOTIC SUBSTANCES

Most common Ninth World items are made of conventional materials, but it's not strange to find a few objects made of these more exotic substances. For instance, amid a rack of steel and iron axes, a character might find one with a synthsteel head (likely a piece of synthsteel originally designed for another purpose and adapted for use as an axe head). Usually, the cost of an item made of exotic materials is the same as that of a normal item, but if the material makes a big difference—such as in the case of a shield made of strongglass so you can hold it in front of you and still see through it—the seller might charge up to twice the normal price.



ARMOR

Armor	Cost	Armor Class (AC)	Strength	Stealth	Weight
Light Armor					
Furs	2 shins	11 + Dex modifier	—	Disadvantage	11 lb.
Leather jerkin	3 shins	11 + Dex modifier	—	—	9 lb.
Armoring cloth	400 shins	13 + Dex modifier	—	—	7 lb.
Micromesh*	500 shins	14 + Dex modifier	—	—	5 lb.
Medium Armor					
Beastskin	5 shins	12 + Dex modifier	—	—	11 lb.
Brigandine	5 shins	12 + Dex modifier	—	Disadvantage	15 lb.
Chainmail hauberk	6 shins	13 + Dex modifier (max 2)	—	—	20 lb.
Metalweave vest*	400 shins	13 + Dex modifier (max 2)	—	—	5 lb.
Synth breastplate*	500 shins	14 + Dex modifier (max 2)	—	—	14 lb.
Heavy Armor					
Scale armor	25 shins	16	Str 14	Disadvantage	60 lb.

*Players probably shouldn't be able to select armor with this designation for their beginning character. In addition, shin amounts over a hundred or so are not often exchanged, and other currencies are preferred. For instance, plate armor is usually too valuable to be traded for shins; a good set of plate armor might instead be exchanged for several useful cyphers or a relatively minor relic, instead.

EQUIPMENT LISTS AND PRICES

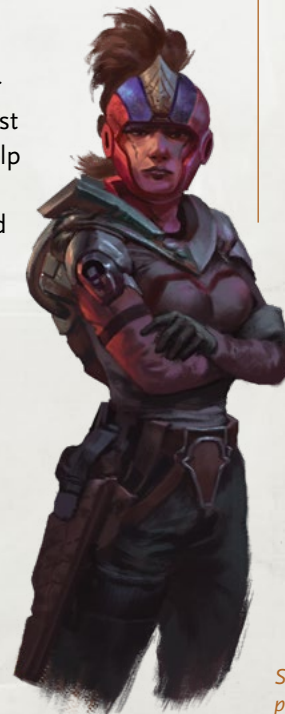
The items in this chapter are presented as a supplement to those in the 5E ruleset, and as such, are not exhaustive lists. Equipment in the Ninth World is often much like that found in ancient or medieval societies but can be far more advanced. For example, a simple tent or bedroll might be constructed of synthetic fiber that makes it entirely water-resistant as well as far lighter and warmer than cloth. A chainmail hauberk could be made in whole or in part from glassy links that are harder and lighter than steel.

It's worth noting that some Ninth World tools and devices would never be found in a medieval setting because they're relics from a previous world or were created with knowledge salvaged from a previous world. Examples of these kinds of objects are ink pens, clothing made from denim or spandex, liquid soap, screw-top metal canisters, rubber gloves, umbrellas, sticky tape, nylon fishing line, spray bottles, and hundreds more similar items. They also include the objects listed under **Special**

Equipment, as well as random oddities and occasional cyphers and relics—although finding either of the latter for sale like ordinary goods is quite uncommon.

ARMOR

Characters expecting danger frequently wear armor. Even the simplest protective coverings help against slingstones and sword strokes, and more sophisticated or heavier armor protects against graver threats.



Special Equipment, page 27

WEAPONS

Weapon	Cost	Damage	Weight	Properties
Simple Melee Weapons				
Forearm blade	2 shins	1d6 slashing	1 lb.	Light
Razor ring	1 shin	1d4 slashing	1 lb.	Finesse, light, thrown (range 30/120)
Simple Ranged Weapons				
Sisk	1 shin	1d4 slashing	1 lb.	Light, thrown (range 30/120)
Martial Melee Weapons				
Verred	3 shins	1d6 slashing	3 lb.	Finesse, light / versatile (1d8)
Yulk	5 shins	1d6 piercing	4 lb.	Reach, versatile (1d8)
Martial Ranged Weapons				
Buzzer	8 shins	1d6 slashing	2 lb.	Ammunition (range 25/100), light

WEAPONS

Many weapons are so ubiquitous that they do not require additional explanation. Those can be obtained from the standard weapon selection options provided by the 5E ruleset. Others benefit by explication, such as the following.

Buzzer: This handheld weapon fires thumbnail-sized bladed disks up to short range. It holds five disks in a magazine and requires an action to reload.

Forearm Blade: This metal weapon is basically a bracer with a mounted blade on it. A favorite of **berserkers** as well as the **Jaekels of Aras Island**.

Razor Ring: This short-range weapon is just what it sounds like: an 18 inch (46 cm) ring with a razor-sharp outer edge. The inner edge is often padded for holding.

Sisk: This solid, bladed throwing disk is about the diameter of a human head. This short-range weapon is used most frequently by the warriors of **Milave**.

Verred: This weapon resembles a sword with two forked blades. It is short and useful in defense as well as offense.

Yulk: This weapon resembles a splayed metal claw mounted on a 2-foot (60 cm) haft. It is used mainly by raiders and wildmen of the **Beyond**.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Nothing on the special equipment list is regularly manufactured by Ninth World crafters. Most likely, these items are recovered from old sites, but they're found often enough and in large enough quantities that many communities offer them for sale. The GM is the final arbiter of whether or not the characters can obtain these items, but as a general rule, common special items are always available, rare special items are available 50 percent of the time, and very rare special items are available 25 percent of the time.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT NOTES

Some special equipment requires additional explanation (though some items are self explanatory).

Brilliance Cloth: This synthcloth obeys the thoughts of anyone touching it. It has the

Milave, page 57

Jaekels of Aras Island, page 66

Beyond, page 72



SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Item	Cost	Weight
Common		
Clear synth bag (small)	1 shin	—
Clear synth bag (large)	2 shins	1/2 lb.
Ink pen	2 shins	—
Rare		
Binoculars/telescope	50 shins	1–10 lb.
Ecledda clothing	15 shins	1 lb.
Glow ink	10 shins	—
Glowglobe, minor	10 shins	1 lb.
Shock ring	500 shins	1 lb.
Very Rare		
Brilliance cloth	100 shins	2 lb.
Floatstone	20 shins	–10 lb.
Glowglobe, major	30 shins	1 lb.
Memory ants	10 shins	1/2 lb.
Shaper key	20 shins	—
Sprayflesh	100 shins	2 lb.
Spraymetal	750 shins	5 lb.
Whisperlock	20 shins	1/2 lb.

ability to slowly change shape and color (but not consistency). A major change requires about ten minutes. A garment of brilliance cloth can be made into any other garment, for example, but it can't be made protective.

Ecledda Clothing: This clothing is made of extremely durable fabric (such as adamant silk).

Floatstone: A piece of rock, usually about the size of a brick, that pulls against gravity. Most people think of it as having a “negative weight” of about –10 pounds. Thus, if attached to anything lighter, it floats away.

Glow Ink: Words and designs written with glow ink permanently glow in the dark.

Glowglobe: This device, individual instances of which range in size from marble-sized to head-sized, illuminates everything within 50 feet with dim light. It can hover in place on its own, or it can be attached to something. The minor glowglobe lasts for an hour when activated. The major glowglobe functions continuously.

Memory Ants: This is a small jar of tiny insects that run across a page of text and then return to the jar. When spilled out

again and given ink, they replicate the text once and then die.

Shaper Key: A shaper key is a wad of putty that can be inserted into a conventional lock. It takes on the form of the key for that lock and then hardens, permanently, into a functional key.

Shock Ring: This weapon is a razor ring with a charged outer edge that inflicts an additional 1d6 lightning damage. If it misses, it returns unerringly to the thrower's hand. Its power is normally never depleted.

Sprayflesh: This tiny synth canister sprays out a sticky gelatin that covers and seals wounds instantly. Its use restores 6 hit points to a damaged character.

Spraymetal: Similar to sprayflesh, but instead of restoring flesh, it repairs minor damage (breaks, tears, and holes) in any simple object—even a flexible object like cloth or a leather bag—but not devices or anything as complex as a crossbow. It has the strength of steel.

Whisperlock: This is similar to a padlock, made of powerful *synthsteel* or *strongglass*, except that it has no keyhole. It opens with a secret word, selected when it is initially locked. The word must be spoken into the lock itself.

synthsteel, page 24

strongglass, page 24



THE STEADFAST

Each of the nine kingdoms has at least one symbol that represents it. Some symbols are ancient, others newly minted by the current leadership. While some kingdoms (such as Ghan) wield their symbol proudly and fiercely, others use them only in times of war or not at all.

"The Amber Pope himself is some kind of biological construct that represents a darker, secret pope that dwells only in shadow."

~Narada Trome, anti-papist

Amber Papacy, page 128

Beyond, page 72

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Navarene, page 29

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The Steadfast comprises nine different kingdoms. Collectively, the rulers are often called the Nine Rival Kings, or just the Nine. These kings, queens, princes, and councils share no love for one another and truthfully have no relationship except that each rules over a land whose people owe faith and favor to the Amber Papacy.

Generally speaking, the Steadfast is more settled and civilized than the Beyond, but it can be just as dangerous. Communities are isolated. Travel on the roads is risky and nearly unthinkable at night—but at least roads exist.

The Steadfast includes all the land from the sea to the Black Riage, south of the Tithe River and north of the Sadara. The nine kingdoms of the Steadfast are Navarene, Ghan, Draolis, Thaemor, Malevich, Iscobal, the Pytharon Empire, Milave, and Ancuan.





NAVARENE

Navarene is one of the largest and most prosperous kingdoms in the Steadfast. Disliked by all the other lands, the people of Navarene are thought of as aloof, difficult, and even arrogant. “Wealthy as a Navarene merchant” is a saying in the Steadfast that almost always has implied negative connotations.

The southern part of the kingdom is known for its rich farmland. Simple farmers and herders work for wealthy landowners who in turn pay fealty to a small number of aristocratic families, each of whom answers to the queen, who rules from her capital of Charmonde. Her palace is known as the Empiternal House, and at its center is a set of sealed chambers that **Queen Armalu** never leaves. To come and go, her court must pass through a series of airlocks and undergo a misting spray that removes any potential contaminants. This odd but careful behavior, coupled with a variety of strange treatments and procedures, has allowed Armalu to live for 253 years—so far.

Queen Armalu is known for being both shrewd and ruthless, and her kingdom prospers as a result, for she uses these traits to best her enemies and the foes of her people. As long as her subjects are obedient and efficient, they are treated well and with a fair hand.

Navarene forms the boundary between the north and the rest of the Steadfast. Thus, the northern portion of the kingdom, south of the Tithe River, holds many forts and war-castles that help defend this border from the dangers of the Beyond. Now that the **Amber Pope** has declared war on the mysterious lands to the north of the **Cloudcrystal Skyfields**, these fortresses are even more important. Queen Armalu has petitioned the papacy to require the other eight kingdoms to pay to help maintain the bastions. The other rulers balk at funding Navarene’s military, feeling that Armalu is as likely to use it to invade them as she is to defend them from the Gaian invaders—should those infidels ever come.

THE WESTWOOD

Vast, lush, and green, the Westwood is a verdant forest dominating Navarene’s coastline. It’s known for the ancient redwoods that stretch taller than any trees in the Steadfast. One particular tree—known as the Emperor of Green—rises high above the rest. Twice as tall as any tree around it, the Emperor stands at almost 700 feet (213 m). It’s clearly of a slightly different species than the other trees. Its trunk is more than 60 feet (18 m) in diameter at the base, and at seemingly random times in the year, a **door** appears



NAVARENE

Ruler: *Queen Armalu*

Population: 1,500,000

Capital: *Charmonde*

Amber Pope, page 128

Cloudcrystal Skyfields, page 72

Queen Armalu has aristocrat stats (page 151).



Charina Emol has steward stats (page 158).

Convergence, page 129



Culova, page 158

on the north-facing side. It disappears again after an hour. Few, however, have reached the tree to look for it. Far fewer have entered it, and if they have, they haven't returned to report what lies on the other side.

For long years, people feared the Westwood, calling it impenetrable and dangerous. Rumors spoke of ghosts and ravenous beasts dwelling within. The Westwood and its hungry spirits were part of the folklore all along the coast. But today, the people of Navarene have claimed the forest, determined to carve out safe roads to the coast and land for farms and towns. For their efforts, they have stirred an enemy—not the ghosts or tree-spirits of legend, but the *culovas*. These creatures claim the majority of the Westwood for themselves and attempt to defend it against encroachment.

In the eastern edge of the Westwood, you can find many mills that supply lumber to Navarene and the surrounding lands.

Lumber is a major export for the country and is part of the kingdom's wealth. The wood—particularly the redwood—is highly prized.

A noble family, the Emols, owns and operates a huge, mobile machine that cuts down and processes trees at the same rate as a hundred loggers. Called the Dark Smoker for the greasy muck it belches into the air while it works, the machine is a jury-rigged mess, requiring a staff of mechanics to continually service and repair it to keep it operational. Repeated attacks by the *culovas* damage the rickety device frequently, but technicians and Nanos always manage to fix it. The current head of the family, **Charina Emol**, has placed a 10-shin bounty on the head of any *culova* brought to her.

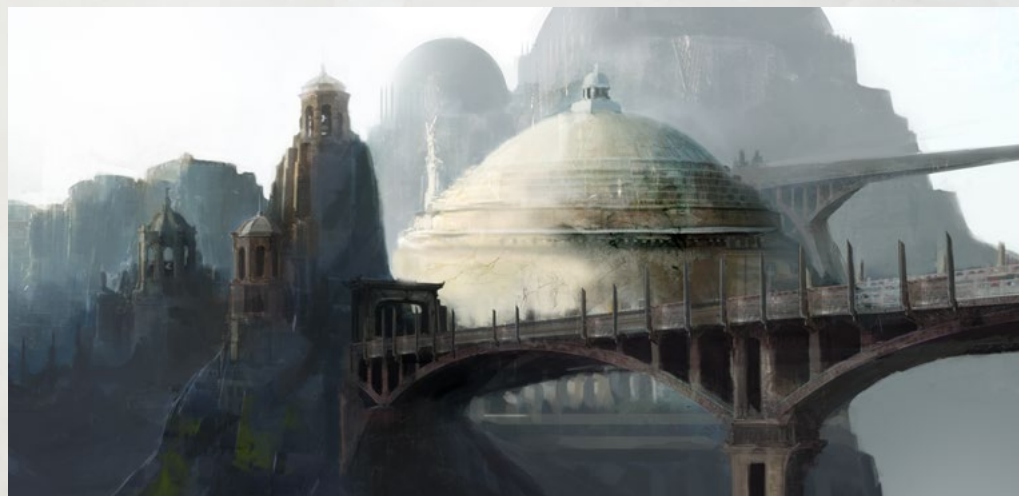
Near the Westwood, you can also find a number of paper mills, particularly around the city of Harmuth.

THE GOLDEN SANCTUM

Hidden deep within the Westwood, this secret citadel belongs to the organization calling itself the *Convergence*. It's a beautiful, relatively new castle, well guarded and well maintained. There are no paths to the Golden Sanctum. Members of the group reach the citadel by other means that are as mysterious as the activities they conduct once they arrive.

CHARMONDE

Long colonnades. Marble statuary. Monuments to great deeds and important myths and legends. Painted domes.





NAVARENE HEARSAY

Dark Whispers: Word from the Garrathol is that the Obelisk of the Water God has begun to glow at night with a faint yellow-green luminosity. No one knows the cause, but the glow isn't constant; some believe it's tied to the phase of the moon. Regardless, strange people have been seen holding rituals in the glowing obelisk's light.

Missing Caravan: A merchant in Shallamas is looking for mercenaries or investigators to find a long-overdue caravan that was supposed to arrive from the north. Among its valuable goods, the caravan carried a trio of near-priceless silver statues said to be sacred to a primitive tribe living below the [Cloudcrystal Skyfields](#).

Ghosts of the Westwood: Even the culovas seem terrified of a new, strange presence in the Westwood that drives them from a locale near the southern edge. Lumberjacks say that the

"green ghosts of the wood" have finally begun exacting their revenge on everything they come upon.

THE WEIRD OF NAVARENE

Harbinger: An odd woman walks the edge of the Westwood, telling anyone who listens that within the next ten years, something will rise out of the forest and devour whole cities. Before she can get much of her story out, she disappears.

Blessed Event: A child born just weeks ago in a small village called Mirbel heals the wounds of any who touch her.

Black Skies: A flock of a thousand or more black vessa birds keeps returning to an ancient tower at the land's western edge, no matter what is done to drive them off.

Biosynth Grove: Fifteen miles (24 km) west of Bodrov grows a small grove of transparent trees made of living synth.

Soaring, arched bridges. Charmonde is a city of architectural beauty and art. The second largest city in Navarene, Charmonde is located on both sides of the Jerribost River, with six bridges connecting the north and south sides of the city.

Charmonde is not walled, but four fortresses surround it to deter invaders, for the city is the capital of the kingdom and home of Queen Armalu. Each fortress has one of four ancient, sonic devices that can create a standing field between them. It's generally known that anyone who tries to cross the barrier created when two adjacent devices are active suffers great pain, convulsions, and even death. The Aeon Priests have determined that the devices are running low on power, however. And despite all efforts, no one has figured out a way to recharge them. Thus, the four devices are used sparingly. They've never been activated in the memory of most of the city's current residents.

Charmonde is home to 95,000 people. The queen's palace, Empiternal House, stands atop the highest hill in the city. It's also known as the House of a Thousand Slaves, for rumors say that is exactly the number of slaves the queen uses in the palace alone. Nearby is the Asaranti University, one of the greatest schools in all the Steadfast. Thanks to the university, the city is known for its scholars, philosophers, and artists as much as for its marble and slaves.

BODROV

Another Navarene city, Bodrov, is uniquely defensible. It lies atop an impossible sort of plateau—in fact, the word plateau almost seems inappropriate. Designed and sculpted by the ancients, the rock formation is more than 500 feet (150 m) high and 800 feet (240 m) across at the top, but only 100 feet (30 m) across at the base. It resembles a round table with one central leg and is sometimes called Table Rock (although, most often, simply Bodrov). A winding path curls up around the base and enters the rock just below the wide top portion. The path into the city leads through a series of artificial caverns and tunnels, which can be sealed at many points.

In fact, the entire base is honeycombed with caves and tunnels, many of which have never been completely explored. Many of these interior spaces, as well as the top of the perfectly flat rock formation, hold the remnants of machines and construction from the distant past. It is speculated that the interior foundation of the entirety of Bodrov might be metal, with the stone appearance having been added later, intentionally or otherwise (depending on the true age of the original structure).

Cloudcrystal Skyfields, page 72

"I knew the Amber Papacy was close to its goal of complete control when I toasted a slice of bread and saw the Order of Truth's symbol appear in its center."

~Narada Trome, anti-papist

A mirror image of a ruin in Navarene can be seen in the sky. The image is always shown in winter and the inhabitants aren't quite human.

"The Order of so-called Truth is the real power of the Steadfast."

~Narada Trome, anti-papist

“Bodrov could have been the jewel of the Steadfast. From here, a monarch could rule the world, safe from all enemies for all time—as long as he never got thirsty.”

~Zacher, architect

Sometimes the defense of Bodrov works against it. Just as it's difficult to imagine an invading army or other danger gaining entrance, so too is it difficult to bring supplies into the city. Food, water, and other goods must be transported up the long path around and through the base and into the city, making Bodrov an impractical place to live. Thus, the population is only about 1,000 people, even though the city could easily house ten times that many, and once did. Buildings—some ancient, some merely old—stand empty, left over from the prior epochs of the world or simply from a time, perhaps a hundred years ago, when people believed that Bodrov would be a city of great importance.

The Vacant Palace is the home away from home of Queen Armalu, although, as its name suggests, she has never been there. It was built for her more than a hundred years ago by an ignorant, but well-intentioned suitor

Argust Provani has aristocrat stats (page 151).

Shadowlings have shadow knight stats (page 157).



who argued that in times of war or other calamity, the queen should come to Bodrov. Wise of him, and yet foolish, for he didn't realize how truly committed she was to never leaving her chambers in Empiternal House. The suitor is now long gone, but his estate still manages the palace for the queen, as per the wishes in his last will and testament.

SHALLAMAS, CITY OF ECHOES

Known by many people as the City of Echoes, Shallamas is a sprawling trade city of 80,000 people, as infamous for its thieves as for the wealthy merchants they prey upon. It is home to the Provani family, another of Navarene's aristocratic houses. The Provani garner great wealth from the caravans that enter the city with goods from the south and leave with goods from Navarene and the Beyond. Even exotic goods from the mysterious lands to the north, such as liquid silk and synthwood, flow through Shallamas.

The City of Echoes is surrounded by an impressive stone wall with many towers. Three main gates provide access, each with its own associated market, and a fourth market lies in the center of Shallamas.

The city gets its nickname from a strange phenomenon that has no explanation. Without warning, residents from time to time see and hear “echoes” of recent past events. Although these echoes seem real, they're more like illusions or holograms; you cannot interact with them. The events can be as recent as a few minutes ago or as distant as a year in the past. In the Shallamas court system, an echo of an eyewitness observing a crime or confirming an alibi is every bit as valid as seeing it actually happen. Echoes have never been observed with inaccuracies.

Argust Provani, the ruler of the city, employs a capable and sizable guard to maintain order, but he also controls an elite group of secretive operatives called the **Shadowlings**, who infiltrate criminal organizations and destroy them from within. The Shadowlings are thought to be as ruthless and violent as the criminals they combat, but they do help to keep the city's merchants and traders safe from thievery.

THE AMBER MONOLITH

Calaval climbed the hill, his pet thuman at his side. Crumbling bits of ancient brick turned to gravel with each step. At the top, he saw the amber obelisk the old woman had told him about. It stretched impossibly into the sky. The reddish-yellow light of the old, tired sun caught in its angles high above the plain of ruin. Even after all these aeons, the machine at the heart of the obelisk still thrummed with power. Rings orbited the device, spinning with unearthly precision.

—Sacred Chronicle of High Father Calaval,
Amber Pope and Founder of the Citadel of the
Conduit and the Order of Truth

According to Calaval, the original Amber Pope (an office that gains its name from the floating obelisk), somewhere inside the Amber Monolith lies a teleportation device that gives access to a numenera edifice floating high above the earth. However, despite Calaval's descriptions and explanations, no one has ever found it or even discovered the secret to accessing the monolith's interior since he supposedly went inside and used the device 400 years ago.

Today, a fortress guards this sacred site and prohibits anyone from attempting to follow in High Father Calaval's footsteps. The fortress is maintained by soldiers in the employ of the Order of Truth who owe no allegiance to Navarene. The queen tolerates their presence as a concession to the papacy.

The Amber Monolith floats 500 feet (150 m) above the ground and stands approximately 2,000 feet (600 m) tall. It floats above a region called the Plain of Brick, a wide expanse of worked stone many miles across.

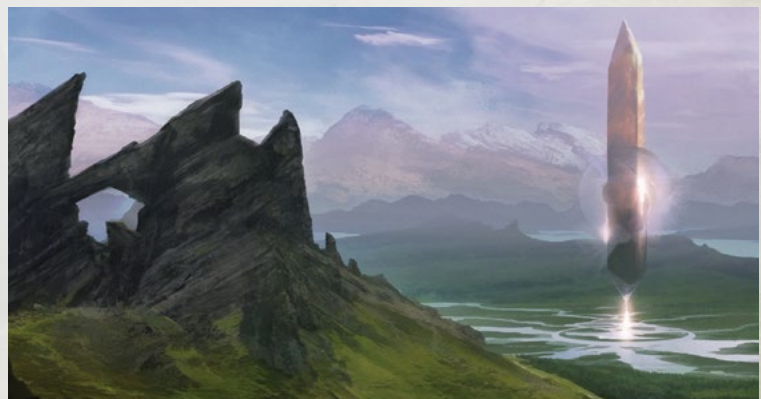
THE OBELISK OF THE WATER GOD

Clearly related in some way to the Amber Monolith, this obelisk floats above a region called the Garrathol in the foothills of the **Black Riage**. Garrathol means "delta" in the now-dead Shume language, even though the area is hundreds of miles inland. The meaning is appropriate because the obelisk draws water into itself from the nearby Tithe River, creating its own sort of delta basin.



Some people believe that the obelisk then sends the water into the air, affecting the weather in the Garrathol. Others claim that the water is sent to a source beyond the scope of the world, which, if true, could be quite bad in the long run. However, given that the obelisk is perhaps a million years old or more and the world isn't drained of water, something different seems to be going on.

The Obelisk of the Water God hovers 500 feet (150 m) above the surface and is almost 2,000 feet (600 m) tall. The lush, fertile region has many small villages but no larger settlements because the area has a reputation for danger. The Garrathol is home to more than its share of deadly predators and monstrosities, and the locals experience a large number of tragic births and mutations.



Thuman, page 238

Order of Truth, page 127

Black Riage, page 75



GHAN

Ruler: King Laird

Population: 1,000,000

Capital: The City of Bridges



THE SEA KINGDOM OF GHAN

*Look long, my friends. Look hard.
Greener hills, bluer waters you'll never find
than those of my heart, in the kingdom by the sea.
Look long, my friends.
Look hard.
Finer men, prettier smiles
you'll never find
than those of my heart, in the kingdom by the sea.*
—The Song of Ghan

Known for its coastal trading ships, the Sea Kingdom of Ghan is a relatively peaceful land. King Laird has no wish to challenge or even appear to challenge Queen Armalu of Navarene or the ruling council in Draolis, yet he doesn't want to appear weak and ripe for the taking, either. Thus, he protects his borders and maintains a careful vigil without making aggressive moves. Most important, however, he ensures that his merchant fleet plays such an important role in the Steadfast that no one would want to suffer his kingdom's sudden collapse—or, just as bad, his sudden refusal to maintain the coastal trade routes vital to most of the nine kingdoms.

The rolling green hills of Ghan are known for herds of **gallen** and **aneen**. Gallen are long-bodied, herbivorous animals valued

for their meat and hides. Aneen stand two to three times as tall as a human, with hunched, hairless bipedal bodies, small forearms, and broad heads. These pack animals can attain great speeds and walk tirelessly for long distances. Many trade caravans in the northern part of the Steadfast use aneen to transport goods or pull massive wagons.

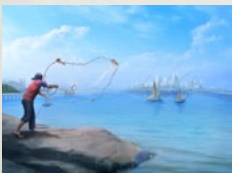
King Laird lives in the Coral Palace off Ghan's coast, a part of the City of Bridges. Ghan has little in the way of an aristocracy. Most of the people are free citizens owing fealty only to their king. Few people own slaves. Governors and mayors rule over districts and towns, but the organization is varied and unofficial. Seafarers and herding folk, Ghanites do not abide a strong government, and King Laird is happy to oblige them.

THE CITY OF BRIDGES

The City of Bridges is the capital of Ghan, although strictly speaking, it's not actually in Ghan. Extending out from the coast, a number of ancient bridges stretch more than a mile to a series of massive metal platforms joined by an intricate web of more bridges. Composed of materials of the prior worlds, these wide bridges and platforms hold homes, shops, warehouses, and other buildings.

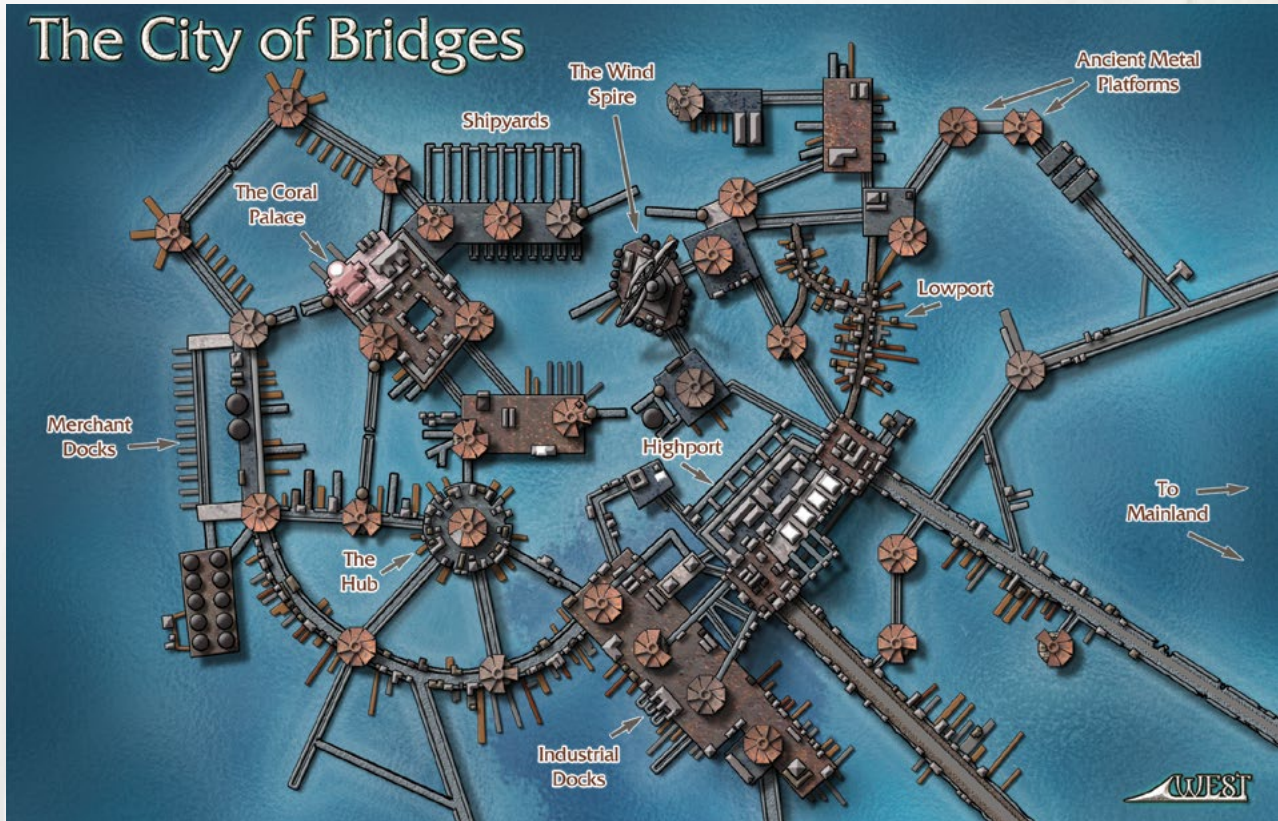
Today the City of Bridges has a population of 20,000 people. Each of the thirty-two

King Laird has aristocrat stats (page 151). In addition, he has proficiency on all Wisdom (Insight) checks.



*Gallen, page 148
Aneen, page 148*

The City of Bridges



platforms has multiple levels, and all of them are in use. What's more, each platform holds structures that can be used as docks for ships and boats. The settlement could have been called the City of Piers, for the entire network of platforms and bridges is almost one big pier (which is entirely appropriate for the capital of the Sea Kingdom). At any given time, a hundred or more vessels are moored at or near the city.

Despite common belief, the city doesn't float. The platforms are affixed to the sea floor, and many people speculate that the large, inactive machines on each platform are drills that extend deep into the submerged earth.

The Coral Palace is not actually made of coral, although large portions of the building

are covered with so much coral that a visitor might believe it to be true. The palace takes up most of one platform where the king's personal ships dock. From here, King Laird rules over Ghan and his merchant fleet.

Rumors say that he is preparing a secret expedition of large craft to sail from the city into the western open sea. With some of the best sea maps in the world at his disposal, Laird knows that no major landmass lies in that direction, but he has placed his faith in talk of a sizable island chain that exists leagues to the west, farther than any recorded voyage has traveled. Supposedly, these islands are inhabited and have exotic goods, interesting lore, numenera, and other commodities that would be valuable to the Steadfast—assuming that a shipping route can be established.

OMAR

Omar is a large mining town. Its people burrowed into the earth and found a wealth of metal in the form of a vast, buried installation or numenera vehicle. (No one has yet determined exactly what they discovered below the ground.) Through processes kept secret, the miners cut



away large sections of otherwise unknown metal from the ancient structure and bring it to the surface, where it can be melted down—with great effort—and reformed into anything a talented smith desires. This metal, known as omaroa or azure steel, is highly sought for its durability and strength.

As with many mining towns, Omar is a rough and violent place. Its citizens live short, angry lives. The ruler, **Mayor Farond**, is as tough as the people in her town. According to many, she maintains much of the order herself, thanks to her suit of nigh-impenetrable armor and its arsenal of built-in devastating numenera weapons.

Mayor Farond has warlord stats (page 159). In addition, she wears a battlesuit relic modified with a built-in instance of flame halo iron flesh.



Battlesuit, page 55

Flame halo, page 73

Varjellen, page 134

Visitants, page 134

THE SCARRED MONOLITHS

Floating high above the galled herds of Ghan, massive humanoid statues drift slowly across the sky. Once, these gigantic objects were enormous war machines. Now they're just curiosities—except, perhaps, to brave explorers who might be able to reach them and find a way inside. Never in memory have the machines done anything but float about the hills, never drifting far from their starting points.

KEFORD

Keford is a lumber town. Ships sail Ryness Bay to reach it and leave laden with some of the Steadfast's finest wood. The lumberjacks

of Keford frequently cross the border into Navarene, and while that kingdom has no efficient way to watch that stretch of its boundary—the woods are too dense—Navarene soldiers in the area find that those coming from Ghan are likely to attack them on sight just on principle.

Keford has a wooden palisade. About 4,000 people call the place home, although at any given time there are another 500 or so sailors in town.

JASTON

The 8,000 residents of the walled town of Jaston devote themselves mainly to agriculture in some fashion; granaries, slaughterhouses, farm implements, animal training, and a variety of similar jobs keep them busy. The people are a no-nonsense, practical folk who are more distrustful of Nanos and the numenera than are others in most similar-sized communities.

About 12 miles (19 km) north of Jaston lies Deverlaush, a large village primarily inhabited by **varjellen**, one of the types of **visitants**. The varjellen of Deverlaush and the humans of Jaston coexist in relative peace without fully accepting each other into their communities. Still, it's not uncommon to see a small group of varjellen walking through Jaston and getting the occasional scowl or sidelong glance.





GHAN HEARSAY

The Sacred Gallen: In a hillfolk village called Iera, the people believe that to lay the foundation for their new temple, they must plow the ground with a sacred white bull gallen. But the creature they were set to use has disappeared from their care. They've offered a reward of 100 shins for its return.

Liquid Ghosts: The southern coast of Ghan is said to be haunted by ghosts, but the entities are actually the intellects and memories of people from the distant past that were loaded into storage that uses smart-fluid housing. Some of the stored consciousnesses now wander the shoreline, often acting with a surprisingly destructive hostility. The only way to stop them permanently is to find the ancient facility where they're stored.

Festival: Omar has a yearly festival celebrating its founding. During this year's drunken revels, a group of thieves intends to use the celebration as a distraction so they can tunnel into

the shin-house that stores the miners' wealth—boldly using the miners' own tools to do the job. The criminals are slyly looking for help. If they succeed, Mayor Farond will certainly put a price on their heads.

THE WEIRD OF GHAN

Man of Glass: A man made of glass wanders the rolling hills of Ghan, looking for something.

The Face of Ghan: In a ruin along the coast, a crumbling stone wall bears a large, vaguely human synth face in relief. If a creature with telepathy attempts to communicate with the face, it sometimes replies.

The Court of the Sphere: At seemingly random intervals, six old men and women gather in a run-down stone tower looking out over the sea. When they sit at a round, red table together, a mechanized sphere appears above the tower and transmits secrets into their minds.

LEDON

Ledon, the city of sea merchants, is likely home to Ghan's wealthiest citizens. It has a population of 20,000 people, most of whom earn their living in a sea-related trade. The shipyards of Ledon are considered the best in the Steadfast, and the city is known for its finely made silken sails, accurate compasses and looking glasses, and virtually any other shipbuilding or sailing need.

The city's harbor is protected by a numenera device that transmits destructive signals through the water. An operator can use it to punch a hole in the hull of a single ship at the waterline, sinking the vessel. The device must recharge for one hour before it can be used again, but this is a well-guarded secret.

A man named **Garibacus** rules Ledon. He is old and not particularly wise, but he comes from a wealthy merchant family and has ties to many other influential clans and the merchant fleet itself.

The Sanctuary of the Eye: The **Angulan Knights** keep their headquarters in Ledon. Called the Sanctuary of the Eye, this cathedral-like building is where new members are beknighted in elaborate ceremonies. Tall watchtowers and intricate images in stained glass make the building quite distinctive.

The knights spend most of their time alone on long missions and arduous quests,

returning to the citadel on rare occasions.

Since most knights only find other knights to be suitable companions, the citadel is home to more than just official ceremonies—friendly reunions and romantic liaisons abound upon a knight's return.

A handful of aged knights, all with the title Grand Knight, live and work full time in the Sanctuary. Most knights don't live to be too old, however, so their numbers are few.

THE MERCHANT FLEET

Ghan's merchant fleet is controlled directly by the king, who at heart is more a mariner than a ruler. The fleet has more than 200 vessels that travel up and down the Steadfast coast, trading goods and collecting money. The ships range in size from small coasters and cogs to multimasted caravels and carracks. Two 700-ton hulks called the *Latecomer* and the *Iron Glove* are the flagships of the fleet.

Ghan ships suffer heavily from piracy, and many are plated in synth or light metals to ward off attacks. Some carry weaponry as well, and both flagships bear massive numenera armaments that keep them quite safe.

The sailors of the fleet are often called **Sternmen**, but despite the name, most of them are female. It's a fleet tradition to never leave dock with more men than women aboard. To do so is considered bad luck.

Garibacus has steward stats (page 158).

Angulan Knights, page 131

Sternmen have specialist stats (page 158). Sternmen have proficiency on all Strength (Athletics) and Wisdom (Perception) checks; as well as checks involving the use of navigator's tools and water vehicles.



DRAOLIS

Ruler: Council of Spheres

Population: 2,500,000

Capital: Qi



DRAOLIS

Draolis is the most populated land in the Steadfast and also one of the wealthiest. Its banner depicts six interwoven spheres, but most people refer to it as the Tiger Banner. Centuries ago, Draolis was home to a powerful queen who ruled the land with a firm hand. Her symbol was a roaring tiger, and her armies crushed all those around her. When her line died out, power in Draolis was seized by a council of wealthy plutocrats who didn't want another hereditary monarchy to take control. The Council of Spheres abolished the tiger symbology, but many people remember the tales from that time and long for that former glory.

Although the council lacks the flair of the tiger rulers of the past, Draolis has not abandoned its ways. The nation remains a military power, with might comparable to that of its chief rival, Navarene. In fact, the Order of Truth is the only thing that keeps these two countries from warring openly.

Qi

Qi is the largest city in the Steadfast. It is also the site of the Durkhal, home of the Order of Truth and the Amber Pope himself.

More than half a million people live in Qi, a city of spires and fantastically huge helium or hot air balloons and dirigibles. The common saying "Half of Qi is in the sky" is

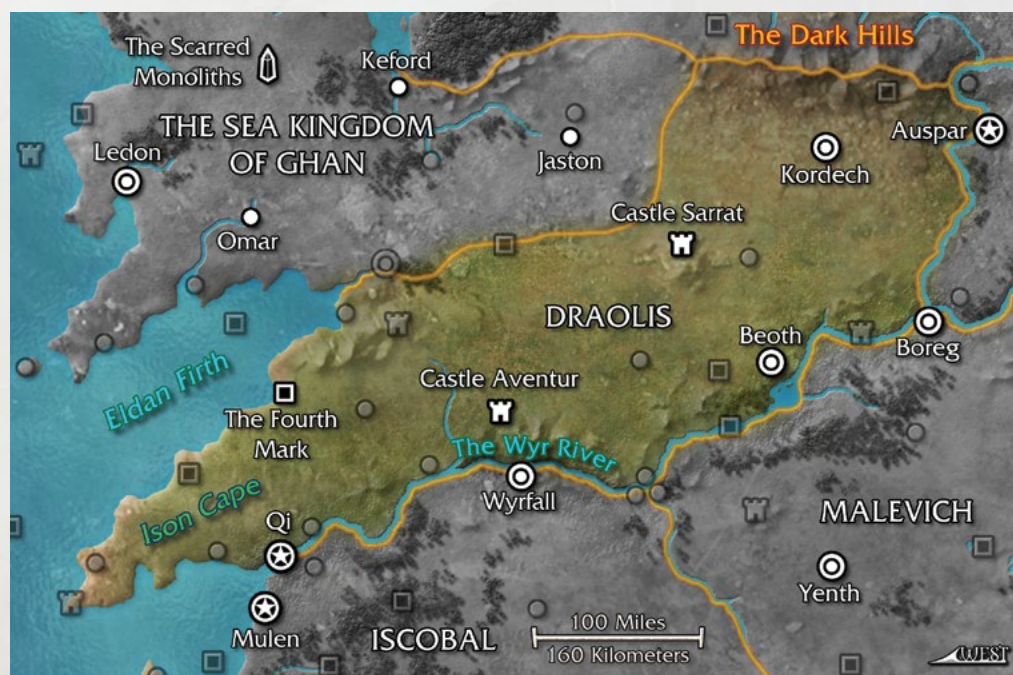
an exaggeration, but it feels accurate when you're there.

The Durkhal complex at the heart of Qi is almost a city unto itself—a vast sprawl of libraries, laboratories, warehouses, living quarters, and administrative buildings. At the center of the complex is the holy palace, serving as residence and office of the Amber Pope. More than a thousand people work and live within the Durkhal.

The people of Qi often travel by fashioned balloons and dirigibles, so there are multiple mooring platforms and high metal masts throughout the city. These aerial vehicles take passengers from place to place around Qi, to various outlying areas, and sometimes to ships moored well out into the harbor. They're rarely used for long-distance travel because—with a few exceptions that employ higher levels of ancient technology—the vehicles aren't capable of long journeys. Besides, most places outside of Qi don't offer the ability to moor or replenish what the airships need.

Qi has many large markets, in particular along the docks. The multilevel central market—well away from the water—is thought to offer one of the most expensive and elite shopping opportunities in the Steadfast. Here, all manner of goods can be bought and sold, with no luxury too exotic or fantastic for one of its shops.

A storyteller in Qi says he keeps a pet dimension curled up in his cloak, which he warns will swallow anyone who threatens him.





Many of Qi's centralmost sections lie on multiple levels, with decorative bridges and raised walkways connecting the higher levels, and bright glowglobes illuminating the lower so that each level is equally lit and beautiful. Trees and flowering plants grow in well-tended plots and pots even in the most crowded areas of the city, including the sections dozens of feet above the ground. Larger parks and walled gardens are common as well. Neighborhoods, particularly in the central city, are often surrounded by walls to enclose the homes and their communal gardens. This practice can create urban rivalries and is quite unwelcoming to outsiders.

The people of Qi believe themselves to be at the center of the Steadfast, and they consider the Steadfast to be the center of the world. This arrogance is so prevalent that it's practically an assumption, and it stirs hatred for Qi in the hearts of nonresidents.

Although the city is elitist, not everyone in Qi is wealthy. On the contrary, those dwelling in the outer sections are often quite poor. They must contend with the difficult living conditions and the high crime rates.

Zhev: The elite peacekeeping force called the **Zhev** is composed of flying cylindrical automatons created by the **Amber Pope** more than a hundred years ago. The Zhev keep mostly to the central districts because they don't have the numbers to patrol Qi in its entirety. The city has grown in the past hundred years, and while the rulers have the ability to repair existing Zhev, they lack the materials and skill to create new ones.

The Marish Clan: **Dietha Marish** is the head of a large, family-based criminal organization that runs much of the illegal activity in Qi. These transgressions consist mainly of robbery, smuggling, and buying and selling stolen goods, but murder by contract also falls within their purview. Dietha's family, called the Marish Clan by most people, is filled with some of the city's most dangerous individuals.

The Mayor: **Marvyr Rann** is the mayor of Qi, appointed by the Council of Spheres. He lives in a dirigible and never trods on the earth, believing that if he does, he will sicken and die. Rann is a frail and likely



Zhev, page 244

Amber Pope, page 128

Dietha Marish has diplomat stats (page 152).

Marvyr Rann has steward stats (page 158).

mentally unstable old man surrounded at all times by a cadre of nearly naked young men and women who attend to his every capricious whim. Fortunately for Qi, the city virtually runs itself, and the Amber Pope has the money, manpower, and influence to accomplish whatever needs to be done.

Naranial Horges has warlord stats (page 159).

Castle Sarrat has claimed the life of at least one member of the Horges family by growing in an inopportune time and place. Visitors would be wise to watch their step.

CASTLE SARRAT

Seventy years ago, the wealthy, powerful Horges family claimed an ancient structure as their own and made it their home. The Horges found most of the building empty, but it had devices that could create edible food for hundreds of people at a time, enough to support not just the family but their entire estate and large retinue of servants. Stranger still, once they moved into their new “castle,” it began to grow. Increasing mainly in height, Castle Sarrat is now almost 600 feet (180 m) high and still growing. Walls, floors, support structures, and more develop at a rapid pace—the castle does not grow slowly but in fits and

starts. In mere moments, a new chamber, hallway, or entire level appears.

Speculation is that the new portions of the castle are built through a process that converts the very air around the structure into metal, synth, and glass. However, no one knows how or why it’s happening.

Naranial Horges, the head of the family, is a renowned swordsman. He is a quiet, imperious man with greying mutton chops and a bejeweled eye patch.

THE FOURTH MARK

Overlooking the crashing waves of Eldan Firth, the Fourth Mark resembles a gigantic upright axe or hammer. The narrow, towerlike base rises up 500 feet (150 m) or more, and the crescent-shaped top is 100 feet (30 m) across.

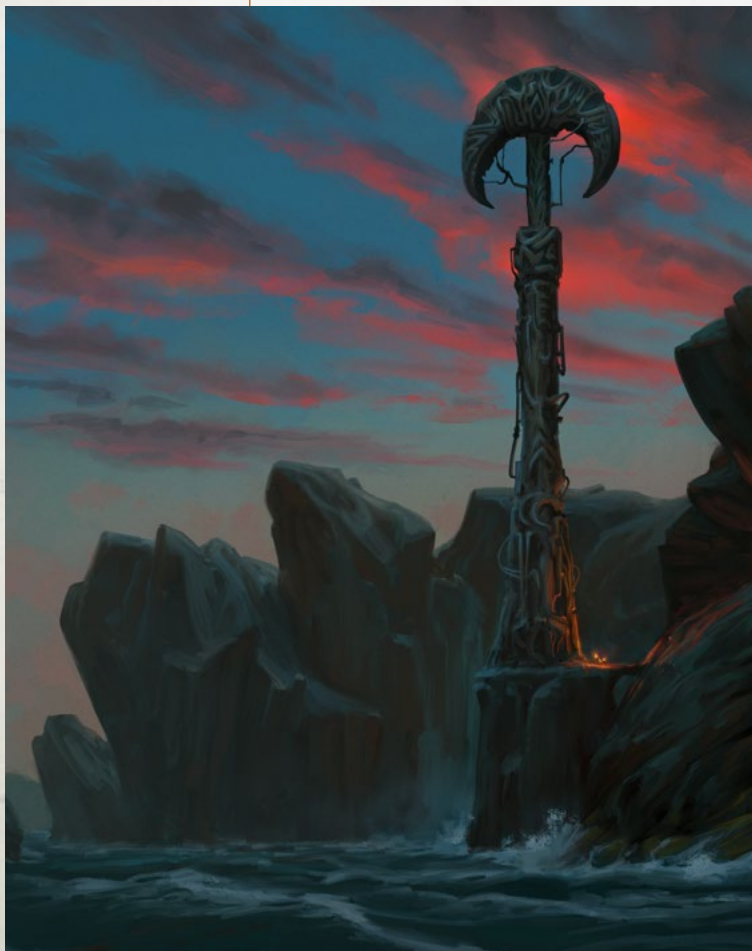
Entering the Fourth Mark is a simple matter. An open doorway at ground level provides access to a winding stair that leads up through the shaft to the top. However, there your progress ends, for no one has ever opened the smooth synth hatch that would provide entrance to the “head” of the tall structure. Dejected explorers have trudged back down and out after trying explosives, destructive rays, and all manner of cutting tools. None has so much as left a mark.

Guaral, a fisher in a nearby village, had this to say:

“That old eyesore gets its name from a legend my grandpapa told me. Folks from that time says there was, back then, more of ’em—four to be all exact. All of ’em standing watch over the firth there. Called ’em the four marks, like they’s marked some special spot or some such. They also says that some folks a-came from across the sea and entered each of ’em, one at a time, and when they’s done, each of them towers sunk into the sea. But when they got to the last one, somethin’ scared ’em outta there. They left it, and there it stands still today.”

BEOTH

Beoth was a holy city of self-proclaimed soothsayers and miracle workers, but their supposed prescience was not enough to warn them of the plague that struck a bit





DRAOLIS HEARSAY

Deadly Sisters: A pair of beautiful sisters named Gaera and Funae work as master thieves, one posing as a noblewoman and the other as her servant. They use this ruse to gain entrance to virtually any location. Not merely interested in wealth or the numenera, they murder their victims and remove their spinal columns. Why do they take the spines, and how can the sisters be stopped?

Insect Plague: A great many dark green insects have appeared in Kordech, and no one has seen their like before. These strange insects feed on metal, causing a lot of damage. The Aeon Priests believe they have a solution, but it requires a wide variety of rare parts for an elaborate machine whose radiation will drive off the pests.

Implanted Memories: **Retton Balen** was an explorer who fell into a vat of strange material in an ages-lost laboratory. His entire right arm is now a biomechanical construct, and

wormlike tendrils thread through his body, always growing and spreading. Retton also claims to have gained memories that are not his own, and he seeks help in understanding them—or perhaps help in finding a remedy for his unique affliction in the laboratory where he first fell victim.

THE WEIRD OF DRAOLIS

Mind Slaves: A wealthy merchant rides across the land in a massive wagon pulled by **margr** slaves, kept in line by a powerful mind-influencing device.

Brain Devourer: West of Beoth lies a huge, towerlike machine. If anyone comes close, it sprouts bladed tentacles that lop off heads and siphon out brains.

Strange Steed: A mighty warrior, her scarred face covered in a half-mask of gold, is sometimes seen traveling on a strange creature. She calls it a “horse” and claims to have unfrozen the beast from an ancient tomb.

more than a year ago. In that short time, a third of the city’s 14,000 people died or became ill enough to take to their beds.

Aeon Priests struggle to come up with a cure for the plague, so far to no avail. The people of Beoth have named it the “toothless bile” because one of the first symptoms is that the victim’s teeth begin to fall out. By that point, however, it’s far too late, and the victim is likely to die within a week.

Arch of Illness: Although they have no cure, the Aeon Priests in the city have fashioned a device they call the Arch of Illness, a cobbled, free-standing arch about 10 feet (3 m) across. It glows whenever someone with toothless bile passes through it. Newcomers routinely pass through the arch on their way in and out of the city, but some worried residents also use the arch to check their health every day.

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

Malegran, the ranking Aeon Priest in Beoth, focuses night and day on ending the plague. He is tall and relatively young, with an angular face. Aeon Priests were not common in Beoth before the coming of the illness, so he and his compatriots have taken up residence in what used to be the city’s great gathering hall. For a year now, the hall has been used as a hospital.

Sister Tevera is a priestess of the so-called “Old Ways,” also known as the cult of Nauz,

the Stargod. The Stargod is a deity revered by the people here for hundreds of years, ever since a falling star crashed in Beoth and people claimed they saw a gigantic, human-looking spirit rise from the crater. Now the temple of the Old Ways stands at the site of the holy crater.

When the mayor of the city died three months ago with no apparent successor, many looked to Sister Tevera to lead them. Although she is an excellent speaker, Tevera doesn’t have the experience to run Beoth. She also opposes the Aeon Priests at every turn, making their work more difficult.

Sister Tevera’s bodyguard and henchman **Baraxis** is an interesting sight. A metallic sheen covers his skin, with dull matte webs interlacing at the extremities. Faint cross-hatching can be seen even across his irises and pupils. The metal flesh has been a part of Baraxis since birth—it’s an organic feature of mysterious origin.

KORDECH

The stench of cattle flesh and cattle dung greets you long before you enter the tall stone wall that surrounds Kordech. As a traveler, you’d probably prefer to pass the city by, but the 7,000-person town is the last refuge for leagues on a road through a dangerous wilderness called the Dark Hills.

Kordech is filled with sales pens, breeding pens, and slaughterhouses for

Retton Balen has explorer stats (page 153).



Margr, page 197

Baraxis has warlord stats (page 159).

Malegran has Aeon Priest stats (page 150).

Sister Tevera has specialists stats (page 158). Sister Tevera has proficiency on all Charisma (Persuasion) checks.



Anatrea has warlord stats (page 159).

Thereni and Poulla have scholar stats (page 157). In addition, they have proficiency on all Intelligence (Arcana) checks related to understanding the numenera.

Broken hound, page 143

General Demiric has warlord stats (page 159). In addition, he has advantage on all actions when within 5 feet of two other military allies.

The Aulifex has arch nano stats (page 155).

shiul—massive creatures with four wide horns and valuable meat. The cattle see their beginning and end in Kordech, but in between they spend their lives grazing in tended herds in the surrounding lands (where they are preyed upon by **broken hounds** and other predators, as well as bandits). Within a 10-mile (16 km) radius around the city, no fewer than twenty-six defensible wooden palisades have been erected near or around small villages to protect the shiul herds at night.

These dangers also explain why the city possesses such a high, well-constructed wall that girds mostly crude wooden buildings, animal pens and corrals, and structures cobbled of found sheets of metal or synth, all connected by muddy, dung-filled streets.

The Tower of the Aulifex: At the center of this dirty, ramshackle cattle town rises a curious structure. A soaring metal walkway curves up toward the glowing entrance to what appears to be a metal tower hundreds of feet high. Strange winglike crests are positioned asymmetrically along the exterior. This is the Tower of the Aulifex.

The Aulifex is the ruler of Kordech. He claims no other name and refers to himself as a sorcerer. In truth, the tower is a relic of the prior worlds, and the Aulifex has mastered enough of its secrets that he commands

a great many powers, including healing grievous wounds, lashing out at enemies with fire, and observing faraway locales.

CASTLE AVENTUR

In the central part of the kingdom lies the unassuming castle of **Anatrea**, a noblewoman who has tracers of light running just beneath her skin in elaborate patterns. Despite her skill as a warrior, Anatrea has a fascination with the numenera and dreams of one day fusing herself entirely with a machine, ascending to a type of godhood, as she believes the people of past aeons once did. To this end, she hosts scholars and Nanos performing experiments to delve into numenera secrets. Her castle, Aventur, hides a network of secret underground laboratories and workshops for a variety of projects.

The Windriders: The two most successful scholar/technicians are **Thereni and Poulla**. They have mastered the process of creating self-propelled gliders called windriders—extremely fast, one-person flying vehicles that are challenging to ride and control.

The Draolis military already uses windriders as scouts, but **General Demiric** hopes to employ them in great numbers one day, attacking foes from above in waves. Thereni and Poulla don't have the means to produce windriders in such quantities; some of the parts and materials required are rare.

A windrider can be purchased, but demand is high, and the waiting list is long. (They used to take shins, but now take only relics, iron flesh, or a cache of valuable materials they can use to craft more windriders.) Anatrea and her personal guard ensure that no one attempts to take advantage of the inventors under her protection.



THAEMOR

One of the smaller and less prosperous kingdoms in the Steadfast, Thaemor is often overshadowed by its neighbors. In fact, the other kingdoms consider it something of a joke.

That wasn't always so. Bordered by two rivers and a mountain, Thaemor was once an unnamed but very much desired piece of land, part of a three-way war between Navarene, Draolis, and Malevich. Each power wished to lay claim to the fertile triangle.

In the midst of the struggle, one man took it upon himself to claim the place he later named Thaemor. Goldguard Landon was a fearsome warrior who knew everything about how to defend a region from the onslaught of multiple kingdoms but absolutely nothing about running a kingdom himself. Under Landon's rule, Thaemor's borders were always well protected and cared for, even from the mightiest foes, but the same could not be said for the people and places within.

After Landon's passing, his son Kaldon took hold of Thaemor and ran it (if you could call it such) much as his father had. He sired a number of children, but none of his heirs survived, and when he died, a man named **Holiva the First** took office in the Precipice, although no one can quite remember where Holiva came from or what skills qualified him to rule.



Today, the way in which other kingdoms look down on Thaemor is a source of pain and embarrassment for Holiva, for he believes that his kingdom could be a land of great power and opportunity if only others could see what he sees.

Unfortunately, what he sees is very little that is real or true. Although Thaemor is a region of buried riches, clear waters, and fertile lands that have not yet come to fruition, Holiva sees none of that. He doesn't see the intelligent, hardworking people or their potential to be great leaders, teachers, warriors, and scholars.

Instead, everything Holiva sees is viewed through the shadowy lens of his vizier, the Hand of Melch, and the Hand urges him toward only one thing: the restoration of the shadow herd.



THAEMOR

Ruler: Holiva the First

Population: 900,000

Capital: Auspar

A group of explorers recently discovered and activated a device that created a permanent passage called the Great Reach. It allows instantaneous travel from Thaemor to the faraway land of Corao, along the northeastern seaboard.

Holiva the First has aristocrat stats (page 151).



The “glimmers” that people in the Ninth World sometimes experience—strange, random glimpses of images or information that may come from the all-pervasive datasphere—seem to be somewhat more common in northern Thaemor.

A Nano named Gaera in Jyrek could build a wide variety of detonations (Arcana of the Ancients, page 62), but she died in an explosion in her lab. Her daughter sells the hundreds of detonations she left behind in a well-guarded shop.

“The shadow herd,” the Hand tells him, “is a group of dark, formless creatures, born of a wicked mind older than the kingdom itself. Free them, and it is they, they, who will help Thaemor become what it once was. They who will help the whole of the Steadfast—nay, the whole of the world kneel before Thaemor’s feet and crown your head with glory.”

Holiva believes what the Hand tells him. There’s only one problem: the hand that Holiva listens to is his own. The man spends his waking hours talking with his own body part in the form of a shadow puppet. He mostly stays awake through the night, when glowglobes provide the most clearly defined shadow puppet and thus when he believes he can hear the advice of his vizier most truly.

While Holiva pools all of his country’s resources toward the single purpose of reviving the shadow herd, the people of

the land work deftly and silently beneath his clouded gaze. After having successive rulers with little to no skill in leadership, the people of Thaemor have learned to become self-sufficient.

Of course, no one whispers that Holiva the First might have lost his sanity long ago—that would be treason. And no one whispers of the ancient time when the shadow herd thundered across all the lands tucked in the shade of the Black Riage—that would be superstition.

AUSPAR

Auspar, located on the Wyr River, is the capital of Thaemor. What the city lacks in population—only 20,000 of the kingdom’s inhabitants live within its borders—it makes up for in height. Some call Auspar the City of Needles, for everywhere its skies are marked with tall, thin structures: buildings, columns, banner poles, public works of art, and more. Residents stretch long, slender cables from their roofs to the highest edges of the Dark Hills, hoping to join the fray.

They’re not after any form of god, nor the sky and whatever might lie beyond it. It’s just that the residents of Auspar feel a deep kinship with their kingdom and believe that as everyone looks down on them, so too should they return the favor. On any given day, you’ll find residents climbing the needlelike structures, using ladders or antigravity belts or pneumatic devices, and finding or building perches from which they can literally look down on the kingdoms around them.

The Precipice is the tallest and thinnest building in Auspar. It begins as a rectangle large enough to encompass the leader’s personal home and ruling offices, and it narrows as it rises, becoming more and more useless as the structure grows thinner and thinner. Every year, Holiva pays someone to add another length to the top of the Precipice. These days, it’s dangerous work, and most who take the job know that it’s a suicide mission. Holiva doesn’t climb the Precipice (or any of the other needles of Auspar) himself and hasn’t for years.





THAEMOR HEARSAY

Sanctimonious Savors: A group of people calling themselves the Savors have started preaching in the streets of Jyrek. Dressed in deep purple and standing in a circle beneath the Eyren, they tell tales of deadly creatures growing inside the structure, creatures that will soon tear apart the egg and spill across the land. They promise that those who join the Savors will be redeemed, but they won't reveal how until you become a member of their order.

Pitcher Plants: Dotted along the eastern bank of the River Septim, a new species of plant has taken root. These pitcher plants grow leafy traps that are big enough to catch large birds, rodents, and fish. **Chi Brogs**, a scholar who studies dangerous plants, has been studying a new variety that he believes to be part of a plot to infiltrate Thaemor, but he can't discover any additional information on his own.

Wild Beasts: At night, residents of the small village of Aagar hear what sounds like a pack of wild animals or machines running and clanking through the streets. Those who dare to venture outside see nothing abnormal, but in the morning, there are usually signs of carnage. Two townspeople have

been killed so far, their bodies looking as though they were attacked by mechanical claws. The village has implemented a curfew, but the frightened residents are at a loss.

THE WEIRD OF THAEMOR

Up and Away: Every morning, shortly after dawn, a round blue orb can be seen rising from where the Wyr River comes down off the mountain. The orb doesn't seem to come out of the water, and no one has been able to capture it—or even verify that it's the same orb every day.

The Black Head: At the edge of the **Black Riage**, east of Jyrek, an object that resembles a head is carved out of the ebony mountain. It's nearly as tall as a man and features odd protrusions of different glasslike materials that light up in various patterns.

Man of the Mountain: In a crook of the Black Riage nearly 100 feet (30 m) up lives a man who has built a nest-like shelter. He never seems to come down from the mountain. Birds and other kinds of flying creatures bring him food and various objects. They especially like eyeballs and will not hesitate to attempt to take one from someone who's still using it.

JYREK

Designed and commissioned by Kaldon to keep his wife, eleven sons, and four daughters safe from any future wars so that his legacy might live on, Jyrek is as much a fortress as it is a city. Today, it houses around 30,000 people, but it was originally built to hold just sixteen. With its triple walls (one of redstone, one of limnelwood, and one of electrified synth), interconnected walkways between buildings, and guard towers at every corner of the city, Jyrek might be one of the best-protected places in the Steadfast.

And that doesn't take into consideration the city's most unusual defense mechanism: a floating, self-contained structure tethered in the center of Jyrek. This egg-shaped structure, called the Eyren, was also commissioned by Kaldon. He brought in as many numenera experts as he could find and had them design a structure that would support up to twenty people for two months, providing food, shelter, recycled air, and, once the tethers were cut, an escape route from whatever war might be raging on the ground. It took the experts more than ten years to build such a machine, and by the time it was finished, Kaldon's children

were teenagers disgruntled at being stuck inside a single city because of their father's paranoia. But in the end, he had his egg.

Jyrek turned out to be an expensive waste of time and money. Kaldon's heirs used the city as their personal playground, but it didn't protect them from anything. Although no wars were waged during their time there, another danger presented itself—the Eyren caught a virus from Kaldon's youngest daughter, Ampel. Believing this new thing to be an inherent part of a human's physiology, the Eyren duplicated the virus and spread it to the other children. Within six weeks, all of Kaldon's children were dead and his wife incapacitated. The Eyren was sealed off, and a law was made prohibiting anyone from entering the structure. The city gates were left open out of respect for the dead. Although Kaldon ruled for nearly twenty more years before his death, he never returned to Jyrek.

Today, the city has all but forgotten its original roles as protector and murderer of Kaldon's dreams of the future. Although the Eyren still sits tethered above the center of Jyrek, the residents barely notice it. It has become just another part of the history with which they live.

Chi Brogs has specialist stats (page 158).

Black Riage, page 75

Around the age of two, all children in the city of Stirc begin to have the same imaginary friend. Her name is Olpenda.



MALEVICH
 Ruler: King Yorvic
 (Regent Ellabon)
 Population: 1,200,000
 Capital: Thriest



MALEVICH

Known for bleak landscapes and people tested by hardship, Malevich's tale is one of war and would-be conquest. Yet after crushing defeats in decades past, its warlords are now quiet. Yorvic, the current king of Malevich, is no bloodthirsty despot, as was true in previous generations. He is, in fact, a three-year-old boy. His cousin Ellabon serves as regent and likely will continue in that role until young Yorvic passes through the ritual of second birth at age thirteen.

Numerous villages dot the landscape of Malevich. These farm communities are usually small and poor, little more than thatch-roofed huts gathered in defensive circles around a communal pen for the shaggy goats they tend. Mud-stained boots walk down rough roads infrequently—the folk of this dark land remain in their isolated villages if possible. They bar the doors at night and pray to vindictive yet seemingly indifferent gods.

Their fear is not misplaced. Malevich is threatened at all times by bands of abhumans and clans of bandits. The former roam in small unorganized groups, while the latter, under the command of the **Bandit**

King, Polele, are frighteningly unified and organized. Many of Polele's warriors are veterans of Malevich's past wars, aged men with few skills that don't involve blades and blood. Rumor has it that the bandit clans have offered to do mercenary work for foreign kings in other lands. Whether this is good or bad for Malevich—if it's true at all—is yet to be determined.

Malevich nobles ride in tall, armored chariots pulled by abhuman and human slaves. They own what little wealth the kingdom has, while the peasantry lives on the edge of starvation.

A fantastically huge rift known as the Voil Chasm serves as the country's southern border. This rent in the earth is 25 miles (40 km) wide in places, but it narrows as it descends. Throughout most of its western reaches, the chasm is about 1 mile (1.5 km) deep. However, it has never been fully explored, and although the deepest point yet reached is more than 10 miles (16 km) below the surface, the chasm is known to cut far deeper in places.

Some call the Voil Chasm by its older name, the Earthwound. Legends say that it was created when the inhabitants of the prior aeon waged war with invaders from another world. The invaders used a weapon of untold power, destroying multiple cities of significant size and influence in an

Ellabon has aristocrat stats (page 151).

Bandit King Polele has deadly warrior stats (page 151).

Known for bleak landscapes and people tested by hardship, Malevich's tale is one of war and would-be conquest.

instant. A few people speculate that these foes tried to destroy the entire planet by drilling deep into the world's core, like an assassin attempting to stab his victim in the heart. If true, the attempt obviously failed, but it suggests that the Voil Chasm might be deeper than most thought possible.

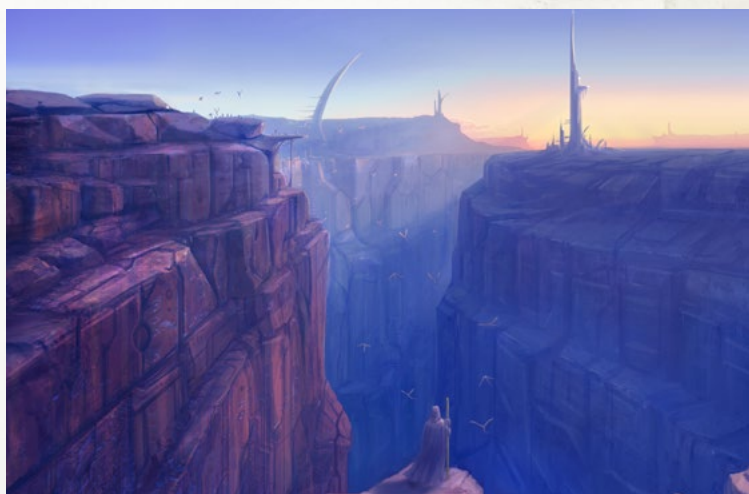
The chasm divides Malevich and the Pytharon Empire. Even though both lands have dreamed of conquest, the gulf between them has prevented them from coming into direct conflict.

STIRTHAL

The city of Stirthal was built atop the northern edge of the Voil Chasm. About 100,000 people live here, making it one of the largest cities in the Steadfast. Much of it stretches across the flat expanse at the top of the cliff, but some of the city extends down the side. Ancient structures protrude out of the chasm wall. Some are inhabited by the residents of Stirthal. Others are wide metal pipes and platforms that support dwellings and businesses of more recent construction. The most dramatic feature is a street that stretches out from the chasm wall about a thousand paces and then comes to an abrupt end. Other cliffside streets run parallel with the wall, connecting the far-jutting perpendicular extensions. The cliff dwellings are the most prized structures in Stirthal, and thus are the homes and businesses of the wealthy and elite, of which the city has more than its share.

The ruler of Stirthal is a woman who takes the title of Governor. Her name is **Marrizek** and she claims to rule over not just Stirthal, but the entirety of the Voil Chasm, in the name of King Yorvic. Quick to action (and to anger), Marrizek is an older woman, bold, brash, and charismatic. Her loyal city guards are called the **Thyrn**. In their gold and black armor, each member of the well-trained force wields two swords, one inscribed with the word "JUSTICE" and the other with "MERCY." The Thyrn are harsh, violent, and oppressive, and a common joke in Stirthal is that they use the first blade incorrectly and the second rarely, if ever.

The current regent of Malevich, Ellabon, lives in Stirthal, despite the fact that the



traditional capital is Thriest. The boy-king dwells there with her.

A creature named **Quanon** dwells in the lower portions of Stirthal. Roughly humanoid, he has undergone so many machine enhancements and biomechanical replacements that it's hard to imagine what he looked like originally—or if he even started out human. Quanon might be one of the Ninth World's foremost experts on energy sources and power generation. His workshop holds a battery or power pack for any device, and his experiments on transmitting power wirelessly (more accurately, tapping into a field of "free power" he discovered that seems to permeate the Ninth World) mean that he can almost certainly recharge any depowered or expended device brought to him. His prices, however, are steep. Even the simplest cell for the least significant device is likely 100 shins or more. Batteries that are rare or more potent might be far more, stretching to sums many princes and kings could not easily afford. Quanon accepts barter from those who can't pay, as he loves to collect intriguing devices for his experiments.

NEVERLOST

Neverlost is a large castle and surrounding town that stands above the Jabbunaran Fields at the heart of the kingdom. The town has fewer than a thousand farmers and herders, and the castle is the hereditary home of **Duke Theomal** and his clan. In times of great need, thousands of people

Quanon has arch nano stats (page 155).

Governor Marrizek has steward stats (page 158).

Thyrn have defender stats (page 152).

Duke Theomal has diplomat stats (page 152).

The bodies of a dead philethis and an equally deceased ravage bear, fused together, were discovered east of Neverlost not long ago.



Philethis, page 216

Ravage bear, page 227

Counselor Rashik has specialist stats (page 158).

have taken shelter behind the castle walls for weeks or months, and true to its name, the castle has never fallen. The duke's family keeps the offer of sanctuary open, although it always carries an unspoken price. Each time Neverlost is used as a refuge, the family grows more powerful and wealthy.

THRIEST

Thriest lies on the River Septim. It's the official capital of Malevich, but the royal palace here sits empty because the regent, Ellabon, rules from Stirthal, the child-king at her side. Crumbling buildings of grey stone line the streets of Thriest, and, like the palace, many are abandoned. However, the river market quarter still thrives, and barges laden with trade goods fill the River Septim. A total of 25,000 people dwell in Thriest, about half the number of the former population.

Lady Vount has warlord stats (page 159). In addition, she wields a relic called the Despoiler.



Ellabon directly rules the city as well as the kingdom at large, but her advisor, **Counselor Rashik**, tends to matters that involve only Thriest. A good-natured fellow, Rashik merely smiles his grandfatherly smile when someone says that he is the regent of the regent. A well-educated man, he would like to see Thriest become a center of learning—something the people of Malevich have never really had. For the moment, however, this goal is but a dream as his city struggles to keep from collapsing and the folk of the regions around Thriest fight just to survive.

BOREG

Boreg sits on the southern banks of the mighty Wyr. Fishers and merchants who use the river make up a significant portion of the city's 12,000 people.

Overlooking both the city and the river, high atop the Red Bluffs, is Castle Dval, home of **Lady Vount**. This noble is frequently known as the Queen of the River Pirates, or sometimes the Robber Baroness. She wields her scepter, an infamous numenera relic known as the Despoiler, which she uses to fuse the bodies of men with dangerous river fish to craft and command an army that blocks travel down the Wyr for those who don't pay her exorbitant tolls. The council in Draolis threatens to take action against Lady Vount if the regent of Malevich does not stop her depredations, but so far no one on either side of the Wyr has moved against her.

South of Boreg stands an ancient edifice called the Wall of Erenyn. This curved metal wall is 3 feet (1 m) thick, reaches a height of 15 feet (5 m), and stretches more than 100 feet (30 m) in length. It shimmers with a cascade of colors and shapes. Occasionally, the wall shows comprehensible imagery, and many believe that it foretells the future, prophesies, or conveys vital secrets to those who need to know. Spending too long in the vicinity of the wall can make people ill, sometimes to the point of death, so visits are usually short.

THE DESPOILER*Relic, legendary (requires attunement)*

This sword-like blade (any sword) has a few buttons and switches on the hilt. It seems ordinary in use, until activated as your action, at which point all creatures within a 50-foot sphere centered on the Despoiler that you designate must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution save. On a failure, they are transformed over the course of one minute (during which time they are stunned; a stunned creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the stunned condition on itself on three successes.). At the end of this period, victims still stunned lose that condition but become amphibious **gorjans** that faithfully serve you.

The Despoiler has a depletion of 1 in 1d20.

YENTH

Yenth has a population of 14,000, and it's a trade city because it sits on a unique border. Yenth is built around a numenera complex from aeons past that houses a large extradimensional portal. Explorers and scholars reactivated the portal thirteen years ago and discovered a parallel universe on the other side—a world very different from the Ninth World, yet similar in certain ways. Weird landscapes and odd flora and fauna fill the land on the other side of the gate, but humans can survive there. In fact, it's home to small cloisters of humans—or creatures so akin to humans that they're mostly

indistinguishable. However, their motivations and outlook are alien; even when the difficult language barriers are overcome, it's hard for Ninth Worlders to truly understand them. Still, the people of Yenth have established trade with the ultraterrestrials and call their world "New Yenth." The ultraterrestrials desire odd things—plants, animals, and substances fairly common in the Ninth World. In trade, they offer unique devices. Most of these items hold little value other than as oddities.

The portal to New Yenth is difficult and complicated to use, and as far as anyone understands, it can be opened only from this side. But some people still fear that ultraterrestrials have infiltrated Yenth, posing as Ninth World humans for a mysterious purpose. Others believe that the ultraterrestrials are the descendants of long-lost travelers and explorers from Earth who now just want to come home.

Whether or not the rumors of large-scale infiltration are true, at least one person from the other side hides amid the humans of Yenth. The ultraterrestrial Nariiv secretly dwells in the city, posing as the owner of a leatherworking shop. He is a refugee from the parallel universe, hunted by his own kind for crimes committed (or, as he claims, allegedly committed) in his own world. **Nariiv** is a skilled warrior and a master of various weapons and combat styles, many never before seen in the Ninth World.

Gorjans have defender stats (page 152). In addition, they can breathe air and water.

Nariiv has deadly warrior stats (page 151).

Shiul, page 148

**MALEVICH HEARSAY**

Disgruntled Warrior: An aging warlord named Gargarth seeks to instigate a new conflict that will restore his land to its former glory by spreading tales of Navarene invasion. He has gained a small but growing following of warmongers who are little more than a rowdy rabble that causes trouble.

Glowing Pyramid: At night, atop a remote outcropping of rock, you can see a glowing pyramid that's five times the height of a man but only a third as wide. During the day, the pyramid cannot be found. Rumor says it's a powerful energy source that will grant great strength and vitality to anyone who touches it.

Stolen Grain: A village called Brusch had a good harvest this year, but all the grain disappeared from the granary. A young eyewitness said that a hole opened in the air, drew all the grain into it, and then disappeared again.

The people of Brusch probably won't survive the winter without that grain.

THE WEIRD OF MALEVICH

The Cloud Machine: A cart pulled by a pair of **shiul**, driven by two very short, very old men, holds a cumbersome device. The machine chugs and spews steam and smoke that appears to affect the weather.

Frozen in Crystal: Nestled in the mountains to the east is a massive shard of crystal, 30 feet (9 m) high and 12 feet (4 m) across. A woman in a strange dress is embedded in its center.

The Fungal Pool: An isolated pond near the center of the land is the home of a huge fungal organism. It creates pseudopods that grab prey and draw them in to be devoured.



ISCOBAL

Ruler: King Noren
tiKalloban

Population: 1,000,000

Capital: Mulen



ISCOBAL

Calm and serene, you will find no place more lovely than the land of Iscobal, jewel of the Steadfast, I can assure you of that. The goodly king of Iscobal dwells in Mulen, a great coastal city whose glass towers glimmer equally in the light of both sun and moon. Beyond its walls, gentle farmers tend crops of golden wheat. The rivers teem with fish and the woods with game. Noble knights watch over the people of fair Iscobal, whose roads are safe and every village and town happy and content. Blessed by all the gods unseen, Iscobal is a paradise on Earth.

—The Journals of Sir Fabithan of Mulen (when this passage was written, seventy-five years ago, it may have been somewhat true)

Iscobal is a land tearing itself apart from within. Internal politics keep the nation focused on itself rather than on the dangers of the expansionist kingdoms at its borders. The palace intrigues involve the royal family, led by **King Noren tiKalloban**. Noren's father, Rabbar tiKalloban, seized the throne about forty years ago from Queen Whenith Sarrumere, whom most believed unfit to rule. The deposed queen died in exile in the land of Ancuan. Now, her sons Bren and Kor Sarrumere want the land back in the

name of their house. To this end, they work against the king, both openly and in secret.

Just a year ago, an attempt on King Noren's life left him with one eye and one arm. Only the healing power of the kingdom's numenera stockpile saved his life. No proof could link the assassination attempt to the Sarrumere brothers, but few in the kingdom have any doubts on the matter. **Queen Thera** has taken it upon herself to organize the kingdom's secretive **Masked Legion** to combat the Sarrumere family in the shadows even as her husband opposes them in court.

During her strange reign, Queen Whenith Sarrumere had become convinced that by using a variety of numenera secrets, she could harness the power of dreams to control the minds of all who might oppose her, inside and outside her borders. Eventually, she gave up on this scheme, only because she began to believe that within dreams lay an entirely different realm that she could rule instead of the corporeal land of Iscobal. With each capricious and bizarre idea she had about sleep or dreams, she issued rewards to explorers who scoured the Ninth World for devices and knowledge related to those topics. She commanded her scholars and Nanos to experiment with the sciences they understood to make her dreams—literally—into reality.

Queen Thera has diplomat stats (page 152).

The typical Masked Legion member has guard stats. In addition, they have advantage on all attacks.

King Noren tiKalloban has deadly warrior stats (page 151). However, he has disadvantage on all attacks and saves.

The people of Iscobal are farmers and fishers. The former raise wheat, beans, and cotton, as well as tend orchards of orange billam fruit. The latter use small round boats called skitters to travel up and down the coast and down the mighty Wyr River.

Iscobal is also known for its abundant game. Hunters provide a great deal of fowl and venison to feed the population.

MULEN

Mulen serves as the capital of Iscobal. It has a population of slightly less than 100,000, and its towers of glass looking out over the western sea are the subject of song and poem. The greatest structure amid all the remarkable buildings is the royal palace, Vitri House. Around it stretches a fantastic park the size of a small city, tended by more than a hundred gardeners.

Mulen's Grand Theater stands as a testament to the city's commitment to art and culture in a world that often ignores both in the name of struggle and survival. Today, however, courtly intrigues make attendance a risky proposition for many nobles allied with one faction or another, as the theater has become a favored place for covert meetings, duplicitous dealings, and assassinations.

Perhaps appropriately, Mulen's beautiful streets and towers conceal a vast undercity. Catacombs, secret passages, tombs, and sewers form a network of tunnels and subterranean chambers. This underground world is the home of thieves, beggars, escaped slaves, and inhuman creatures.

The Cold Grasp: Both above and below the ground, Mulen hides more than a few dark secrets. The **Cold Grasp**, perhaps the most infamous guild of assassins and thieves in the Steadfast, uses the city as its headquarters. The leader of the Cold Grasp, a woman named Hedra, is known for a strange affinity for, and mastery of, serpents. Her enemies or targets might find themselves sleeping in a bed of deadly crux vipers or discover a tiny, extraordinarily lethal red asp hidden in their soup.

The secret police force known as the Masked Legion operates in the shadows, opposing the Sarrumere family's covert



attempts to undermine the royal family's control of Iscobal. In this capacity, they also run afoul of the Cold Grasp and other sinister elements of the city.

DYNAFEL

Dynafel is known for its unique spun cotton cloth (named after the city) as well as other textiles, fabrics, and couture. Nearly 60,000 people live in the walled city, which has relatively simple wooden structures and narrow streets.

The mayor, **Harcorth Munn**, is a rotund man who never goes anywhere without his entourage and his companion **thuman**. Well liked and well known, the mayor is no stranger to Dynafel's bars, gambling dens, and brothels.

The Dreaming Reliquary: The city of Dynafel is home to the Dreaming Reliquary, where Aeon Priests keep—and continue to research—the remnants of the prior queen's obsession with dreams. Devices that implant dreams, transmit dreams, and spy upon dreams are on hand along with stranger things, even if Queen Whenith's scholars were never able to fulfill her desires of using dreams to control reality or tap into other realities altogether.

Chief among the experts at the Dreaming Reliquary is an Aeon Priest named **Narla Deshu**. She tells anyone who cares to ask that while the queen's goals were childish, her support of numenera research and experimentation is greatly missed. Narla's own work has become political in nature, and many claim that its continued existence

Harcorth Munn has aristocrat stats (page 151).



Thuman, page 238

A typical member of the Cold Grasp shadow knight stats (page 157).

Narla Deshu has Aeon Priest stats (page 150). In addition, she has proficiency on all checks related to numenera devices involving sleep or dreaming.



TELEPATHIC EYE

Relic, very rare (requires attunement)

This disc is worn adhered to your forehead. As your action, you telepathically communicate with one willing creature you can see or sense within 120 feet. Alternatively, as your action, you can observe and overhear at a specified location within a mile for one minute. Finally, you can attempt to find a specific individual within 10 miles. The creature can make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw, avoiding your attention if it succeeds. Otherwise, you learn of the target's exact location for the next minute.

A telepathic eye has a depletion of 1 in 1d20, checked any time you attempt to observe at a specified location or find a specific individual.

is a show of support for House Sarromere. Narla, however, has no allegiances other than her devotion to the Order of Truth; she simply wants the government of Iscobal to continue funding her research.



*Yellow swarm,
page 242*

Of late, the city of Dynafel has suffered attacks by clouds of the **yellow swarm**. The city's stone wall cannot protect against the swarms, and the city guard has little appropriate weaponry to combat the menace.

Jallacor has Aeon Priest stats (page 150). In addition, she has a telepathic eye relic.

WYRFALL

Wyrfall lies along the Wyr River. This multitiered city is built amid a series of waterfalls where the Wyr cascades through

Aeres Canyon. The people of Iscobal associate the river with the divine water spirits, and Wyrfall is the central focus of this religion. It's a holy locale where pilgrims gather to have pains healed and futures foretold, for the Wyr spirits flow backward in time, bringing knowledge and life-giving energies.

The Order of Truth has a particular disdain for Wyrfall and the superstition-based beliefs of its people. There are no Aeon Priests in the city, and the residents are content with that.

The Temple of the Unseen rises amid the waterfalls and rocky outcroppings of the city. Presided over by **Jallacor**, a priestess and seer, the temple provides a home for many self-proclaimed oracles and prophets. Jallacor is an extremely tall, beautiful woman who may or may not be able to see the future and speak with river spirits, but she certainly commands a number of preternatural powers.

RACHAR

The city of Rachar grows in a ruin from a prior age, full of buildings of stone, steel, and glass that still stand. Some of the structures have proven too difficult to use, however. Some have no easy means of entry or egress. Others are unstable and threaten to collapse. A few house mysterious and sometimes dangerous machines that are best avoided. If necessary, the unused buildings are barricaded to keep people out.





ISCOBAL HEARSAY

Submerged Fugitive: An aeons-old automaton has arisen from a deep seaside pool. Metal limbs carry it along the sandy coastline while its glass head constantly looks around. The machine acts this way because it's being pursued. When it arose, so too did a number of flying spheres, each 15 inches (38 cm) across, bearing holographic faces and trailing tendrils. Both hunter and hunted would welcome assistance, but which to help, and why?

Family Feud: House Sarromore's attempts to undermine the royal family are growing more brazen. Word in Mulen is that they offer payment in cyphers and oddities to anyone who works for them on missions of spying and sabotage.

Hunters and Prey: A creature haunts the wooded lands between Rachar and Wyrfall, preying on hunters and trappers. Only those carrying freshly killed animals are attacked. No other information is known, but local leaders offer a reward for ending the beast's reign of terror.

THE WEIRD OF ISCOBAL

The Gelatinous Pavilion: In Rachar, a large plaza is covered by a low canopy of ever-shifting colored gel.

Metal Corpses: At one point along the Wyr River, what appear to be the dead bodies of eight imposing metal humanoids lie on the bank.

Ghostly Tune: Along the road into Dynafel from the south, strange, melodious music can be heard, even though no source is apparent.

Living amid machines and structures of the past, the city is no stranger to the weird. Talking statues, moving walls and streets, sudden energy fields that block doorways—Rachar is always filled with the unexpected.

A floating structure of metal and synth hovers high above the city. It may have been a vehicle once, but no one has discovered how to make it move. The city watch uses the structure as an observation platform to monitor Rachar and the surrounding lands for trouble. Reaching the platform usually involves using a gravity-manipulating mutant named Baurn.

One of King Noren's most trusted friends rules Rachar. **Terrhvyss** is a man with a clawlike metal hand and an artificial eye, and he often hides these features as if embarrassed of them. A wise and capable leader, Terrhvyss covertly hoards the numenera in a vault in his own estate. The few people who know his secret believe that he stockpiles the devices because he loathes the relics of the past and wants to protect the world from the dangers they represent. However, the truth is that he gathers the objects to further rebuild his own body.

GTHARREN

An old man named **Phiraster** dwells in the valley of Gtharren. He watches over a massive crystal that stands 50 feet (15 m) tall and 20 feet (6 m) across and gives the valley its name. The Gtharren Crystal is an artificial construct with intriguing properties. People come to the valley to break off shards and use the power within, but Phiraster turns away far more visitors than he welcomes.

Some call Phiraster a wizard or a demon, but he is a learned Nano with great power. A few think him mentally ill, and that might be true. If those entering the hidden valley cannot answer his questions to his satisfaction, he uses his special abilities and relic to drive them off. Sometimes the questions are personal inquiries about the visitor's intentions. Sometimes they are riddles or koans. Occasionally, the old man doesn't ask questions but instead bids seekers to perform tasks for him.

The point of their efforts is to attain a **shard of the Gtharren Crystal**. In aeons long past, millions of intelligent beings placed their memories and personalities in the crystal for long-term storage. Today, a single shard of the crystal holds hundreds of these beings. Although the memories cannot be directly accessed by any known means, the power within the crystal lattice can be used to interface with and control other devices, even those that seem to be depowered or whose purposes are unknown.

Terrhvyss has deadly warrior stats (page 151).

Phiraster has nano exemplar stats (page 156).



Gtharren Crystal Shard

Relic, very rare

This crystal shard, when touched to any relic or similar device, grants you full understanding of and the ability to use that device.

A shard has a depletion of automatic.



THE PYTHARON EMPIRE

Ruler: Challadien III
Population: 2,000,000
Capital: Rarmon



THE PYTHARON EMPIRE

Possibly the oldest of the Steadfast kingdoms, the Pytharon Empire once commanded most of the southern region, including Milave, Iscobal, and Ancuan. Although the empire collapsed almost a hundred years ago, it regained its footing and began to prosper under the previous empress, Challadien II. She consolidated old holdings into Imperial rule again under the auspices of protection.

Now the new, relatively young empress, Challadien III, hopes to extend her aunt's successful reign. Most believe she has her eyes on lands that once were part of the empire, in particular Milave and Iscobal, and perhaps seeks to spread her influence over lands to the south.

The Pytharons are well aware that the regions of Matheunis to the south are far more settled than they once were. These free realms, including the powerful city-state of Nihliesh, feel the gaze of the empire upon them. Pytharon nobles already send their troops down there to raid for slaves.

Pytharon is known for gently rolling fields of wheat, beans, and corn. Its fertile lands were once a great part of its success and could be again, for its ample "breadbasket" has fueled great armies.

My dear and loyal subjects,

Your beloved Empress, Challadien II, Lady of the Southern Reach, and Queen of the Riage, wishes you to know that the days of foul banditry and lawlessness that have plagued these lands have come to an end. The peace-loving forces of the invincible grand Imperial armies, under my direct command, shall restore this realm once again to a land of prosperity and peace. You and your families shall be safe under their banner. Your children are like unto my own, and my own desire is for their happiness and good health. The integrity of your lands, your homes, and all of your belongings shall be secured under our banner. Those who stand in the way of this generous and beneficent gift of safety, however, are naught but robbers and undesirables, and shall meet our swift judgment.

RARMON

The empire's capital is the great city of Rarmon, home to about 80,000 people. This old settlement of marble, stone, and glass once fell into a state of decay but now is being restored to its former grandeur. Everywhere, scaffolds cover important buildings, while workers restore crumbling facades.

The Sunken Palace: At the heart of Rarmon is the Sunken Palace, the ancient home of the Empress. This structure is unique because the entire thing is a

A tree in Rarmon records what happens near it and intermittently replays holograms of recent events, with some details changed.

numenera device. Spherical in shape, it is half immersed in the ground so that it appears to be a dome of metal and synth. The palace can rotate in any direction, however, and has its own gravity. Thus, the sphere can be rotated so that the entrance is concealed below the surface and the floors within are perpendicular to the ground outside, with no discomfort to anyone within.

The Grand Orrery: Within Rarmon is a large metal orrery that shows the configuration of the sun, the Earth, and the other six planets. It turns in accordance with the actual movement of these spheres.

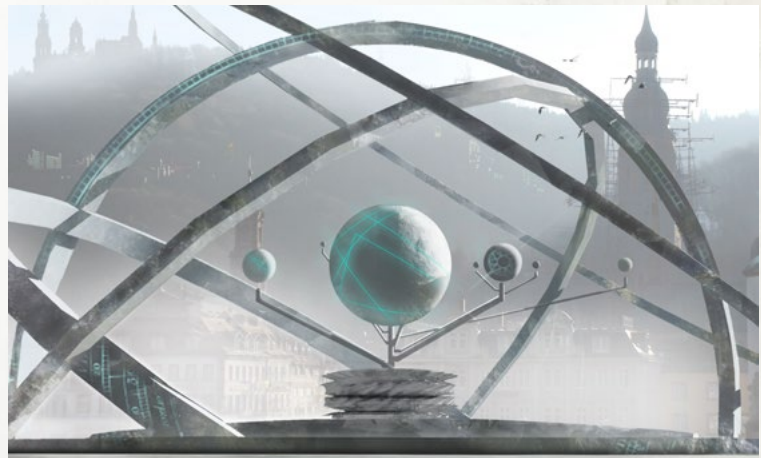
The man in charge of maintaining the orrery is a diminutive fellow named **Garrot** who stands less than 3 feet (1 m) tall. Garrot is an engineer and mechanic of great skill. By activating the complex mechanisms within the base, he can raise the orrery high above the level of the city so it commands attention in the immediate area.

The central sphere of the orrery, the “sun,” is an electromagnet of immense power. Garrot uses this device as a defensive weapon on behalf of Rarmon, directing invisible beams of sun-hot fire at anyone or anything he desires.

JARGOLAMIS AND LUIGOLAMIS

The so-called Twinned Cities of Jargolamis and Luigolamis were once so interconnected that they were considered a single entity. With a combined population of 60,000 people, the Twins have long been seen as a safe place to live, with easy access to goods and services.

The Twins are punctuated by matching mirrored towers, each of which reflects the other city. Walk into Jargolamis, make your way to the Jargo Tower, and you’ll discover that in every pane of glass, the bustling city of Luigolamis is reflected back at you. Stand before the Luigo Tower in the other city, and watch the intricacies of Jargolamis happening before your eyes. At the top of each tower is a creature sculpted in an off-white material that casts an eerie glow in the night. The Jargo Tower has a terror bird, while the Luigo Tower is topped with a slicer beetle.



The two cities are connected by a large, elevated skyway tube almost 2 miles (3 km) long called the Umbil. Created from a combination of stronglass, ivy tangles, and various metals, the Umbil runs between the two towers. Once, it provided safe passage between the cities, with a motorized walkway and jarlers—abhuman slaves that pulled long carts full of people and supplies. Small markets and eateries sprang up along the way, and the Umbil became one of the most well-traveled routes in the Steadfast.

When the motorized walkway stopped working one day, the rulers of Jargolamis and Luigolamis—siblings **Margo the Wember** and **Paras Gulosi**, respectively—announced that they would have it up and running again in a matter of days. But the siblings fought over the best way to solve the problem, as they often did, and the walkway remained broken. Temporary fixes were put into place by those who had the power and knowledge, but nothing lasted. As the years stretched on and the walkway was not fixed, the Umbil fell into disrepair and disuse.

Now the tube has become a place for dark dwellers, thieves, and worse. Although the Umbil remains the shortest passage between the Twins, it’s also the route most likely to get you killed. The abhuman slaves have regained their freedom, the markets sell far darker wares than the foodstuffs of old, and dangerous creatures skulk around every bend. Trade and travel between the two cities have become sparse and strained, as has the relationship between the sibling rulers.

Still, new light dawns—a constructor named **Limech** recently moved into

Garrot has specialist stats (page 158).

Margo the Wember and Paras Gulosi have aristocrat stats (page 151).

Recently, the leaders of the Twins issued a statement saying they are looking for mercenaries willing to help clean out the Umbil. Pay can come in the form of shins, oddities, or even property in one of the cities.

Limech has specialist stats (page 158).



Limech's mechanized creatures have type three basic automaton stats (Arcana of the Ancients, page 246).

Lord Myallatur has deadly warrior stats (page 151).

A typical Mahal Shard has legionary stats (page 154).

Brehm, page 148



Sathosh, page 232

Jargolamis. He, along with a small passel of **mechanized creatures**, is building a second connection between the Twins, an open-air skyway that runs below the Umbil. Only about a quarter of it has been completed so far.

FAR BROHN

The trading city of Far Brohn lies near the northern edge of the cold desert of Matheunis. Tall stone walls help to protect it from the frigid winds of the south, but their real purpose is to keep out the bandits, abhuman raiders, and other terrible threats that emerge from the desert. Chief among these dangers are the mind-screaming hordes of **sathosh**, which frequently attack trading caravans on the way to and from Nihliesh.

The merchant lords of Far Brohn are always looking for help against these raids.

The city itself is secure. Its walls are laced with numenera devices that affect the minds of those who try to assault them, using sonic vibrations to cause pain and confusion.

RATHSCOR FORTRESS

Guarding the southern border of the Pytharon Empire is the great fortress of Rathscor. **Lord Myallatur** commands the fort and its defenses. His soldiers, the **Mahal Shards**, are infamous for their prowess and might—particularly their speed. The Shards include cavalry, riders of reptilian coursers called **brehm**.



PYTHARON EMPIRE HEARSAY

Far Afield: A rusted-out hulk of an ancient device has sat in the middle of Reynald Denny's fields without incident since long before he tilled the soil. Recently, the device has started shooting rubbery orbs of gel into the fields at odd intervals. The orbs are covered with tiny spines that break off in the skin when touched. Reynald fell sick after attempting to move one of the orbs, and many of his livestock died after touching the devices. His wife seeks help with removing the orbs from the field and incapacitating the machine.

The Glowing Roads: A number of attacks have occurred along the open roads leading to Rarmon. Each account is nearly identical: travelers swear they were attacked by giant four-legged creatures with glowing purple eyes and pincers for mouths. One survivor has a wound along the inside of his leg to show for his trouble. The scar glows with a magenta hue.

THE WEIRD OF THE PYTHARON EMPIRE

Sky Writing: On particularly cloudy days, those who stand in Rarmon and look up at just the right time can see the Truth

words "We Will Help You" written across the clouds, along with a series of unknown symbols. The writing is neon orange and very uniform. It lasts anywhere from a few seconds to a minute.

The Voices of the World: Outside of Jargolamis is a stone that stands nearly 10 feet (3 m) high, shaped like an inverted triangle. The stone is riddled with holes, and if you put your ear to any of them, you can hear what sounds like conversation—the larger the hole, the louder the voices. Each hole has a different discussion, and each time you listen at the same hole, you hear different people talking. Most of the time, the language is not one that you know.

The Dog in the Machine: Half buried in the rubble of a ruined city is a box. From some angles, the box seems to contain a large canine, suspended in midair. From others, the box looks empty—you can see right through it to the other side—but you can hear the sounds of snarling and howling. If you were to look down on the box from above, you'd see a top panel fitted with a series of sliders and buttons.



MILAVE

From Nomilla Eron, Milavian noble:

Once Milave was a region of the Pytharon Empire, when its red banners flew from every tower in the South. Now that name is given to a loose confederation of small noble states and even a few so-called republics. The latter, of course, are backwater counties too wretched for any proper noble family to desire position, where the merchant classes give the peasantry fool-headed ideas of ruling themselves. The only thing that truly binds Milave together is fear of invasion by the empire. Milavians have few similarities, but a memory of the hard-won independence from Pytharon is one. Ostensibly, Milave is ruled by a council of representatives of disparate governments, clans, and factions who meet in the city of Orrila.

The nation will not last as a cohesive whole for long. The ruling council does little but bicker over petty matters while the nearby empire once again grows in military might. If war does come, Milave's loose union is likely to collapse, each state fighting for itself and no other—and thus we are all doomed.

One possible savior, however, is a noble warlord named Tarvesh. This charismatic young leader has the support of many Milavians, and his personal fighting force includes three terrifying numenera war machines, the likes of which have not been

seen before in the region. I suspect that Tarvesh has clandestine support from the Amber Papacy, which hopes that he can unite Milave and keep the peace in the southern end of the Steadfast. Indeed, many hopes rest with that one man. We shall see if his broad shoulders can bear the burden.

Most people of Milave are farmers who produce a variety of foodstuffs as well as an herb called gianche, or sometimes just ganch. It fills many pipes throughout the region, and it's sometimes rolled into cigars as well. The herb is a mild relaxant, but when treated with certain chemicals, it can also be a powerful hallucinogen.

Ganch fields are difficult to maintain and require a large workforce. A few communities have repurposed a variety of numenera machines and devices to help in the labor, so it's not uncommon to see a massive construct or automaton harvesting fields of ganch leaves.

ORRILA

Orrila serves as the capital of a land that truly has none. A sort of microcosm of Milave itself, it is a cosmopolitan mishmash of cultures and people. A stone wall girds what is now the central portion of the city, but the city spread out from those walls long ago with buildings of many different

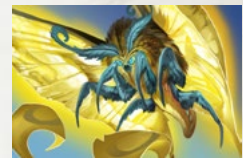


MILAVE

Ruler: The Milave Council

Population: 900,000

Capital: Orrila



Stratharian war moths seem particularly attracted to ganch fields. Sometimes entire plots must be abandoned when swarms move in. One field currently has a cocoon so large that farmers speculate it will produce a war moth as big as a house.



styles and materials. In very recent times, a large tent-city has grown around the southern gate of that wall, covering what is now known as the Field of Voices.

Much trading takes place in Orrila, thanks in no small part to a device located on a high campanile in the center of the old town. Known as the All-Speech, the device automatically translates any word spoken within the city (and a fair distance beyond) into a language understandable to each listener's mind. The All-Speech has some interesting side effects, however. Some children reared in Orrila learn to speak far more quickly than expected, understanding the words of their parents even as infants, while others never learn because they are still understood even when speaking gibberish. A Milavian saying holds that lies are harder to tell in Orrila and secrets harder to keep, but this claim has yet to be proven.

Thirty miles (48 km) east of Orrila, workers toil in the **floatstone** quarries. You can spot the quarries from far away because

of the vast tarps that catch the stone as it's dug from the earth. The workers pull it from what looks like former monuments of some kind, buried in a long-forgotten age. Of course, the ground repels the floatstone, so much of what is excavated flies into the air.

AIAN

Known by some as the City of Merchants and by others as the City of Beggars, Aian is only tenuously part of Milave, maintaining as much independence as it can. The city-state has a population of perhaps 30,000. Ruled by an elected senate, Aian is one of the prominent republics in the Steadfast. As its monikers suggest, it is a city of commerce and trade, a gateway between the Steadfast and the lands to the south. Its markets are filled with exotic goods, and wealthy merchant clans maintain burgeoning warehouses here.

The Aian saying "Those not rich are poor" is used to justify avarice and ruthless business practices. In other words, if

Floatstone, page 27



you don't fight to get all you can, you'll have nothing. The saying is also a fair assessment of the city's class structure. Those who are not wealthy merchants, clerks, accountants, salespeople, or caravan drivers are extremely poor, working for scraps as laborers, bearers, or porters—or worse, without employment at all, living as beggars and thieves.

Rumor has it that the Amber Papacy does not believe in democracy, and that agents of the Order of Truth work against Aian in the shadows of the city. If this gossip is true, the agents likely work with the **Beggar Queen** and her network of spies. She hates the oligarch council and the merchants who elect them. No one knows much about the Beggar Queen herself, but she has three lieutenants that are biomechanical hybrids with the ability to become invisible and kill with a touch, ensuring that her power remains unchallenged.

OSSAM'S TRAVELING MENAGERIE AND SOARING CIRCUS

Come one, come all!

Boys and girls! Men and women! Humans, visitants, and mutants!

All are welcome at the greatest display of remarkability and extraordinosity the Ninth World or any world has ever seen, heard, sniffed, felt, or tasted!

All are welcome at Ossam's Traveling Menagerie and Soaring Circus!

Think you've seen mystery? Wait until you wonder at the three-headed moranx!

Think you've seen majesty? Wait until you experience the death-defying Kaprof Brothers and their aerial acrobatics!

Think you've seen menace? Wait until you cower at the roaring harraspawn and its fire-spewing eyes!

Think you've seen magic? Wait until you gasp at the sorcery of the Great Theon and his trained cragworms!

The Beggar Queen has shadow knight stats (page 157).

The Beggar Queen's three lieutenants have warlord stats (page 159).



MILAVE HEARSAY

Recruitment: Clandestine agents of the warlord Tarvesh seek recruits to work as spies and infiltrators or as soldiers. Either way, the recruiters are said to wear numenera relics on their foreheads that allow them to see into the minds of others, both to ensure that those they speak with tell the truth and to ascertain the talents of others, which aids in recruitment. Rumors say that these devices even allow them to implant a failsafe in the recruit's mind. Should they go on to betray their new overlord, the psychic imprint will destroy the mind from within. For truthful commitment, however, the recruiters are offering excellent pay, numenera support, and of course, a free, safe, and stable Milave.

The Roving Road: Rumors speak of a well-lit path that appears only on very rare nights or dark, mist-shrouded days. This road is paved in blocks of an unknown substance, and it is said to lead to a secret location that cannot be accessed in any way other than by the road. The road always appears in different locations throughout the land, and only for an hour or so at a time. Once you take the road, however, you go where it goes until you reach the end.

The Ice Pit: A perfectly round, metal-edged pit of unknown depths can be found about 40 miles (64 km) south of Aian. On even the warmest days, cold mist rises from it. Those who have attempted to reach the bottom claim that it simply gets colder and colder as one goes down. No one has ever reached the bottom and returned to tell the tale.

THE WEIRD OF MILAVE

Dry Coral: A field of coral-like growth extends throughout an expanse in the western portion of Milave. At night, patches of the coral glow with an unearthly light. As with beds of actual coral, unique and sometimes dangerous creatures dwell in and amid the formations.

Weeping Wanderer: An ancient automaton wanders the roads of Milave, damaged and asking for help. However, the fluids it leaks are debilitating and hallucinogenic to humans.

The Minds of the Dead: A pair of men living in a village in the eastern border of the land claim to have a device that reads the thoughts of the recently dead. They say that if the deceased are hooked to the device quickly enough, their consciousness is stored inside it, granting them "eternal life."

Ossam himself may be the greatest wonder of his show. He's not human, but an extremely human-appearing construct. Older than the Ninth World, his true motivations are clouded in mystery. Few people know his secret, and Ossam would literally kill to preserve it.

Ossam has deadly warrior stats (page 151). In addition, he wears a micromesh armor with built in ray emitter (recharge 6).

Micromesh, page 25

Great Theon has nano stats (page 155).

Aneen, page 148



Ray emitter, page 103

Cragworm, page 155

Seskii, page 233

You'll thrill! You'll chill! You'll come away changed forever!

Just 2 shins per person! Children under ten and children over eighty half price!

Traveling throughout the villages and towns of Milave (and sometimes Ancuan), Ossam's Traveling Menagerie and Soaring Circus is a caravan of wooden wagons that house the creatures and the performers, and a floating numenera platform that serves as transport for equipment and a hovering stage during performances. As they travel, the members of the circus put on shows, filling people's minds with wonder and their own pockets with coin.

While much of the menagerie and circus is real, the truth is also stretched to heighten the experience. The use of disguises and conventional trickery as well as holograms and various numenera devices enhance every performance. For example, the **Great Theon's** "sorcery"

is produced mainly by hidden devices, although the man commands an array of psychic powers to boot. His trained **cragworms** are hologram illusions projected over trained **seskii**. The Kaprof Brothers are talented acrobats, but the harraspawn is little more than an illusion. The moranx is a deformed **aneen** never shown in clear light.





ANCUAN

A broad, fertile, and peaceful land, Anquan is blessed on many fronts. Its rolling hills teem with bountiful herds of animals, its fields flow with produce and grains, and its long shorelines offer fish and other valuable commodities. Of course, Anquan is not without its troubles. Pirates ply the shorelines, preying on coastal trading vessels. Bandit raiders threaten villages. *Sathosh* and *chirogs* roam the countryside.

King *Asour-Mantir* rules from a castle of stronglass 20 miles (32 km) outside the city of Glavis. Tradition dictates that no one other than his immediate household and guard live within a radius of 10 miles (16 km), so the Transparent Palace, as it is called, stands alone in a sprawling, rocky field. The king's extended family is large, the product of two noble houses joined in permanent alliance to ensure the stability of the land. Members of the *Blue Legion*, his royal guard, are renowned for their skill as archers.

The people of Anquan are independent and self-sufficient, relying on their king for little. They make their ways as sailors, fishers, arron farmers, yol herders, and salt miners. (Arron is a grain used to make sweet-tasting bread. Yol are short, long-haired creatures known for yellow wool,

tender meat, and the cheese made from their milk.)

Similar to how *Angulan Knights* throughout the Steadfast have tamed *xi-drakes* to use as flying mounts, the people of Anquan sometimes ride *rasters*—large, biomechanical, bat-like creatures native to the region. Often the raster-riders, or “rastriders,” are loners who live along the coast. Some, however, join raider or pirate groups, training their fellows to be rastriders. A sky filled with brigands mounted on giant hover-bats can be a terrifying sight indeed. (On the other hand, an aerial battle between a rastrider raider and an Angulan Knight is a memory no witness would soon forget.)

ISHLAV

Ishlav is a city built on a city. The original Ishlav was destroyed about twenty years ago when a group of explorers returned to the city with a strange device they had discovered in an ancient ruin. When the Aeon Priests in Ishlav fiddled with the object in an attempt to understand it, the device released a powerful burst of energy that destroyed most of what lay within a radius of 2 miles (3 km). However, none of the people, animals, or plants were harmed. Only nonliving matter was affected. The blast split this line with a fine blade—it left



ANCUAN

Ruler: King *Asour-Mantir*

Population: 1,500,000

Capital: Glavis

Angulan Knights, page 131



Xi-drake, page 241

Raster, page 226

Sathosh, page 232

Chirog, page 154

King *Asour-Mantir* has aristocrat stats (page 151).

The typical *Blue Legion* member has legionary stats (page 154). In addition, they have the following ranged weapon attack.

Longbow. Ranged
Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, ranged 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.



Kollos has deadly warrior stats (page 151), though he usually uses unarmed combat instead of weapons because his unarmed attacks deal damage like the deadly warrior's longsword attacks.

freshly cut wooden logs unharmed, but it obliterated older wood in rafters, wagon wheels, and shovel handles. Strangely, the ground—soil, rocks and the like—appears to have been unaffected.

After the event, new strangements were discovered. For example, those caught in the blast found that some, but not all, of their diseases had been cured, their wounds healed, and their general health improved. Even today, Ishlav's new generations enjoy robust health, good looks, and impressive physical qualities.

The city's buildings, obviously, are relatively new. After the blast, workers rebuilt some of the original layout, but an influx of people wanting to share in the renowned health-boosting qualities has caused Ishlav to double in size. Now home to 20,000 souls, it's a burgeoning city with a large idle population that waits for its mysteries to heal, boost, or aid them in some way. Unfortunately, many people have no means of supporting themselves

except through begging, thievery, or worse, so Ishlav is gaining a new reputation, one of darkness and danger.

That danger comes from many sources, but one in particular is on the rise: the Monks of Mitos, a well-structured organization led by a man named **Kollos**. Renowned for his otherworldly hand-to-hand combat skills, Kollos claims to have found a way to harness the cosmic power of the universe within his cells, channeling this energy into a lethal fighting style that he calls "fistprayers." He and his followers preach about creating a more harmonious, safer world, and they teach free classes in self-defense and nonlethal combat. But behind the caring, soft words lies something more sinister, and those with the necessary money or influence can avail themselves of the monks' deadlier skills.

Cold and dangerous, the Sea of Secrets is beset by ship-devouring serpents, horrific storms, and a wide variety of pirates, the worst of which hail from Ancuan (and the worst of them from Aras Island).

KAPARIN

A coastal city on the southern shore of the Steadfast, Kaparin boasts roughly 15,000 people but actually consists of less than half that at any given time. It's the unofficial home of the Redfleets, a crew of vagabonds, thieves, scientists, and other miscreants who sail the high and low seas in search of natural treasure. For the most part, they show public disdain for any numenera they find, but they aren't above selling it to the highest bidder.

By all accounts, Kaparin is a typical coastal town, filled with wood and stone structures, cobbled streets, and a series of connected docks for seafaring vessels. However, the city features one unique building along its wharf: a large stone complex called the RFM, which is a maritime museum, hall of fame, and library all rolled into one. Here, the Redfleets catalog their accomplishments and store their findings. A visitor can view the preserved skull of a rare flutterfish or listen to an audio recording from the depths of the ocean. And you'll likely find at least half a dozen Redfleets, past and present, just waiting to be asked about their contribution. If you read the signs posted liberally inside and outside the RFM, you'll discover that the objects on display are famed the world over and coveted by many. (Just don't be surprised if neither you nor anyone you've ever known has heard of them.)

Due to such a large percentage of its inhabitants taking extended ocean voyages, Kaparin's homes stand empty for long stretches of time. Merchants and craftspeople specialize in water and seagoing wares, including ship and **submergine** repair and upkeep, breathing apparatus, food stores, and long-distance trade routes to sell the treasure that comes in from the explorations.

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

The ruler of Kaparin is **Sallian Orsay** the Red, one of the original Redfleet founders. A tall, willowy woman with dark red hair, she appears to be about twenty years old—and has appeared to be that age for as long as anyone can remember. The rumor is that she found something buried beneath the ocean floor on one of her final submergine missions that has allowed her to live forever, or at least to stop the aging process. Although some of her colleagues are angry that she didn't share her discovery with the rest of the fleet, most feel that she is a good ruler, if a little cold and reclusive at times. Sallian has a seemingly unlimited supply of **goons** that will die to protect her. If called on to fight, she wields a longsword made of honed whale bone.

Retired Redfleet Captain **Jamson "The Liar" Connell** is often seen about town these days since he no longer commands a submergine crew and doesn't go asea. He says he retired years back, but others in Kaparin murmur that being dishonorably discharged from an already dishonorable fleet is hardly retiring. Town gossip says that during one particularly dangerous mission to the Fengali Forest, Connell killed and ate his entire crew. He goes berserk when physically or verbally threatened, attempting to strangle and eat his opponent (often at the same time).

Kaparin's **street rats** are the teenagers and young children born on ships at sea and then left behind. They live in small groups beneath the docks and often create graffiti on the sides of docked submergines, searching for (or cursing out) their parents. Most of them are willing to help with information, tasks, or directions for the right price or even a bit of kindness.

The Ramsi sisters, Jordica and Zanca, lead and protect this ragtag group. Both deny the rumor that they're Sallian Orsay's bastard daughters. If you're approached

Sallian Orsay has Glaive stats (page 153).

Goons have tough stats (page 159).

Captain Connell has legionary stats (page 154).

Typical street rats have tough stats (page 159).

Submergines are clearsynth bioships that safely dive up to 5 miles (8 km) beneath the ocean's surface and stay there for up to six years.



Anders the Jack has—unsurprisingly—jack stats (page 154). All Intelligence checks involving biological and virological knowledge have advantage.

In the Ninth World, words like “pike” or “scorpion” equate to somewhat different creatures than we in the 21st century understand, but these words are used because they are the closest equivalents available.

The ceremonies of Relia and Bianes involve songs, elaborate costumes, and significant rituals with hand gestures, key words, and repetitive phrases. Worshippers re-enact myths of the brother and sister overcoming adversity, healing the sick, and even giving life to various kinds of plants and animals as boons to humanity.

by the two girls, they might seem well informed and suspiciously willing to help, but they’ll probably do their best to ensure that you get what you want—at the price of a favor.

GLAVIS

Approximately 20,000 people call Glavis home. The sprawling city seems like a grouping of three towns located in close proximity by chance, with a sparse collection of buildings and roads among them. One of the three sections, primarily a port, is on the minor River Frohm. The second is atop a high hill called Nurel’s Hill. The third is a farming community filled with markets for produce and livestock.

The people of Glavis worship a pair of gods called Relia and Bianes. These sibling deities are believed to watch over those who place offerings on their secluded altars. Enough people have seen the offerings disappear right before their eyes that even nonbelievers suspect that Relia and Bianes—or something posing as them—are real in some sense. Whenson Breeve, the chief constable of the city guard, has a theory:

I think Relia and Bianes are real. No, not the brother and sister you see in the marble statues in their temples, but some kind of invisible beings. Maybe they’re the source of the religion. Maybe they just came along and took advantage of it. But there’s something really there. Under the temples. Within the walls, I think, or at least that’s what my gut says. With my own eyes I’ve seen food placed

upon their altars disappear. No, not disappear. I’ve watched it be . . . consumed is the word I would use. When it happened there was a sort of burning smell in the air and I heard a kind of crackling sound, like a distant fire. I won’t lie to you. It scared me. There’s things left over from the far-off past, you know? Things I don’t understand. And some of them are smart. And hungry. And maybe vengeful.

Within the city of Glavis, a scholar known as **Anders the Jack** keeps a laboratory where he studies viruses and bacteria, presumably for the good of humanity. Beneath this public lab lies a secret underground facility, however, where he conducts experiments on creatures that seem to be strange monkey-rat things. Anders has a rare condition that requires constant blood transfusions. His monkey-rat-thing slaves provide the blood and serve as subjects on which he constantly tests potential cures for his condition.

In the hills just north of Glavis, great vents in the ground expel strange gases into the air. Amid these geologic exhalations dwell intelligent gaseous creatures called the Sruu. Very little is known about these beings, which apparently have a civilization deep below the surface. Those that come up through the vents do so unwillingly and seek to return.

PIKE’S HEAD

A small fishing town along the coast, Pike’s Head has one aspect that makes it quite remarkable. About 300 feet (90 m) off the shore, a massive thing juts up out of the water. People call it “the Beast.” Although in some ways it resembles a structure, it’s clearly made of organic material, with chitinous plates and leathery flesh. But it never moves and shows no sign of life. It also never decays, so it gives no indication of being the corpse of an enormous creature. Someone long ago thought it looked like a river pike’s head, but the Beast has no identifiable bodily characteristics. No head, no eyes, no limbs—just a hulking, twisted mass 50 feet (15 m) across that rises more than 80 feet (24 m) above the water. Most people give it a wide berth, as

it has an unpleasant odor, but some brave residents believe that the fishing is better near it.

SCORPION'S REACH

This sprawling peninsula is filled with the ruins of the prior worlds. Known for its weirdness and mysteries, it is frequented by explorers, discoverers, and numenera scholars. Scorpion's Reach is also dangerous, offering regular encounters with **Oorgolian soldiers**, **mastigophores**, **disassemblers**, and other remnants of the past.

RARROW

If Ishlav is a city built on a city, Rarrow is a city hidden within a city. The founders built it on both sides of a spatial rift. The city on this side of the rift is called Rarrow, but its counterpart on the other side is called Hidden Rarrow. About 5,000 people live in Rarrow, and another 2,000 live in Hidden Rarrow.

No one knows precisely where Hidden Rarrow lies in relation to Rarrow. Is it in a parallel universe, on another planet, or just elsewhere in this world? Many people have their own theories. Hidden Rarrow seems to have the same or a similar sun, but the moon never appears in the night sky, and the stars are similar but not identical. This latter fact lends credence to the belief that the rift is not spatial in nature but temporal, and that Hidden Rarrow lies further in the future.

The rift is 200 feet (60 m) wide and runs through the middle of each half of the city, but it's invisible. Passing through the rift results in a smooth transfer from one side to the other with no sensation of transition. The folk of Rarrow know exactly where the rift lies and have built a plaza around it (a matching plaza exists in Hidden Rarrow), but they don't mark it in any way, so newcomers sometimes stumble into it by accident. The rift is unmarked because the city's inhabitants want Hidden Rarrow to remain—well, hidden. They want it to be a sanctuary to which they can flee if invaders ever come to Rarrow. On the other side, defenses are in place—a stone wall and towers to defend against invaders who use the breach with hostile intent. The street in the plaza on the Hidden Rarrow side can be rigged to collapse, and beneath it is a wide pit that the defenders can fill with oil to create a burning “moat.”

The people of Rarrow are sea traders and fishers. The harbor is a calm but deep port, and a tall lighthouse at the edge of town guides ships in on the frequent cold and foggy nights. The mayor lives in and works out of a large house in the center of town made from the hull of an ancient flying craft of metal. Hidden Rarrow is a sanctuary sought by refugees, those on the run, or those looking to disappear. Rumor has it that if you pay the city a hefty fee, you can get a place to stay for as long as you wish—with no questions asked regarding who or what you're trying to hide from.



Oorgolian soldiers,
page 212

mastigophores,
page 198

disassemblers, page 167

Hidden Rarrow is home to a significant marketplace of taboo, forbidden, or dangerous goods. This black market is not an illegal enterprise in the city, but the authorities of other locales hate it, for it is a place where weapons, relics, and worst of all secrets can be bought and sold, and used far beyond Rarrow.



ARAS ISLAND

Belonging to no kingdom and bearing the characteristics of no single region, Aras Island stands strong as a bastion of independence, murder, and mayhem. While technically located in Ancuan, the island and the kingdom want nothing to do with each other. Resting just beneath the heel of Scorpion's Reach, the mountainous island is covered with snow and ice nearly year-round and has an incredibly harsh climate, thanks to offshore quakes, biting winds, and storms that batter the coastline with giant waves.

The people of Aras are equally harsh. Calling themselves Jaekels—after the giant sea scorpion they worship for its aggressive nature, armored skin, and saw-toothed claws and tails—they revere a bloodthirsty, animalist nature above all things.

Jaekels emulate this belief in their actions and their physical form. Animalistic surgery (including grafting, genetic manipulation, and implantation) is common, especially among those who ride in the island's fierce and aggressive water army. It's not unlikely to find Jaekels in various stages of transformation. Bandages and odd healing accouterments are frequent sights, and claws, teeth, horns, and wings are prized body enhancements. Only those with the highest honors in killing and pillaging, known as Araskas and identified by an intricate pattern of blood tattoos, are deemed worthy of having wings of any sort.

Despite their use of body-enhancing technology, Jaekels favor simple, traditional weapons, which they typically steal from their captives. It's long been considered a sign of weakness to use a technological weapon, although that perception is changing, and today you're more likely to see a mix of weapons among Jaekels. With or without weapons, they are fierce warriors, fighting literally tooth and nail, having turned their bodies into specialized killing machines.

Jaekels kidnap scholars, tinkerers, and other numenera workers and bring them back to Aras, where they force their prisoners to create stronger, fiercer animalistic elements. For their experiments, they also capture a wide variety of creatures, including humans and abhumans. Rasters are a special favorite, both for their biomechanical wings and for the sport of capturing them and their riders.

Jaekels build their living, working, and merchant structures from scavenged bits of whatever materials break on the shore of their island. Their boats, however, are another matter, lovingly constructed by an Araska and her crew from the parts of captured and stolen ships. It's considered a great achievement to capture a vessel from an organized group like **Ghan's merchant fleet** and dismantle it entirely before turning it into a new Jaekship (or using the parts on a ship already in progress).

Ghan's merchant fleet, page 37

Jagged Dream, page 132

Some villagers in Ancuan recently awoke with a crystal orb embedded in their chests. The orbs are transmitting something and heat up if damaged.



ANCUAN HEARSAY

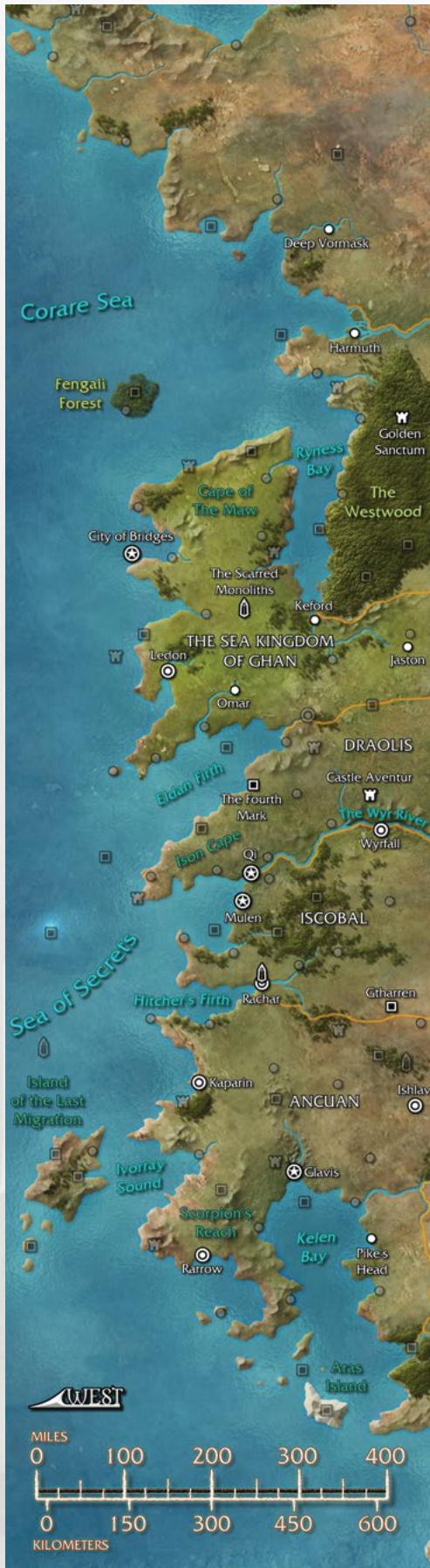
Oracle in a Pool: Dwelling in shallow pools along the western coast is a creature that calls itself Jruve. It looks like a grey and violet slug 12 feet (4 m) long. If you manage to find Jruve, it can reveal three of your possible futures. In return, it asks for a particular kind of numenera device—which it swallows whole.

Rising Dissent: Members of a **Jagged Dream** cell in Glavis have been extremely successful of late fomenting dissent against the royal family. With their support, a warlord named Serec the Grudge is gathering an army of rebels to rise up against the king (and likely set up a new, warlike regime). For now, however, this rowdy army simply makes trouble.

THE WEIRD OF ANCUAN

House of Holes: Near the middle of Scorpion's Reach stands a four-sided structure about 50 feet (15 m) tall and 15 feet (5 m) across. The walls are filled with round holes that range from a few inches to a few feet in diameter. Light shines from within the holes, night or day. However, the holes don't lead inside the building, but rather somewhere else.

Teardrop Trees: Odd, teardrop-shaped trees grow in a grove near the eastern border. No one has a name for or an understanding of them, but it is known that if any living thing comes near the trees, that thing dies in short order.



THE WESTERN SEAS

Few people in the Ninth World realize that the Western Seas extend all the way around the globe, forming the vast, single ocean that surrounds the megacontinent. Ninth Worlders primarily use the seas to travel and trade up and down the long coast. The king of Ghan and his merchant fleet captains believe that a significant island chain lies far beyond the western horizon, however, and they hope to mount an expedition soon.

The Western Seas are filled with danger and mystery. Those who sail the waters are no stranger to pirates, predators, and horrific storms.

CORARE SEA

The Corare Sea is relatively gentle and, as one heads north, quite warm. Although the sea is home to fish of all kinds, stories tell of intelligent predators—part synth, part cetacean—that live in the deeps and come up to hunt.

FENGALI FOREST

Located about 100 miles (160 km) off the Steadfast coast, the Fengali Forest consists of around 4,000 acres of submerged trees. The tops of the trees—mostly drowned evergreens, water tupelos, and longbow willows—rise above the water, some by as much as 20 feet (6 m). Beneath the surface, the trees are connected by their tangled, ever-expanding root system.

Above the water, the branches are threaded with trunked lilies, giant vines lined with poisonous barbs that slither along the treetops like snakes. Once a year, the lilies produce nests of strongly scented orange flowers. These poisonous flowers quickly kill any creatures that eat them; once the host is dead, the flowers cocoon inside the body until they're ready to sprout. Trunked lilies have been known to swim as far as 100 miles (160 km) to return to the forest of their nesting place.

A tight clan of humans, known simply as grovers, lives above the water among the branches and trunks in a series of floating platforms and shacks built of scavenged

Slying is a common term used to convey a combination of sly and lying. While mostly derogatory, it also carries a hint of respect for someone's skills at deception.



Ghost crab, page 145

synth and metal from the ocean. They are not aggressive unless they believe that their clan or forest is in danger. Grovers have become immune to the trunked lilies' poison and use the vines as whips or lassos against their enemies.

Far below, almost half a mile beneath the water's surface, the lower trunks and root systems create a series of reefs, similar to coral reefs, which are home to ocean rifts, sunken numenera, and deep-sea creatures. Among the beasts, root sharks are the most aggressive—fast swimmers and solitary hunters, they lie in wait, camouflaged against trunks or the ocean floor, until their next meal appears. **Ghost crabs**, some as large as 5 feet (1.5 m) across, weave intricate silica webs between the tangled roots to trap prey. These alabaster crabs, which seem to appear and disappear in the depths, are blind, relying on their finely honed sense of touch to find and devour prey caught in their webs. They're such talented hunters that even the root sharks give them a wide berth.

Three long ocean rifts run through the forest, parallel gouges 1 mile (1.5 km)

long and at least 3 miles (5 km) deep. Those who brave these black depths face daunting foes but might find great rewards of numenera discoveries.

ELDAN FIRTH

Within the coastline of the Steadfast is a deep inlet with an inhospitable shore of jagged rocks and steep inclines. Called Eldan Firth, this place is home to a species that, unknown to almost anyone, is perhaps the oldest unchanged species on the planet. More than a billion years old, the octopi have inhabited the earth's seas for longer than any one species has dwelled on dry land. These cephalopods are far more intelligent than anyone has ever guessed, and Ninth World octopi have fashioned their own sophisticated undersea society, cities, and machines. They likely possess great lore, although they have always studiously ignored the activities of creatures that dwell on the surface.

The Octopoidal Queen reigns from a palace deep in Eldan Firth, ruling her subjects no matter how far they spread out across the seas. The few people on land

who know of her existence understand that it's wise to speak with her before heading into uncharted waters.

SEA OF SECRETS

Cold and dangerous, the Sea of Secrets is beset by ship-devouring serpents, horrific storms, and a wide variety of pirates, the worst of which hail from Ancuan (and the worst of them from Aras Island). As you travel south in the sea, small, hard-to-spot icebergs become a real threat to sailing. It's said that somewhere to the far south is a city frozen in solid ice, reachable only by a stout ship and a brave and experienced captain.

THE ISLAND OF THE LAST MIGRATION

Once, shortly after our world was born, when she still was young and barely a babe upon her mama's knee, her mean grandmama wanted to steal her away and keep her for her own. And who could blame the old woman? When our world was but a babe, she was twice, three times as beautiful as she is now. A sight to behold, so stunning that even the strongest man fell to his knees at the sight of her.

Mama was loath to let her go, and the two women fought and fought over the babe, pulling her and pushing her, tugging her between them. Then grandmama did the unthinkable. She slapped the babe, who cried out in pain and fear. The two women, seeing what they had done, they got on their knees and begged for forgiveness and promised to cherish our world forever.

But our world was already growing up fast. She knew that it would only be a matter of time before her mama and grandmama were at odds again, and she wanted no part of it. She knew the women needed to be separated to protect all the creatures of land and sea and sky that lived within.

"Look what you have done," she told them both, and pointed to her shoulder, where the mark of her grandmama's hand still blazed upon her skin.

The women bowed their heads, shamed by the power of their love.

"I banish you to the skies," she told her mama, "where you can look down and see me and grandmama every morning."

"I banish you to the seas," she told her grandmama, "where you can look up and see me and mama every night."

Then our world touched the mark that she bore, her first mark among all the marks that would come, and she said, "Here shall be the most beautiful place on the whole of my body, a sanctuary for all those who are in danger and need saving. When I am old and begin to die, for die I shall"—

At this, her mama and grandmama began to weep, for they did not want to think of her growing old and dying. But our world continued as if she had not heard.

—"I shall bid everyone come to this place, this mark, for their final journey, and they shall live there for all of eternity."

Hearing that, her mama went to the sky and her grandmama went to the sea, for they saw that already the babe had grown up and was doing wondrous things, and they wanted to see every single one of them.

And that, my child, is how you came to be born in paradise, on the Island of the Last Migration.

And that's how come you have the mark on your shoulder, too—right, grammum?

Right, child. And soon, you will be old enough to have your own mark. And, as is our tradition, I shall be the one who puts it there.

The Island of the Last Migration is a starfish-shaped bit of land just off the Steadfast's western shore. It's a place of myths, legends, and extraordinary dangers. Once, the island was a paradise, inhabited only by members of the Gutos clan, and its splendor was unparalleled—extinct volcanoes along the skyline, fantastical creatures and foliage of all sizes and colors, tumbling waterfalls to refresh the spirit and the soul.

Believing themselves to be the descendants of the world-child, members of the Gutos clan tattooed their young children with the mark of their ancestors, forever etching the outline of a handprint on one shoulder.

Then the island paradise changed. Some Gutos began to retell their version of the world-child myth, believing that the point of the story was not that they were destined to live forever in a place of paradise, but that they were chosen to share this sanctuary

Aras Island, page 66

One of the most common types of boats used along the coast and on the islands are called drumrunners. These shallow-hulled craft have an aft section shaped a little like a drum, used for stowage.

with the world. Calling themselves the Gutonons, they parted ways with their clan and touted the promise of paradise to anyone who would listen. They sold bits of the island to anyone with the shins in hand, offering a utopia where disease and danger feared to tread and where the inhabitants were destined to have eternal life.

Word spread quickly. Soon the island was covered with homes, businesses, and growing cities. Deforestation raged to make room for new buyers. Many species that had originally enticed people to the island's shores were dead or dying. The water ran black with residue and stink. Among the chaos, a civil war broke out between the Gutos and the Gutonons, and it wasn't long before the war extended into a full-out battle against the newcomers.

Their island paradise now a battlefield of dirt and blood, the people began to leave their big homes and businesses. The Gutonons, with the Gutos forever at their throats, left the island or became assimilated back into the larger clan.

All that stands today are the remnants of a collapsed society. Buildings crumble and fall to the strangling ruin of creeping vines and crawling critters. Cities lie empty but for the roar of wild things raising their young in the dark alleys and black byways. Machines rust into loam and bits of metal that winged creatures use to line their nests.

Every day, bit by bit, paradise returns to the Island of the Last Migration. And deep in the island's hidden heart, the Guton clan waits and watches, passing down myths and legends to the babes on their knees, decorating their skin with the mark of their ancestors. For a long time, they thought the world was dying, but now they realize that she has merely been sleeping. When she awakes, and the island with her, clan members will be ready to fulfill their destiny as her chosen ones.

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

Nneka is the esteemed child of the pairing of the old and the new. One of the potential future leaders of the clan, she is nearing adulthood, long past the age when she should have received the island's mark from

her grandmama. Born in the generation that came after the civil war, Nneka doesn't believe in the old ways and has refused the mark of her people.

A tomboyish young woman with short hair dyed bright orange from the crushed wings of calterflies, she dresses in the rags of the dead she finds among the ruins of the cities. Nneka often shirks her duties to spend her days exploring the run-down buildings and factories, and she knows a great deal more about the world beyond the island than she does of her own home.

Chelvin is a remainder from the great war. This humanoid creature is almost entirely mechanical and was designed with a single purpose: to kill. Equipped with a camouflage-seeking topcoat and four long arms, each of which wields a different type of weapon, Chelvin roams the island without purpose or place to call home. His external construction of smooth manufactured material appears indestructible, but his mind is another matter. Sometimes he attacks animals and humans without provocation, attempting to fulfill his original duties. Other times, he offers whatever assistance he can.

Nneka seems to be the only person who can guide Chelvin's hand and mind into doing good. However, there is talk that she is being corrupted by Chelvin's dangerous side, and that the two of them are beginning to scheme for the island's destruction.

Mabon Macabee came to the island to work in one of the early factories in what was then called Guttentown. Unlike the others, most of whom were killed during the war or left when things began to go badly, Mabon settled on the island and refused to leave. Part of the reason is that the weather here seems to ease the longtime aches she'd had in her joints. But part of it is her discovery of the island's large and intelligent bee population, which was nearly wiped out by industrialization.

Mabon has become an avid student of the hives and an advocate for their survival, building a home from scavenged materials and honeycombs in the midst of the area's largest bee population. It's not unusual to see her surrounded by a giant swarm of

Chelvin has zhev stats (Arcana of the Ancients, page 244).

Mabon Macabee has specialist stats (page 158).

Nneka has scholar stats (page 157).

bees. Sometimes they cover her body like living, buzzing armor; other times, they form the shapes of island creatures for the amusement of local children.

Mabon is on good terms with the Guton clan members, despite their fear of the bees, and often helps them restore parts of the island to its natural state. Despite the fact that she's lived on the island for a long time, the children and many adults continue to call her From Far (melding the words of the name together so it sounds like "fromfar") because she wasn't born there. She doesn't seem to mind and even introduces herself as "Fromfar Mabon."

My work with the bees continues apace. Ever since I broke the code of their language dance, the queens seem willing to let me into their lives and work, and the others seem to respond well to the training regime I put them under.

We continue to work toward the future safety of the island, but the work is slow going sometimes. While the suit of armor has proved more difficult than expected—the bees accidentally sting me more often than I'd like—we have seen breakthroughs on training the drones to mimic my shape, creating a decoy. I am not sure of its use yet. Although the children delight in seeing two of me, I hope it to have greater implications for the protection of both myself and the island.

The Guton inquire as to why I feel the need to protect myself, but I do not have the

language to tell them that I sense something wicked and wanting in my dreams. It taints even the taste of honey upon the tongue, and turns my thoughts of sweetness to those of stinging fear.

WESTERN SEAS HEARSAY

The Song of Calling: At times, a strange and alluring song can be heard just off the coast. Reports of sailors and fishers say that if you follow the song, at some point you sail into an entirely different sea, as if your ship passed through some kind of doorway. These reports also speak of rose-colored seas, living islands, and intelligent, four-winged birds. The tales intrigue many bold explorers, who seek the enthralling song so they can discover where it might lead.

THE WEIRD OF THE WESTERN SEAS

Fire of the Seas: Throughout the seas, sailors speak of a rare occurrence where green fire arises from the calm waters. Those few who have sailed into the fire (intentionally or otherwise) have found that its flames do not burn, but its warmth transforms matter. The alterations are not as dangerous or violent as those brought by the iron wind, but things bathed in the green fire of the seas change significantly nonetheless.

The Eloquent Fish: Along the coast of the Sea of Secrets, every once in a while, an impressively large fish breaks the surface near a small boat and attempts to engage the occupants in a conversation in perfect Truth.



THE BEYOND

"The Aeon Priests in the Beyond claim to have no allegiance to the Amber Papacy, but you have to admit, having a handful of agents spread throughout that vast region is a wise move for an organization that wants to control the world."

~Narada Trome, anti-papist

The land beneath the Skyfields is sometimes simply called the Fallen Fields, when it needs differentiation. However, most of the time the entire region is referred to as the Clouddrystal Skyfields.



Jiraskar, page 189

Travonis ul, page 239

The Beyond is a very Steadfast-centric term, used essentially to describe any area of the world that isn't part of the nine kingdoms. As the scope of the world known and understood by even the most learned scholars in the Steadfast is limited, however, what the Beyond technically includes are the lands south of the Caecilian Jungle, west of the Clock of Kala, and north of the Southern Wall.

The people of the Beyond are even more disparate and isolated from one another than the folk of the Steadfast are. Although these lands are full of would-be rulers, most communities are independent. Many have little contact with the world outside their own limited bounds, and some have none at all. The scattered villages of the Beyond are called *aldeia*, and most are centered on a *clave* of Aeon Priests. Due to the perils of the Ninth World, many *aldeia* don't welcome strangers. Some of these villages are dangerous in and of themselves, as the inhabitants have taken up cannibalism, human sacrifice, or similar practices.



THE CLOUDCRYSTAL SKYFIELDS

To the north of the Steadfast, beyond the Tithe River, float the Clouddrystal Skyfields. These ever-growing crystalline shards slowly drift high above a plain of the shattered remnants of shards that fell. Some of the shards are as large as cities, and others are as small as a fist. Or a sliver.

Many consider this area a holy land of sorts. Some so-called sorcerers and priests contend that the crystals are the perfect foci for magical power, and they desire to conduct all of their rituals and ceremonies on, near, or beneath the shards. Oracles supposedly watch the future here. Gods speak to mortals more clearly and more often, thanks to the shards.

However, most people recognize this arid landscape to be—holy or not—an inhospitable wasteland, particularly in the eastern portion of the region. This area is little more than a desert. In places, a dune sea—pierced with crystal shards—dominates as far as the mountains. In the west, there is a bit more life, but the land remains unfit for farming or grazing.

Dangerous creatures roam the expanse beneath the Skyfields, including a variety of bandits, abhumans, *jiraskars*, and *travonis ul*.

THE CROWD CITY

Beneath the floating crystal fields, on an otherwise barren plain, a mass of millions of preserved corpses of humans, abhumans, animals, and strange beasts compose a city. Some mad genius fused these bodies together through unknown means and sculpted them into the shape of buildings, streets, and other structures.



Stranger still, a mysterious force animates this mass of flesh. Buildings change shape and size, and the entire city moves across the landscape. It usually moves very slowly if at all, but occasionally the Crowd City will be miles from where it once stood in just a matter of weeks.

Rather than being attracted to the dead bodies, insects and animals generally avoid and even flee from the Crowd City as if repelled by an unseen force.

No one lives in the Crowd City, but occasionally explorers delve the recesses of its macabre streets and alleyways looking for secrets. Some never return, suggesting that perhaps something does dwell here after all.

SCORPION SANCTUM

Standing high above the surrounding desert, the Scorpion Sanctum is one of the three main citadels of the organization that calls itself the Convergence. The area around the sanctum is plagued by chirog raiders, so the magisters within rarely see visitors. However, the abhumans pose little threat to the members of the **Convergence**

themselves, who conduct their bizarre experiments in peace.

UNSEEN LAKE

Here, fish appear to swim through the air, and boats float along with nothing supporting them. The Unseen Lake is a large body of water—6 miles (10 km) long and 2 miles (3 km) wide—that is utterly transparent. You can see the floating crystals in the distant skies from its shores.

The water isn't just clear, it's essentially invisible, making the lake look more like a depression filled with flying fish and wavering plant life. The water is normal in all other respects, and if taken from the lake, it takes on a standard appearance after three to four days (unless it's carefully preserved in a sealed container).

Stork-headed abhumans with backward-bent, hooped legs dwell in a small village at the northernmost point of the Unseen Lake, subsisting on fish caught in nets from boats. These creatures keep to themselves and flee from other beings if possible.

Along a road in the Beyond, raindrops never fall. They remain suspended in the air, eventually turning to glowing embers.

Convergence, page 129



DEEP VORMASK

Deep Vormask lies below a small lake, to the far west of the proper Skyfields. Reaching this enormous limestone cavern involves trekking through miles of winding, difficult tunnels. The cavern itself is 3 miles (5 km) long, and water draining from the lake above creates a waterfall that drops down from the ceiling, forming an underground river. Over this river is a wisp of a stone bridge. On one side of the river lives a group of **yovoki**; on the other, a small tribe of humans. After long conflicts, these two groups have reached an unstable detente.

The humans have built shelters from masonry stone and fibrous fungal stalks that resemble wood. They number approximately 400 and have mastered not only the layout of the huge cave but also the miles and miles of tunnels and caves around it. The humans subsist on fungus, cave reptiles, and large subterranean insects, which surface-worlders find to be a more impressive bounty than it sounds.

Across the river, about 300 yovoki dwell in tiny caves and hollows within the larger cavern. They gather around cookfires when they're not wandering about the subterranean labyrinths.

Both groups use an odd, ancient technology found only in Deep Vormask. Within the cave grow round, hollow stone spheres that reach 15 feet (5 m) in diameter



before detaching from the stone around them. Although it seems impossible, these naturally growing stone bubbles have hatches in the bottom, windows on the sides, and interior controls that enable a practiced occupant to steer the sphere through the air in any direction. These spheres function only within Deep Vormask.

UXPHON

Along the western edge of the Black Riage mountain range lies Deathwater Canyon. A distinguishing characteristic of the canyon system is the network of huge ceramic pipes that run through it, exiting from the solid rock for a time and disappearing back into a canyon wall. The pipes are 10 to 15 feet (3 to 5 m) in diameter and sometimes split into two or three conduits at key junctures. No one has ever determined where the pipeline originates or terminates, but the pipes are said to be empty now, or mostly so.



Yovok, page 243

Chirog raiders (Arcana of the Ancients, page 154) of the region seek to steal machines and even technological spare parts. Some believe this suggests that they are building or repairing something deep in the desert.



CLOUDCRYSTAL SKYFIELDS HEARSAY

Gaian Spies: By papal edict, the Order of Truth has proclaimed that any spies from the enemy Gaian forces found in the Cloudcrystal Skyfields will be put to death. Proof of executing such a spy earns special dispensations from the Aeon Priests.

Ritual Escort: A company of theurgists seeks to hire guards for a journey into the Cloudcrystal Skyfields, where they intend to perform a ritual beneath the crystals. Something that they carry to use in the ritual draws strange and hostile creatures that attack the group at every turn.

Crystal Prospector: An old woman named Filloria Dram wants to harvest portions of one of the floating crystals. She has a deflated hot air balloon in the back of her wagon, but she's looking for help in reaching the crystal and dealing with the challenges of harvesting it.

THE WEIRD OF THE CLOUDCRYSTAL SKYFIELDS

The Garden of Jirzeem: About 150 miles (240 km) north of the Navarene border, you can find a large garden of beautiful blooms, flowering bushes, and long-limbed trees. It appears well tended, but no gardener can ever be found.

The Wizard: A being who calls itself d'Ambersh traverses the lands beneath the Skyfields on what seems to be a floating rug. It wears flowing robes with a distinctly pointed hood. Tiny creatures, some winged, caper and cavort around d'Ambersh, who calls the creatures its homunculi.

The Ghost Mountain: Near the center of the region lies an enormous, mist-shrouded peak—maybe. Many who have gone looking for the mountain never find it. Others report finding it without any problem.



The large city of Uxphon sits at the heart of Deathwater Canyon, amid a central core of the pipe system where something still flows. The 25,000 people that call Uxphon home use the pipes in two ways: the empty conduits have become thoroughfares, and the others radiate heat. The homes of the wealthy abut the warm pipes, which also provide hot and cold running water thanks to some recent ingenious engineering of small pipes.

Uxphon is a very old city. Seven families that have lived there the longest claim noble status and dwell in ancestral manors. Rumors say that some or all of the buildings have hidden chambers and subterranean levels where the nobles hide their debaucheries, treasures, and greatest secrets. Local thieves claim to have broken into the manors and seen some of these secret places, but most such boasts are probably lies. Of course, that doesn't mean the hidden chambers don't exist.

Uxphon has a large slave population, and the city's slave market is renowned. It's fueled by the gladiatorial arena, where well-trained slave combatants fight each other as well as captive beasts. Successful gladiators not only win their freedom but can also become wealthy in their own right.



THE BLACK RIAGE

A great, dark mountain range that is the primary natural division between the Steadfast and the Beyond, the Black Riage is a place of both difficulty and danger. The inhabitants of villages scattered throughout its expanse are trappers or herders of rock goats or similar creatures. A wide variety of abhuman tribes also dwell in the mountains, including **margr**, **chirogs**, and **sathosh**, as well as stranger, rarer breeds.

Three main passes lead through the Black Riage, although other, secret passes exist as well. The main routes—Tremble Pass, Cerdyn's Pass, and Garl Nave—offer caravans and travelers the means to cross the mountains without undue difficulty, although the paths are steep and sometimes narrow. In the winter, all three

The current champion of the arena is Llaritan (deadly warrior stats, page 151), a woman infamous for her use of magnetism to wield multiple weapons at once.

In the nearby town of Sun Passes By, it's possible to hire a mostly tame tetrahydra to fly you all the way to the lands of the east, to the town of Sagus Cliffs.



Tetrahydra, page 237

Margr, page 197

Chirog, page 154

Sathosh, page 232

Convergence, page 129

become very dangerous, and the southern two are almost certainly blocked, leaving Tremble Pass as the only possibly clear passage through the region.

MT. ZANLIS

The tallest mountains in the Black Riage at 23,000 feet (7,000 m), Mt. Zanlis is also known as the Dark Master. Most of those who dwell within 100 miles (160 km) of the peak believe it to be some kind of living being possessed of great power, though whether god or devil none can say. Aeon Priests investigating the area suggest that the mountain's core might be artificial, housing a machine intelligence with the ability to affect reality on a fundamental level. The potential motives, goals, or outlook of such an intelligence remain entirely conjecture. However, the locals talk of green rain, acidic hail, other weird weather, unexplained lights, changes in gravity or the flow of time, the sudden appearance of strange creatures on the mountain's slopes, and the disappearance of travelers, hunters, or others that got too close. And yet some explorers have traversed the region many times without incident.

LEGRASH

Legrash is a mud-soaked, flea-infested, disgusting collection of hovels whose dirty, disease-ridden residents prey, one way or another, upon the travelers trying to use Tremble Pass, particularly pilgrims of the Wandering Walk. The locals say "lay-graus," but we call the place Leg-Rash, and there's good reason. I wouldn't stay in that place any longer than I had to unless I wanted to get some kind of rash, or far worse. Stay the night in one of their two inns? No thank you.

About 500 people live in Leg-Rash, and every one of them is a degenerate, from the storekeepers and merchants who triple any reasonable price for anything you might want, to the even less ambitious folk who will just slit your throat for the shins in your pocket, assuming they can get up off their drunk, lazy asses long enough to do it.

—Tellus Fertrek, merchant caravan guard

Lattimor, page 138

Legend has it that one person was able to contact the intelligence in Mt. Zanlis. She did so by finding a secret chamber at the heart of the mountain. Finding it again proved impossible. Some speculate that the mountain can reshape itself as it needs to.

Wandering Walk, page 88

EMPTY SANCTUM

One of the three main citadels of the *Convergence*, the Empty Sanctum is not empty at all, despite its name. It's located in the foothills at the edge of the mountains, and the local people—who are few—stay away, considering the citadel to be a place of great evil.

MENCALA PEAK

The rumbling volcano called Mencala Peak is another tall mountain in the Black Riage. It's the home of not one but two tribes of savage *lattimors* that attack humans—and anyone else, including each other—on sight.

The atypically vicious *lattimors* of Mencala Peak are said by some to worship dark gods. Other people, however, believe their hate has been bred by generations of poor treatment at the hands of local human inhabitants, whose bones now litter the stony sides of the mountain.

HIDDEN NARESH

Deep in the Black Riage, tucked away as if by accident, like a cheap ring fallen from a finger into the depths of a pocket, rests Hidden Naresh. With around 1,000 inhabitants, Hidden Naresh is a toadstool of a city, growing in the dark, sucking the nutrients from the world around it, poisoning the air and the minds of its inhabitants with every passing moment of its existence.

Here the light is low, and the morale more so. Yet in order to pass through the mountains on this route, you must also pass through the morass that is Hidden Naresh.

This is how Hidden Naresh eats you alive: enter from the west, the land of the Steadfast, where most is clean and kind and light, where there is rule and law that can be grasped by even the simplest of minds. Leave behind the light, the law, the living. Enter the world of the dark, the destroyed, the dead. The gates of Hidden Naresh stand pale and phosphorescent in the darkness. Near them, and you'll see the faces of those who serve as gateposts. Nearer still and you will see the holes that line the luminescent bodies, row upon row of perfect dark wells in the flesh. Too near, and you'll see that

the holes are not empty. Inside each one, a wormlike creature wiggles and pulses, thrusting its pale head into the world, blind eyes and open mouth searching the air from inside its black den. Do not look into the gaze of those who stand guard at the gate, for they are also filled with emptiness, with wriggling grubs for the whites of their eyes.

As you attempt to pass between the gateposts, the worm-things extend farther from their body caves, brushing against your hands, your wrists, your face. Do not harm them. Let them seek comfort in your touch. It's been so long since they've had skin to brush against.

You may pass if you can stomach the understanding that this is just the beginning. That your travels will get worse before they get better. That it's not your body that is in danger here, but your mind, your very sanity. This is the dark legacy—the deadly promise—that is Hidden Naresh.

Step farther, come inside. Here, you'll find the stench of growing and dying things so ripe that you wonder if a death from lack of air would be preferable to being alive and breathing this foul exhaust. Beneath your feet, mud sucks at your steps, as if seeking to drag you into the depths. The wooden walkways, of which there are few, sag with rot and mildew. Structures are built into the mountain crags, atop the rotting skeletons of other buildings, from hanging tendrils high above, and even on stilts that sink deep into the muck. The black liquid that runs down the stone and across the toes of your boots is thick and viscous. Mushrooms and fungi line every surface with ghostly pale bodies.

When your eyes adjust, you'll see that what first appeared to be a city empty of life quickly becomes a city of moving, breathing shadows. Tucked into every bit of blackness is a pair of eyes, a dirty mouth, groping hands. A few are human, although the dirt and darkness make it hard to tell. Others are clearly something else, a fact easily discovered by a rusted squeal of metal, a slither of tentacle, the clack of bone on bone. Some might offer wares, while others beg for an offering of food or drink. Sex is easily had for a sum, should you dare to risk it, as are creatures and trinkets.

Most abundant are offerings of mycos—any number of mind-altering and mind-enhancing drugs made from the mushrooms, fungi, and algae that are both wild-growing and cultivated in the city. Perhaps the cheapest thing in Hidden Naresh is your own death, proffered up for little more than what you might have in your pockets.

If you see red and blue lights glowing in the darkness, they may call like sirens, urging you forward so that you might see something at last, but do not follow them. These are the algae farms, stagnant pools of liquid where the most potent of the mycos are grown. Along the surface of each pool, blue and green and purple strains of algae thrive beneath the red and blue lights. Sharing the pools with the algae are the worst of the mycos addicts, barely cognizant creatures who no longer notice or care that they've become little more than living fuel to power the lights embedded in their bodies.

Ask anyone on the street who rules Hidden Naresh, and they'll say, "No one," or perhaps, "Me." But in truth, the city is ruled by **The Sorcan**, a man so riddled with implants and upgrades that it's almost impossible to tell whether he truly is—or ever was—human. He gives off a weird glow, sometimes yellow and sometimes orange, but it's hard to say whether it comes directly from his skin or from his biomechanical parts. He is often found traipsing the rotting wood walkways of the city, followed by his harem of **Nibovian wives**, who protect him in return for the safe space and fertile men he provides.

The Sorcan is not ruthless, for to be ruthless one must care, at least a little. Instead, he seems entirely unconcerned with the rabble and filth at his feet. Rumor hints that he does not sleep with his Nibovian wives, nor with any other creature that inhabits the town, that he does not eat, and that he does little in the way of ruling. He seems utterly content to let the city grow as it will and exist as it will, as long as he can walk the darkness and retreat to his simple stone house in the city's south end. There are those who say that The Sorcan has fallen to the power of the mycos, and perhaps he has. But other whispers tell of

The guardians of Hidden Naresh are humans genetically modified to be hosts of poisonous wormlike creatures. The guards have legionary stats (page 154), and when the guard hits with a melee attack, the target creature must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution save. Failure results in two levels of exhaustion.

A nano made of cracked and stained synth wanders the Beyond, looking for something it calls "The Hungry City."

The Sorcan has nano exemplar stats (page 156).

Nibovian wife, page 147

darker attractions within the city that hold his attentions.

Perhaps, if you've made it this far with your mind and body intact, you are the person to ask him. Perhaps he'll even tell you.

TITANIC RIDGE

A place where stone meets sky to pose tantalizing dangers, the so-called Titanic Ridge is a very high, sheer drop-off slicing its way through the Black Riage. The ridge rises 10,000 feet (3,000 m) above its base. A series of metal towers runs the length of the cliff top, about 15 miles (24 km). Because these towers are covered with red and blue lights, most still functional, they are best seen at night. It's said that those who manage to scale the cliffs find that the towers are associated with an interdimensional gate and nigh-incomprehensible beings composed of matter and energy at the same time.

CURTARIS

It's hard to find, but if you go looking for it, you might find a long box canyon on the eastern edge of the Black Riage mountains. At the end of the canyon stands an enormous statue of a vaguely human figure. Holding his hands above his head, the seated man appears to be holding the sun aloft in the sky. In fact, a visual distortion

field makes it seem that the sun always appears in his hands, regardless of the time of day or even the weather. At night, the figure appears to be holding the moon, which is always full.

About 300 years ago, people came to the canyon and discovered the massive statue, which rises 400 feet (122 m) into the sky. They called it Curtar and built their community around its base. To the hardy and faithful folk of this city, Curtar is the creator of the universe and the bringer and sustainer of life. Most of the 3,000 people of the town, Curtaris, belong to this cult and spend their lives trying to enact the will of their god.

The people of Curtaris are forbidden to leave the canyon. The doctrines of Curtar state that any straying from the canyon will be cursed with a horrific plague, which means that any who do sneak away can never return. But few people ever try to leave. They remain in Curtaris their whole lives, growing their food and creating whatever they need.

Somei is the leader of the city and the cult. Extremely intelligent and capable, she is faithfully devoted to Curtar and the community.

In the main square of Curtaris stands a massive synth screen, measuring almost 15 feet (5 m) across. From a panel in her chambers, *Somei* controls the images that appear on the screen, broadcast for all to see. She uses this to convey information to the populace as well as to conduct religious rites with the entirety of the population at once, every morning at dawn and every evening at dusk.

THE SLANT MILIEU

There is a place where the rocks whistle lullabies to their pebbled children, where even the stoutest trees and the angriest mountains bow before the press of invisible hands, where a man would take his life before he fought to stand straight against the wail of the welkerwind. There is a place where the sound of terror is silent and where the deadliest foe is an invisible twist of air.

That place is the Slant Milieu.

Somei has aristocrat stats (page 151).



The welkerwind—the fierce, angry blow that storms down off the Black Riage almost constantly—is both the Slant’s savior and its jailer. The wide strip of land in the Beyond is pummeled day in and day out, its trees bending sideways, its mountains turning their pointed tops toward the ground. The few creatures and fewer people who brave the elements to live here have become stooped and hunched. Low and slow is the common refrain among the people of the Slant.

The trees in the area bend at sharp angles, typically a foot or two above the ground. This creates unusual shapes that are coveted by ship-builders, carpenters, and others who work with wood. Those who can get in and out of the area with both a tree and their life intact easily find a buyer for the first (and are glad to have the second). Enterprising business owners have tried planting certain types of trees here, attempting to create nurseries, but the welkerwind scatters a huge percentage of those saplings long before they can take root.

There are few towns in the Slant, if they can even be called towns. Those who live in them call them burrows, and truly that is a better term. Each collection of humans lives in a handful of underground rooms and interconnected tunnels. The tunnels were built not by their current inhabitants but by someone or something long ago. They wind on in a seemingly endless tangle, far more extensive than needed to house the small number of people living there today.

The residents carefully seal off the tunnels past the point where they need the passages to survive, using a mix of mud and wind-rounded pebbles common to the area. The seals not only protect them from additional windways but also decrease the chance of attack. Well-protected, windless burrows are much in demand by other humans and by creatures who seek shelter.

There is much to fear in the Slant besides the welkerwind. Creatures of the area have adapted a variety of mechanisms, many of them dangerous, to defend themselves and their young against the high winds. For example, the sessils are low-crawling marsupials whose young spend their early lives in pouches being dragged along the ground, and the lofty boab gliders are flying carnivores that use the wind to their advantage when diving down toward prey.

The large carnivorous insects known as *caffa* have perhaps become the most dangerous of all. With their cloaked eyes and their wings of iridescent goldgleam, *caffa* have learned to navigate at ground level and below, flying through the tunneled mazes beneath the earth. A flap of their strong wings is enough to send a man flying. Two flaps, and a man will find the wind a far easier force to withstand.

At certain times of the year, a single wing flutter also releases a spray of eggs, all of which dig into the ground to cocoon before becoming *caffa* larvae—ravenous creatures that appreciate the taste of corpses as well as that of living flesh. A *caffa* larva can eat ten times its weight in a single night.

Caffa are also one of the few reasons anyone would choose to brave such a place as the Slant. Their goldgleam wings are coveted by those in more civilized places for decorative purposes, and the cocoons of their young are gathered and spun into *silster*, a nearly unbreakable golden thread.

Caffa, page 144

In the aldeia of Evril, everyone near death is visited by a flock of green birds; it stays until death, even if this takes days.



Because of their small size, many caffa wings and cocoons must be collected to produce even a meager trade amount, but the profit is so high that many are willing to take the risk. Those who trek the caffa trade route, carrying goldgleam and silster from the Slant to those who desire it, will likely find themselves well rewarded, should they safely make the trip.

After the caffa, other humans are perhaps the most dangerous creatures to life and limb here. Abhumans sometimes seek shelter in the burrows, alone or in groups. The Slant has a criminal contingency as well. Long ago, Challadien II, the former empress of the Pytharon Empire and a woman with a special affinity for goldgleam and silster, sent a large group of criminals and guards to the area in the hopes of bringing back quantities large enough to satisfy her needs. Her plan was for the criminals to stay as harvesters while her guards traveled back and forth with the goods. But her guards never returned, and the criminals discovered that they'd been sent to the perfect place to hide from the

world. They and their families stay on, thieving, killing, and selling their spoils to those who walk the goldgleam route.

There are two standing structures in the Slant: the windmoldens and the Susurrus. The windmoldens are as black as night and hundreds of feet tall, with multiple long arms that catch the wind. Built from an unknown material that not only withstands the gale but captures and contains it, the windmoldens seem capable of producing enormous amounts of energy if only someone could discern how.

The Susurrus rises nearly 100 feet (30 m) and is built of a variety of metal and synth tubes in a wide range of sizes, all placed at seemingly haphazard angles. Broken whirligigs swirl wildly at the end of some of the tubes, while torn flags whip at others. Bits of glass and stone hang from silster threads, banging into each other. It seems impossible that such a slipshod structure could stand the test of time and wind.

Those with an ear for music, however, quickly find that the Susurrus is the opposite of slapdash. In fact, at any given angle and strength of wind, the structure provides not wind resistance but wind passage, creating haunting, ethereal music that can be heard throughout the Slant and beyond.

INGWALD

At the far end of Garl Nave, the southernmost pass through the Black Riage, crouches a modest-sized town called Ingwald. Once the home of hunters and trappers that traverse the mountains to the west and the forest to the east, Ingwald is now better known as a town of cutthroats and thieves. The de facto ruler of Ingwald is a **lattimor** named **Gravish-Morel**, who commands a band of river pirates that operate on the Welbyway. Before Gravish-Morel and his scoundrels came to town, the community was led by Tarae, a rugged human woman who had worked as a scout and guide before accepting the mantle of leadership. No one knows where Tarae is now. The pirates and thieves have run things in Ingwald for more than a year.

Lattimor, page 138

Gravish-Morel has warlord stats (page 159).

He also has a fire shield relic.

Fire Shield

Relic, very rare (requires attunement)

When an action is used to activate, this device grants you +3 bonus to AC for 1 minute, during which time all creatures within a 10-foot sphere centered on you must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity save or suffer 4d6 fire damage, or half that if successful, the first time they enter the area.



BLACK RIAGE HEARSAY

Roots of the Mountain: Far below Mt. Jaspar in the southern part of the range is a small subterranean civilization of bestial, almost apelike abhumans. Unlike most of their kind, they don't raid human settlements—in fact, they never leave their own unlit realm—but they are quite hostile to intruders. Rumor has it that these abhumans possess a powerful numenera device that restores full health to those nearly dead and even gives life to those recently slain.

Rock Slide: An avalanche in the mountains has completely cut off a small village from the rest of the world. The people there need food and medicine, but no one knows how to reach them.

THE WEIRD OF THE BLACK RIAGE

Mystic Alignment: At a certain spot in the northern part of the Black Riage, the mountain peaks—when seen from above—resemble the positions of the stars in the northern sky overhead. A skilled astronomer will tell you that the positioning is not a precise match, but in twenty-three years, it will be.



CAECILIAN JUNGLE
Woods. Water. Wind. Rain. These attributes define the Caecilian Jungle. Other people use harsher words. *Death. Destruction. Monsters. Madness.*

Covering more than 500 square miles (1,300 sq. km), the Caecilian Jungle is dense with trees, underbrush, rivers, fog, and rain. Natural and mechanical creatures stalk its shores, lie in wait along the branches, and wing their way down upon prey in the dark of night.

Why go at all, then? Why enter its dark borders and risk life, limb, and sanity? The jungle has treasures to be found, ancient gods to be awoken, and wonders to be discovered. Despite the fact that there are no known reports of anyone returning from a visit to the Caecilian, believers continue to plan expeditions to its tangled innards.

Makeshift camps have sprung up at various points around the edges of the jungle. Typically created by people who canceled their trek at the last minute, these camps are places of shelter and information sharing. They sell jungle maps that point out the locations of various gods and features, but every map is different

from camp to camp (and sometimes even within the same camp). Explorers can also purchase slightly used tools, as well as great quantities of tifo fruits, a bitter podfruit that is extolled for its ability to calm nerves.

There are believed to be at least five wonders within the confines of the jungle:

- **Le Temple de Frogue:** A giant stone temple of a humanoid frog rests in the middle of a swampy river. A fertility symbol, the frogoid invites explorers into her temple through the open doorway between her legs. Her lower levels are covered in the deep swamp that surrounds her. Frogs, newts, flying fish, and other amphibious creatures flock to her.
- **The Wild Garden:** A wall of electricity 10 feet (3 m) high surrounds a carefully tended garden of genetically enhanced carnivorous plants. Members of the Sarracenians, a group of scholars that studies and worships unique plants, often claim that the Wild Garden is their mecca.
- **Archeol:** In this miniature city, each building stands no taller than a human's knees. The inhabitants are sometimes said to be supernatural beings,

Despite the fact that she's kept her silent, unmoving vigil for years, Le Temple is not entirely unliving. If she deems that those who come to her door are worthy, she assists them in their fight against the Frog King but not against his armies—that, explorers must do on their own. To be considered worthy, a visitor must make an attempt (no matter how fumbling) to worship at the altar just inside her front door. Le Temple's assistance comes in the form of her blessing, which temporarily gives one chosen ally froglike reflexes (advantage on all Dexterity checks, saves, and attacks) while imposing disadvantage on the attacks against the character made by the Frog King. The blessing lasts for 10 minutes.

The Frog King has Glaive stats (page 153), plus additional Frog King abilities.

sometimes mechanical, and sometimes just very small humans. Clearly, someone still uses the city, but they're either invisible or adept at hiding.

- **The Malingering Valley:** This deep, dark cut through the earth is always in unnatural shadow. Cold springs that run underground erupt regularly in spouts of cold water, ice steam, and small creatures carried from the depths.
- **The Westwind:** This jungle element is ever moving within its area, a corkscrewed tornado that carries trees, animals, and all manner of debris in its circular grip. Changing in size depending on what it holds, the diameter of the Westwind can be as small as a human or as large as 30 feet (9 m) across. Its destructive path is easy to follow, as it's strong enough to rip trees from the ground and drag large objects for long distances.

If you could look at the Caecilian Jungle from the air, you'd see that the vast forest still holds much of its original shape: an oblong star with five points. Along the edges, where the forest meets the rest of the world, the trees are taller and darker, close enough and tight enough to create a living wall. At the widest section of each point, right before it joins the center of the star shape, sits one of the five wonders. Although the jungle is overgrown and tangled now, it seems to have been the careful creation of loving—and very large—hands.

LE TEMPLE DE FROGUE

Here, at last, lies the thing I have been searching for all of these years. Others scoffed, sure. Still others questioned my sanity. Because that is what one does when placed next to brilliance. In coming up short, they must regain their status by what they tell themselves about me. It all comes back to me, clearly, just as it came back to me to do what was asked of me.

The gods never talked to me, not a one of them, not even when I was little and needed someone to tell me that I was acceptable, not a monster, not a hideous, horrendous thing that deserved to be stuffed deep into the mud and muck. No.

Here, among my own kind, resting at the feet of my own image, surrounded by my own self, I am at home. I deserve the mud and muck, surely, but only because the mud is reverence, the muck is godlike, because this is perfection and I wear its blessing.

—The Frog King

Located deep in the heart of the Caecilian Jungle, Le Temple de Frogue is a much sought-after fertility symbol. Rumors tell tales of spontaneous pregnancies, beneficial mutations, and increased fertility. The humanoid frog remains silent on the issue, inviting explorers to discover for themselves what awaits inside her temple door.

Just inside her front door is a round great room. While there, look up—you can see all the way to the curved roof, and you'll catch glimpses of the seven floors above the ground level.

The great room features a large, clear waterfall that flows from the top floor and splashes to the swamp below. Inside the curtain of water rest two synth statues of tadpoles, positioned as if they're swimming up the falls. Despite their age and the pressure of the water, the tadpoles are pristine, their careful etchings and details still intact. At the top of the falls, high above, sits a smaller replica of Le Temple, her frog legs spread wide on either side of the water. This is clearly an altar to Le Temple, although no offerings can be seen.

In addition to the seven floors that rise above the main level, there are also rooms inside each of the legs as well as beneath the ground floor (although those are flooded with swamp water; travelers need water skills or equipment to explore them at length).

At the far wall, visitors can raise or lower a mechanical platform to reach the upper floors. Despite its age, the platform works smoothly, giving the impression that it's used regularly.

The Frog King, a frogoid mutant who was scorned and ostracized by his family and society for his amphibian appearance and habits, has taken Le Temple for his wife. He haunts her internal rooms, believing that all frogs within the temple are their children.



He is jealous and paranoid of any who come to worship at the altar of his bride, believing that they intend to take his place as her rightful husband and king.

In his time at the temple, he has discovered some of the numenera left by former worshippers and has puzzled out its secrets. Using the devices, the Frog King has created an army of anura: followers built of mud, living frogs, and dead worshippers. Due to experimentation and the occasional lack of appropriate parts, **anura** vary in appearance. One might have a body of mud, the limbs of dead worshippers, and two frog heads trained for attacking. Another might have a human head and body with frog limbs that allow it to move rapidly toward opponents. The king considers the anura to be his true children, as they carry elements of both himself and Le Temple.

The Frog King fights out of jealousy and paranoia. He is less interested in protecting his queen and his young than he is in protecting his own place as Le Temple's husband. He sends his army of anura to deal with intruders and shows himself only after most of them have been slain.

The anura seem endless, but each one is fairly easy to conquer. The real danger is the potential to be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of attackers.

ADDITIONAL FROG KING ABILITIES

Standing Leap. The Frog King's long jump is up to 100 feet and his high jump is up to 50 feet, with or without a running start.

Poison Aura. The Frog King constantly emits a seeping poison, such that his attacks deal an extra 9 (2d8) poison damage on a hit.

ACTIONS

Jumping Kick. If the Frog King jumps at least 15 feet as part of his movement, he can then use this action to land on his feet in a space adjacent to another creature and make a melee attack. If that attack inflicts damage, the creature is also knocked prone.

Anura have uncommon animal stats (page 148).



CAECILIAN HEARSAY

The Trapped Man: Rumor has it that a man named Rorvic is trapped within Le Temple de Frogue, held prisoner by the king. Rorvic knows the location of a vast hoard of valuable treasures and secrets of the past.

The Blue Ache: A terrible disease called the Blue Ache has broken out in a village south of the jungle, and scholars who study plants say the cure is a rare leaf found only in the depths of the Caecilian.

The Seven Pyramids: Seven vaguely pyramid-shaped devices of unearthly metal are thought to be keyed to the Caecilian Jungle. These numenera devices hail from some other world, but if gathered, they give a pair of users (it must be two individuals) strange control over the very nature of the jungle, suggesting a clue to its origins. The pyramids were

gathered by a woman named Daiwesi 400 years ago, but then, for reasons unknown, they were scattered across the Ninth World. They have not been recovered since.

THE WEIRD OF THE CAECILIAN JUNGLE

The Pit of Horrors: Within the confines of the jungle lies a dark pit of unknown depths. Machines appearing to be little more than an elaborate mass of mechanized blades and almost serpentlike mouths lurch out of the pit from time to time, grab whatever living creatures they come upon, and drag them down into the pit, never to be seen again.

The Undying Tribe: A tribe of humans in the jungle that practices cannibalism. For reasons unknown, these people do not seem to age past maturity. Their violent lives are often cut short, but some have reportedly lived hundreds of years.



THE PLAINS OF KATARU

A large, sprawling region, the Plains of Kataru stretch from the southern end of the Caecilian Jungle to the northern edge of the Ba-Adenu Forest. The northernmost part of the plains is somewhat arid, but the rolling flatlands farther south are fertile and temperate.

Wild herds of swift **espron** and plodding reptilian **camethosaurs** roam the plains, preyed upon by **callerail** and **ithsyn**.

There are no cities on the plains, but small towns and aldeia, mostly farming communities, dot the landscape. The farmers grow wheat, beans, and vegetables of all kinds. Most of these small communities are self-sufficient, though they occasionally trade with caravans from the Steadfast that travel across the Black Riage on their way to Augur-Kala. But these are rare.

There are also nomadic tribes of human hunters that erect temporary villages of hide tents and yurts on the plains. These tribes tame the **espron** and ride them as mounts. Some of the nomads have turned to raiding more settled communities and even other tribes.

Terrible storms sometimes cross the Plains of Kataru, particularly in the spring. Cyclones, fierce hail, flash floods, and lightning strikes are serious dangers.

THE EMPTY MACHINE

In the vast fields east of the Black Riage, but west of the Dessanedi fields that have no name, you can find the Empty Machine. It's easy to do—you can see it from miles away because the large machine stands out among the flat fields. It resembles a wide spear point that fell from the heavens and plunged into the earth.

The lower portion of the machine is a scarred shell of metal, and the upper part is a strange tangle of twisting cylinders, globes, tubes, and things that have no name in the Ninth World. The entire machine rises 600 feet (185 m) into the air, and the widest point—itsself 200 feet (60 m) above the ground—is about 800 feet (245 m) across.

Huge hatchways hang open in various parts of the machine, and people have cut or blasted entrances and exits in other areas. The interior is a maze that stretches throughout the machine, seeming to follow little pattern or logic. Tiny corridors lead to enormous echoing chambers, wide access tubes lead nowhere, and everywhere you explore, you find—nothing.

At least, mostly nothing. The interior of the machine seems to have no moving parts, no mechanisms, no controls. The rooms give no hint of their original use, if any. But the Empty Machine is no longer empty because it has been inhabited by various creatures and people over the years, each trying to lay claim to all or part of the structure, always with mixed results.

Espron and camethosaurs have uncommon animal stats (page 148).

Ithsyn, page 146



Callerail, page 152

Travelers tell of a nonhuman city in the northern reaches of the Plains of Kataru, inhabited solely by insect-like creatures.



Notably, a few years back, the Empty Machine was the home of a large tribe of hideous, four-armed abhumans called the dzaal. After they committed many atrocities upon nearby villages, the local folk hired the Triad of Thirst—a group consisting of a **legionary** and two **nanos**—to end the raids. Through methods that remain mysterious, these three champions eliminated the dzaal. If any of the creatures remain, it would come as a surprise to the locals, for none has been seen since that day.

THE AUSREN WOODS

Day 12

The woods really are the queer purple color that I was told. The trees don't look particularly strange in any other way. But the leaves and even the bark range from a bluish-red to a deep violet. The branches are alive with birds of all kinds and colors. I almost expected them to be purple as well, but none are.

Day 14

The fruit of these trees is delightful. I am already wondering if I can carry a sack of them back with me to Uxphon. I think Eilla could make some extraordinary wine from these.

Day 15

I feel unwell, but I plan to leave for home tomorrow nevertheless.

Day 16

Too sick to leave today.

Day 17

Still very ill. I can't help but notice that none of the wildlife eats the fruit of the trees. My gut is covered in bruise-like sores, very tender to the touch.

Day 19

The sores on my gut have formed distinct growths. I can barely stand. The food I brought with me is gone. Only the purple fruit to eat. Despite the pain in my stomach, I am filled with hunger.

Day 20

The growths are . . . longer. I cannot move except to crawl, and barely that.

Day 22

Dear lords of my ancestors, help me. The growths, as long as serpents, have begun to burrow into the soil around me. I tried to cut one of them, but the pain increased beyond that which I could stand. Still so weak. Tomorrow I will try again.

~Here the journal of Temallis Crost ends.

The Triad of Thirst has, in recent months, disappeared without a trace somewhere north of the Ausren Woods.

Legionary, page 154

Nano, page 155



The Ausren Woods are a large forest of purple trees that grow nowhere else. Do not eat the fruit of these trees.

THE ORGOREK

The field is called the graveyard, and it's not hard to understand why. In every direction, all you see are scattered white stones, so greatly resembling gravestones that it is hard to recognize that they are not, in fact, just that. And in the middle of it, the thing they call the Orgorek, for reasons that pass understanding. But then, what would you call it?

A sort of . . . I don't know, building? Monument? Let's say structure. A structure made of some kind of very dense, very hard ceramic floats above the stones. Its surface bears a number of large, round hatches, and from the top, believe it or not, grows a huge tree that must be centuries old, if not far older. And the tree? There are no other trees like it for a thousand miles.

On the underside of the boulders floating around the Beanstalk grows a fungus unknown anywhere else. If it can be harvested and mixed with regular soil, anything planted in that soil grows within an organic sheath that is as hard as steel but very pliable. The sheath can be used for armor or other objects.

No one lives within 50 miles of the Orgorek, but if you can find someone to ask about it, like I did, you learn that while it's serene and even kind of beautiful, it's also dangerous. Fiddling with the hatches apparently causes whiplike tendrils to come out of the Orgorek and attack, and their touch seems to burn flesh in a very unnatural, disturbing way. I'm not sure what that means, but I'm happy to remain ignorant.

The Orgorek likely holds still more secrets and mysteries, but who wants to get close enough to discover them? I'm not an explorer. I'm just a writer.

THE BEANSTALK

The Beanstalk. In the middle of seemingly nowhere, it rises literally into the sky and out of sight. The legends of Jack, for whom all Jacks are named, cross paths with it.

And then Jack climbed the Beanstalk. He climbed and climbed and climbed. He climbed so very high that when he stopped climbing, he found himself in the clouds. He stood so high, in fact, that Jack had climbed all the way to a castle built by giants.

The base of the Beanstalk is a tall tower of metal and glass. As tall as the tower is, rising up from the highest point of the tower is a strip of unknown material that reaches far, far higher. This "stalk" is about 10 feet (3 m) wide but only a few inches thick. No one knows exactly how high it extends, but on a clear day it seems to simply disappear into the sky. Even more mysterious is the Beanstalk's purpose—what waits at the top? The stories, of course, say that it leads to a castle in the clouds, occupied by a giant. These same legends suggest that there is a danger that the giant will one day come down the stalk to plague the land.

Due to a gravitational distortion likely caused by the Beanstalk or the tower, five boulders the size of small mountains (along with numerous smaller stones) float in the air around the base and the lowest part of the stalk. These gravity-defying stones have no known purpose and might be an unintended side effect of the process originally used to construct the tower and the Beanstalk.

In recent years, a small town of about 1,000 residents has grown around the tower. Most residents are farmers, growing wheat and, ironically, beans in the flat region around the tower. The people don't know how to access the interior of the base, but they have built wooden structures and scaffolding around it, which support observation platforms and places for religious rites. There is no wall around the town, but dangerous beasts and other threats seem to avoid the area most of the time.

Someday, the wise folks say, the giant will return, looking for his stolen goods. Looking to get revenge. Looking for Jack. But on that day, Jack will be long gone, his days long since done. But his grandson or granddaughter, or perhaps their grandson or granddaughter, might just be on hand to trick the giant again and save the land from his terrible wrath. Let's all hope so. For the land to be safe, we need not a hero, but a Jack.

There are many ways to travel to the skies high above the Ninth World. Is the Beanstalk one of them? Perhaps. But only the giant knows for sure.



PLAINS OF KATARU HEARSAY

Dark Riders: A group of **aneen**-riding bandits plagues the countryside, raiding villages and waylaying travelers on the road. Their leader is a woman named **Milaconi**, who has the power to heal or harm with a touch. Her chief rival is a woman named **Ghabhail**, who has begun to raise forces to oppose the bandits. Ghabhail, a tall woman with braided red hair and a long polearm, is recruiting help and offering payment for weapons, armor, or other devices (with which she has some skill).

THE WEIRD OF KATARU

The Black Sphere: A sphere of unknown black material rolls across the plains, seemingly of its own accord. Some reports say that it is 12 feet (4 m) in diameter, and others put it closer to 30 feet (9 m), which might suggest that the sphere changes size, or that there is more than one.

The Discordant Blooms: Although rare, a yellow flower grows in certain locations on the plains. If brewed for three days, it forms a concoction that will make the imbiber aroused past the point of clear thinking for up to a day.

Aneen, page 148

Milaconi and Ghabhail have warlord stats (page 159). In addition, Milaconi has a gauntlet of Kataru.

Gauntlet of Kataru

*Relic, very rare
(requires attunement)*

This metal glove restores 3d8 hp, or on a successful touch attack, inflicts 3d8 necrotic damage. Once you use either power, you must finish a short rest before doing so again.



DESSANEDI, THE JAGGED WASTES

The land of Dessanedi is a mostly barren field of broken, jagged glass that lies south of the Great Slab, north of the Plains of Kataru, and west of the Clock of Kala. Although paths lead through the aptly named Jagged Wastes, travel in this region is slow, arduous, and filled with cuts and scrapes—or worse.

Underfoot, traversable paths are nothing but tiny shards of glass. On either side stand outcroppings of serrated edges and razor points. If the Jagged Wastes weren't the only way to reach the pass called the Sheer, it's unlikely anyone would ever come here.

Scholars suspect that at some point in the distant past, the sand-swept dunes of Dessanedi were turned to glass, perhaps through intense heat. Time has broken and shattered the glass, making the wasteland very difficult to cross.

Nothing grows in the Jagged Wastes, and other than a few scavenger birds, little lives there, making it at least a quiet journey. The significant communities are found on the very edge of the wastes, in regions that might technically be considered part of the Plains of Kataru.

THE GREAT SLAB

The Great Slab is a huge construct that rises from the blue-green earth in a hulking block of synth, metal, and organics. It lies at the southernmost edge of the Fifth Stretch of the *Wandering Walk*. Rising more than 3,000 feet (900 m) into the air, straight up on all sides, and covering more than 9 square miles (23 sq. km), the Great Slab can be seen for long distances and is often used as a point of reference on maps. A reddish-black oil continually runs down the sides, making the construct impossible to climb. Nothing grows along its slick walls and few, if any, creatures live near the sides of the Great Slab.

However, the top is a different matter—the surface of the slab is an ecosystem of its own. Carved out of the enormous flat top is a blind valley, a deep, narrow crevasse that runs north to south, with an abrupt ending on both sides. A closer look at the valley reveals that it seems to have been dug out of the surface of the slab, as one might accidentally gouge a table. Littered along the gash—which is called the Driftless Valley—giant, half-buried boulders reflect light, even when there appears to be none. Due to its isolation, the valley hosts creatures found nowhere else in the Ninth World, with genetic mutations that combine two or more creatures into one.

The Wandering Walk is a pilgrimage route through the Ninth World. No one knows the exact length of the Wander, nor can anyone seem to point to its exact beginning or end.

There are many who speculate that the Wander is actually a circle that encloses the whole of the Ninth World and that some, especially those with enhancements or otherworldly attributes, have been trekking its eternal loop since before recorded time.

Those who have attempted to climb the Great Slab have been thwarted by the slick sides, apparent bad luck, or some other impediment that hindered and eventually stopped their progress. Thus, the slab's diverse ecosystem and potential treasures remain unknown to most people of the Ninth World.

WHITE LAKE

White Lake is a small town by most standards, but it is the only bit of civilization for 40 miles (65 km) around, amid a particularly empty stretch of plains near the Jagged Wastes. About 1,500 people call the town home and have named it, not surprisingly, after the nearby lake fed by streams coming down out of the mountain.

The town's unofficial leaders are a married couple named **Hervan** and **Deil**. Hervan is a Nano who specializes in abilities that shape and control magnetic fields. Deil was a skilled warrior, but he lost the use of his legs a few years ago. Today he rolls about in a wheeled metal chair that Hervan levitates and moves when he is nearby. Both men command the respect of everyone in White Lake because years earlier, they drove off a force of abhumans that threatened the town.

The lake was named for the large number of ferrix turtles that lay their eggs each spring, appearing to turn the normally clear waters white. The eggs are a delicacy to the people of White Lake, who carefully leave enough to ensure a new generation of the creatures.

Six miles (10 km) south of White Lake lie the ruins of Selascor Castle, a 400-year-old fortress made of heavy grey stones. The lord of the castle was once the ruler of the area, but after an angry uprising, he was hanged for crimes against his subjects.

YOSH-UL

Yosh-ul is a meeting point for nomadic tribes that dwell in the region. About 1,000 residents live there permanently, but at any given time, the population doubles due to nomads who come for only a month or so each year. In Yosh-ul, the temporary residents hold festivals, weddings, important meetings, and other community

events before once again resuming their harsher nomadic lifestyle.

A natural spring provides water and a few fields of grain and vegetables. The permanent part of the community is a collection of wooden and stone buildings, and visitors to Yosh-ul erect temporary yurts, tents, and pavilions.

The town—if it can be called that—has no official ruler, but if the need for one arises, the leader of whatever tribe or tribes are in residence takes the mantle. However, the wisest among these leaders consult with a woman named **Vona**.

Many people in Yosh-ul revere Vona as a goddess. Unknown to most, she comes from a distant world and is an artificially created organic being capable of asexual reproduction. Sent to colonize Earth, she originally produced a large progeny, but afterward she went mad and hunted down each of her offspring. Since then, she has reproduced only once, creating a daughter called Aorolae.

Vona has the power to alter and shape her own genetic material and that of other beings close to her. Thus, she can transform herself or others. Using her power as a weapon, she can cause an enemy's body to tear itself apart.

Vona is known to those in Yosh-ul as the Great Mother, the Glass Wraith, and the Life Weaver. Although aloof, she is kind and wise.

THE LAMBENT FIELDS

A shimmering wasteland. A business venture. A burial ground of the new gods. A sacred place of ancient worship and death. Depending on who you talk to, the Lambent Fields are all of these things and more.

Bordering the westernmost edge of the Clock of Kala, the Lambent Fields are more than 100 miles (160 km) across and potentially just as deep (or deeper). The surface area is covered in multicolored dust that shines even in the dimmest light. Enterprising individuals collect the dust and sell it to those who can afford it. The wealthy use the dust as décor for buildings, clothing, and their bodies.

Buried deep beneath the shimmering earth, however, is something of greater

Vona has Ojj stats (Arcana of the Ancients, page 210), but with the personality and motivations noted here (she is kind and wise, though aloof). She can also cast harm, inflict wounds, and polymorph at will.

Hervan has nano stats (page 155) whose abilities all stem from magnetic interaction.

Deil has legionary stats.

Colten Gangy has steward stats (page 158).

Efrix Morle has specialist stats (page 158).

The vilgrim flower has crystalline petals that shimmer and vibrate in the wind to attract insects—which it then devours.

Stackle Spire has aristocrat stats (page 151).

Lorne Mamm has diplomat stats (page 152). In addition, she has proficiency on all checks related to local history and religious practices.

value, but no one can figure out what it is or, perhaps more important, what to do with it. Layers upon layers of metallic creations fill the earth, a numenera boneyard, ripe for the taking—or it would be if not for the political tensions rampant in the nearby city of Picalah.

The city has long claimed jurisdiction over the Lambent Fields and stationed a standing army around its borders to keep poachers from the valuable materials. Businesses with the appropriate papers were allowed to send specially trained individuals called yarders to mine the fields as long as they paid their proper percentage to the city.

Everything changed when a yarder unearthed the intact body of a giant mechanical creature. It had three heads and multiple limbs and would have stood at least three times as tall as the average human. The creature bore symbols along its many limbs, and within two of its appendages were objects. The first was a ceramic bowl inscribed with similar markings. The second was what appeared to be a type of stone game piece, possibly an ancient die, bearing pictograms on its sides.

PICALAH

Picalah is a city of about 10,000 people, many of whom came to the area as a result of the find in the Lambent Fields. The simple city is having difficulty dealing with the influx of new people as well as the contentions over the fields.

Shortly after the discovery of the mechanical creature's body, Picalah split apart, with four organizations at the helm of the controversy. While the four groups fight, the mining operations are at a standstill, except for those who sneak by or pay off the guards in the dark of night.

Stackle Spire is the city's director. She believes that the purpose of the Lambent Fields is to bring prosperity, fame, and a high quality of life to Picalah and its inhabitants. She keeps the army at the field's borders and continues to fight for the right to mine the numenera.

Lorne Mamm is the Mag of the Populace Priory, a religious sect that believes the

giant creature is one of the gods that came before and deserves worship as such. The Populace Priory advocates that a large, open-air place of reverence be built in the center of the dig.

Colten Gangy is the overseer of the Land Laws, a group of city natives who argue that the fields are a burial ground for giants. The whole area must be reburied out of respect for the dead. The group insists that replanting the land with a giant grove of trees would keep the dead happy in their graves and prevent them from rising to destroy the earth.

Finally, **Efrix Morle** is the voice of the Lambent Order, a newly founded sect of those who worship the numenera. They argue that Picalah must fund a careful excavation of the fields to look for more giant mechanical creatures and build a museum to protect and display their remains.



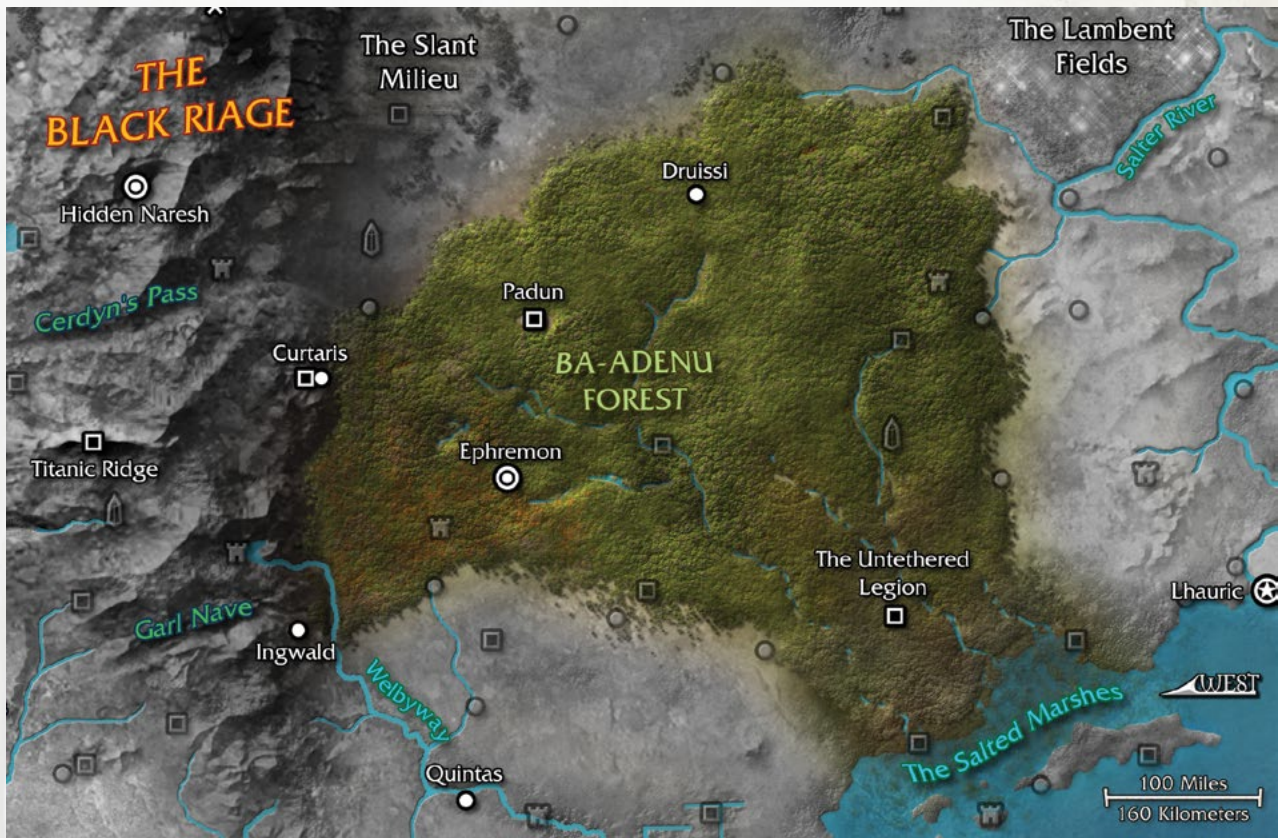
DESSANEDI HEARSAY

Manhunt: A murderer from Yosh-ul has fled into the Jagged Wastes. The nomad leaders seek hardy folk to track him down and retrieve him, but this decision has stirred up contention among the tribes. Some say the windstorms this time of year are likely to claim the criminal before any posse could find him. Others want the more tangible justice of a trial and traditional death by scorpion sting.

THE WEIRD OF DESSANEDI

Rune Tower: In the middle of the Jagged Wastes stands a pristine tower of what also appears to be glass, but the structure looks sturdy, and local gossip says it's indestructible. The tower is 30 feet (9 m) tall, and at the top, it projects images of unknown symbols made of light.

Warrow Beetles: Throughout the wastes, you can find strange, translucent beetles that appear to subsist on the glass. These warrow beetles cannot be eaten safely, as they have more in common with mineral than with flesh.



BA-ADENU FOREST

This vast forest encompasses such a large area of the Beyond that it has at least three distinct climates within its leafy borders.

The southwestern area, which hedges the Black Riage, is dry and crisp. Winds whistle between the tops of the tallest trees, swaying their branches far above the ground. Trees topple regularly here, and a call of “Crackling!” is common among those who live in the wilds. Explorers can expect to find herds of **stondels** and **breslings** here, as well as winged creatures of all shapes, sizes, and colors. This area, which includes the city of Ephremon, is the most densely populated section of the forest. Most people dwell in curved huts built from stone bricks.

The middle section is a dense jungle, thick with underbrush and canopy levels that rise toward the sky and house many wild creatures. The air is so heavy with moisture that water drips from the trees, keeping the ground—and any who walk along it—damp at all times. Most small to medium creatures live high in the trees, hoping to escape the large carnivores that

slink and stalk along the moist forest floor. Here travelers find the large wall known as the Padun, as well as the city of Druissi.

The southeastern tip of the Ba-Adenu Forest, which turns to swamps and bogs, is populated with reed-like snags and boggrove trees. Here, both the air and the ground are still and wet. A false step could land someone throat-deep in a stickybog or at the mercy of a hungry caiman that had appeared to be a dead log. Camouflage is the name of the game, and most creatures are difficult to see among the mud and muck. The Untethered Legion thrives in this part of the forest, a further plague to all who wish to cross through the area.

EPHREMON

The large city of 20,000 people occupies many levels of the forest, from cavelike dwellings among the tree roots to nest-styled homes in the highest canopies. A large circle of carefully tended ester trees creates a makeshift wall around Ephremon, and lookouts sit in well-fashioned tree rests to keep an eye on things inside and outside the city. A complicated system of risers,

Stondels are bison-like animals that are 3 feet (1 m) tall. They have uncommon animal stats (page 148).

Breslings look like segmented worms about the size of a human's arm, with hairy legs that end in three-fingered hands with opposable thumbs. They travel en masse, feeding on leaves in the tops of trees. They have uncommon animal stats (page 148).

ladders, and swings (all made from metal, synth, and wood) allows access to every level of the city.

Most inhabitants are agile and avid climbers, having learned at an early age how to move between the levels. However, visitors are likely to struggle and fall behind as they attempt to follow a native to any level beyond the ground.

Residents worship a creature called the Falgreen, which appears to the pious in the form of a floating young woman in a tattered black and green dress, with twigs for hair. The fiercely devout say that for the price of a child, Falgreen will promise long life, but most people merely consider her to be a bringer of luck and a safety net during their travels among the treetops.

PADUN

Padun is an enormous oval-shaped wall, almost 15 miles (24 km) across, deep in the Ba-Adenu Forest. The original structure seems to have been built from a soft metallic substance carved or shaped into round stones. Over the years, a variety of materials, including stronglass and purple trees from the **Ausren Woods**, have been used to extend and repair the wall.

Its surface features many thousands of windows, doorways, holes, and other entry points. Some have been constructed and include doors that close and lock. Other entrances appear to be the remnants of wars, battles, and attacks.

A number of cities, fortresses, and strongholds have been built within the wall, but all failed and are now in ruins. For every potential ruler who sees the giant wall and imagines a kingdom of loyal and protected subjects, there is someone else who will take advantage of the difficulty in defending such a large structure and space.

DRUISSI

A small town in the northern section of the Ba-Adenu Forest, Druissi is home to around 1,000 inhabitants. It is built on the visible part of ancient, unknown wreckage that generates a stable, low-level heat year-round. Residents of Druissi take full advantage of this, using the conductive

heat to warm everything from food and water to their homes.

THE UNTETHERED LEGION

Deep in the swampy mire of the southeastern section of the Ba-Adenu Forest is the Untethered Legion. The name is both a place and a foul curse, one not even uttered in the brightest of days.

The Untethered Legion is a land of mud and oil, with pools of a murky substance that flows red for days on end, hardens to grey, and then liquefies again. And with every hardening of the land, the hounds of the Untethered Legion incubate inside its belly, waiting to emerge from the soil. When the pools turn back to black and red, the hounds are born, pushing nose-first through the liquid in a great upheaval of slavering jaws and bared fangs.

Awaiting their arrival are the legion's riders, biomechanical humans cloaked to match their new steeds. Their teeming masses fill this region of the forest—gathering, waiting, building something that is so far unseen and unknown. Someone, somewhere, gives them orders. Only the legion knows what those orders are and where they come from.

Ausren Woods, page 85



Jiraskar, page 189

In the aldeia of Carrow there are always exactly three birds perched atop the buildings in town. Always.

A common curse in the area is "I hope you stand before the Kneeling Tower and catch your death of Hulan's Curse."



BA-ADENU HEARSAY

Horrors on the Prowl: An increase in the number of **jiraskar** attacks has the forest people worried. Why are so many of the predators active lately? What can be done about them?

Lost Necklace: Thieves stole a necklace from the home of Darlajyn, a wealthy woman in Ephremon who is the sister of one of the town's administrators. They didn't know that the necklace contains a numenera device that stores information she can access telepathically, including the vault code for the town treasury.

THE WEIRD OF BA-ADENU

Vampire of the Woods: A gaunt humanoid creature, possibly a mutant, haunts the woods, draining the blood of its victims and leaving their desiccated corpses for others to find.

Ice Palace: A small keep made entirely of unmelting blue-green ice stands in the northern forest. No one knows who, if anyone, lives there.



ERRID KALOUM

A shockingly flat lowland region, thought (erroneously) to be dry and lifeless, Errid Kaloum is in fact a shallow salt lake that has formed a thick crust over its surface, an extension of the **Sere Marica**. Throughout the otherwise level, monotonous landscape, occasional mounds rise like islands in a sea. The comparison is apt, because these mounds are, indeed, islands in the salt lake. Each island is surprisingly fertile and lush, even for the climate, for two reasons. First, they're formed due to geothermic activity below the lake, and thus they're warmer than the general area by about 5 to 10 degrees. Second, some of the mineral structures forced up through the salt lake to form the mounds also serve as a powerful desalinizing filter. In other words, within each island is a reserve of fresh water. Thus, the islands are fertile and covered with plants and animals. A few host small communities of human hunters and gatherers who travel across the salt flats in large wagons pulled by salt-crusted therish oxen.

Many of these settlements follow the gory religion of **Lhauric**, but without priests who can communicate with the **Challifani**, their version has simply become bloodletting and murder for its

own sake. Other villages reject these practices but have to fend off raids from what they call the blood-folk, who continually hunt for victims.

HTHUMOS

A small town lies at the confluence of the Salter and Eviet Rivers as they come down out of the Clock of Kala. The town, Hthumos, surrounds a tall castle of dark grey stone. The community takes its name from the castle, which in turn takes its name from its depraved ancestral residents.

The Hthumos family are wealthy nobles who lord over the surrounding land and its people and treat them (and often each other) with trickery and cruelty. They make sport of hunting peasants and rule capriciously, freeing murderers from the dungeon and sentencing innocents to toil in the mills for imagined slights. The nobles maintain their control through dark-armored soldiers called **terror-hounds**, whose collars artificially induce physical pleasure when the wearer inflicts pain or causes fear.

The current head of the house is **Hesterin Hthumos**, a mutant albino with a conjoined twin brother named **Sterrick**. The brother is little more than a head and a hand with tendril-like fingers on Hesterin's torso. However, he is fully conscious, aware, and

Sere Marica, page 94

Terror-hounds have legionary stats (page 154). Terror-hounds' ranged attacks inflict an additional 3 (1d6) psychic damage on living targets.

Hesterin Hthumos (and Sterrick) have aristocrat stats (page 151).

*Lhauric, page 101
Challifani, page 101*



ERRID KALOUM HEARSAY

Rescue Mission: One of the blood-folk villages has captured a well-known naturalist and explorer named Brene Fal Koses, most likely for dire purposes. Members of her traveling company offer a substantial reward for her return.

Castle of Light: On one of the islands of the salt flat, someone has built a castle whose walls appear to be made of translucent energy rather than matter. No one knows who is the master or mistress of this castle, but multiple reports of *abykos* encounters have come in from the surrounding area.

THE WEIRD OF ERRID KALOUM

Ship Without a Sea: Half buried in the salt flats, a hundred miles north of the Sere Marica, lie the remains of a sailing

vessel made of metal and a material that appears to be synth fibers spun like silken webs.

The Floating Circle: In the middle of the salt flats is a circle 300 feet (90 m) across that causes some items placed above it to become lighter. Objects that weigh less than 300 pounds (136 kg) float above the circle, although anything weighing less than 3 pounds (1.5 kg) flies off into the atmosphere, likely never to be seen again.

None So Blind: In the village of Heathian, on the northern end of the salt flats, some of the previous and all of the latest generation of residents have been born without eyes. The local Aeon Priests have fashioned “sight sticks” for these people—devices shaped like hand mirrors, which they hold in front of their faces to gain a kind of artificial sight.

Abykos, page 142

Salachia, page 98

Some mechanical beings and other machines in the proximity of the Sere Marica have developed means to protect themselves from the high salt concentrations. The details on these processes can sometimes be purchased or traded for.

intelligent. Years ago, when local chiurgeons said that Sterrick would likely die and should be surgically removed, Hesterin refused. Instead, she spent a great deal of her family’s wealth scouring the world for numenera that would save her brother, for whom she had unnatural affections. This quest eventually bore fruit, and now Sterrick is encased in an iron helmet that keeps him alive on his sister’s body—a woman that, by all accounts, he despises. (The helmet has a variety of vision-enhancing apparatus, as well as a device that gives him the ability to manipulate metal objects as if he had hands at a distance of up to 100 feet.)



THE DIVIDED SEAS

Along the southern border of the Beyond rest two bodies of water, connected by a channel called the Imoros Strait. One body, Sere Marica, is heavy with blue salts. The other, Navae Marica, has enough fresh water to sustain the entire population of the Beyond for years. The two inland seas are so unlike in every way that they might as well be situated a world apart.

At 1,600 miles (2,575 km) across and 1,500 feet (460 m) deep, Sere Marica is more than twice the size of her sister. The source of Sere Marica’s salt is something of a mystery, for the water that enters the sea from the surrounding rivers and through the Imoros Strait is fresh water, changing only when it reaches the Sere. Creatures

of many sizes and colors live in the lake, from the gigantic and aggressive cerulean octopi to the barely visible duandas, floating bubblefish that attempt to implant themselves in openings on a body.

The cultural sensibility of Sere Marica is as varied as its creatures. *Salachia*, the Salt City, is buried deep beneath the surface of the lake, and the Salted Marshes lie along the northwestern shore. Many of those who live along and within the Sere Marica depend on salt for sustenance and daily living.

One thing noticeably missing from the Sere Marica area is mechanical beings. The salt is too harsh on them, rusting and corroding their internal and external elements without remorse. Travelers in the area, especially those who plan to enter the water, would be wise to protect any technologies, including prosthetics and relics.

The smaller, shallower Navae Marica is a source of fresh water, fish, and game for all who live near it. Many who dwell on the shores are boaters and divers. Here, towns focus on turning the numenera into diving equipment, portable flotation devices, and various forms of water transport.

OUR ORDER OF THE LADY OF THE SALT WAY

Our Order of the Lady of the Salt Way, sometimes called Our Lady of the Acrid Tongue by those outside the group, is a religious order established at least four generations ago by Saint Eseld. Members

believe that all life springs from salt and the salted places of the world, and they feel blessed that their center of worship and inhabitation is just such a place.

Situated on a long, thin, unnamed island in the Salted Marshes, the order consists mostly of women, although gender is not a requirement. In fact, members take only three vows:

1. Worship salt as god and as life.
2. Offer shelter and succor for those in need.
3. Never leave the island unless called upon to do so for great and grievous reasons by a vision of the late Saint Eseld herself.

There are whispers of a fourth vow—a willingness to be encrusted with salt and something (this word changes in the telling, but “cured” and “eaten” are two common ones) upon your death—but no one has been able to verify these rumors.

Members of the order, known as halites, are skilled in the use and creation of all forms of salts. The order supports itself through the sales of various salt products, including fireworks, cured and pickled foodstuffs, dyes and pigments, and medicinal remedies.

Halites of both genders wear comfortable clothing of bright, salt-dyed colors, usually red, yellow, or blue. They wear their hair long and braid it with a salt-and-herb mixture that crusts the twinings in place and gives them the perpetual look of going grey. They smell of brine and sea water.

Though halites believe all other religions (especially the Order of Truth) to be horribly misguided, the order does not consider itself to be at war with them. Rather, the halites lie low and wait, having faith that eventually everyone will see the truth—that salt is the life and the way—and then the ranks of the order will swell, as they should.

Currently, **Halite Gabra** heads Our Order of the Lady of the Salt Way. She is a firm-handed woman whose salted crimson braids fall past her knees and then loop back up to the top of her head. She layers her skin with salt, which over time has built up to give her a nearly ethereal glow. Both of her ears are covered with small, manufactured circles, and if her dark green eyes seem slightly too large for her head, it's because they're not the ones she was born with. Once a loyal member of the Order

Halite Gabra has diplomat stats (page 152).



of Truth, Halite Gabra was eating a platter of salted fish when she saw the vision of a woman in white among the bones. Believing it to be a test of her faith, she quickly stabbed at her eyes to remove the sight. When the vision began speaking, she punctured her own ears as well.

Blind and deaf, she believed she would wander the land until she died for her religion. When she awoke some time later, she was in a large castle, surrounded by the smell of salt and sea, being cared for by loving hands. Taking it as a sign that this was the faith of her destiny, Gabra devoted herself to Our Order of the Lady of the Salt Way.

Over the years, she rose through the ranks and used some of the earnings from salt sales to buy a pair of mechanical eyes and a couple of rudimentary hearing aids. Although generally considered a fair but tough leader, Gabra is known to have a soft spot for those who come to her claiming that their faith has been tested, as hers was.

THE LANDSCAPE OF THE ISLAND

A low seawall runs along most of the unnamed island's border, with a single gated docking area on the shore farthest from land. The island has five stone buildings, all of which are believed to have existed before Saint Eseld's time. Based on the structure and layout of the complex, it might have been the home of someone rich and well protected, perhaps a military leader or ruler. Due to the high salt content of the marshes, the buildings, walkways, and statuaries are covered by thick layers of salt, giving visitors the impression of hulking, misshapen grey creatures.

The largest building, which resembles a basilica, houses a large kitchen and storage area; gathering rooms for games, community activities, and worship; an enormous cellar with a store of goods; and a variety of other amenities. Members of the order live in the upper levels of this building. Each has a private room, and the order does not shun monetary goods or gain, so the décor is finer than one might expect.

The second-largest building, a long, flat structure with a single story, is the crafting

and production space. Here, halites pay fealty to salt by turning it into a variety of useful items. Some of this work is done by hand, and some with hand-cranked and numenera-based machines.

Next to that building, slightly more than half the size of the craft space, is the storefront. Here the halites sell their goods and wares to the public, including fireworks and sparklers in various colors, brined pickles and salted fish and beef, paints, dyes and pigments in bright hues, salt remedies and potions, salt rock candies, and more. Shins are always accepted in payment, but buyers find that an offer of fresh vegetables and fruit—rare delicacies on an island buried in salt—leads to a better exchange.

The final two buildings are crumbling and rarely used, except perhaps for illicit rendezvous or storage.

At the far end of the island, there is a door in a hill, barely noticeable for the crust of salt upon it. The lock and latch, however, appear free of crust, and look as if they are used often.

CURRENT EVENTS

Halite Mafil, a long-standing member of the order, recently fell ill with fever for no obvious reason. Even in his agony, he maintains that it is nothing, a poor choice of fresh foodstuffs, but Halite Gabra believes that he sneaked off the island and that his illness is punishment for his betrayal. She refuses to heal Mafil until he confesses what she believes to be the truth. A newer member of the order, a woman named **Veneta**, seeks aid for Mafil despite Halite Gabra's orders, risking her own standing with the group.

One of the most skilled members of the order, a broad-shouldered woman named **Chatta** with clear blue eyes and short, tight braids of pure white, recently discovered a way to harness the electricity conduction of salt electrolytes. She is eager to sell the plans of the process to someone who can implement them, but she wants to keep the transaction secret from the rest of the order.

Everyone knows that Saint Eseld is long dead, but halites often see her visage in the layers of salt that crust the buildings

Halite Mafil, Veneta, and Chatta have specialist stats (page 158).

and the land. Members of the order also regularly claim that they see her figure walking along the island's shore. To honor the saint, they leave shins and food among the rocks where she is most often seen; the offerings are always gone in the morning.

ASTARIA

Located along the Imoros Strait, Astaria is a place of wonder and darkness.

In the position of power is **Ormakal the Mind**, a disembodied mechanical head who trails a series of wires and cords from his neck when he's not plugged into the giant pillar in the center of town. Ormakal has the ability to encourage others to do his work for him without most people even realizing it. Those who discover his secret either keep quiet or they're made quiet by Ormakal's regiment of loyal worshippers and watchdogs, people of dubious intent who call themselves hivers.

Under Ormakal's rule, the inhabitants of Astaria have devised a way to use osmotic

ADDITIONAL ORMAKAL THE MIND ABILITIES

ACTIONS

Control. One creature that can hear and understand Ormakal within 120 feet must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed for 1 day, or until such time as the target suffers any harm, when it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success.

Ormakal the Mind has nano stats (page 155). In addition he has the control ability.

power—the energy that becomes available from the difference in salt concentration—to supply their leader with the huge amount of energy he needs to function. They've built a large membrane across the strait that is porous to water and salt, but nothing else. Those who wish to cross through the strait may do so for a cost, but they'll probably have to wait because the membrane opens for passing ships and water transports only once each day.



HAYREST

The circular lake city of Hayrest, situated along the southern shore of the Navae Marica, teems with people. For its relatively small size, it boasts a population of 50,000.

Within its carefully constructed moats, which flow around and through the city as though they were natural rivers, Hayrest is a center of scholarly pursuits and handicrafts. Such a place is surprising so far from the Steadfast, but it might be due to the strong influence of the city's varjellen population. Once consisting of just a few visitants in a small section of the city known as the Mark, varjellen have migrated to Hayrest in increasing numbers. The Mark has grown to encompass nearly a quarter of the city and is now home to varjellen and humans alike. Here, you'll find not just markets of interesting and unusual goods but also art studios, scientific laboratories, and street universities.

Additionally, Hayrest is known for water transports of all types, including a special bubble diver made only by Vestiai Lagim, a varjellen who runs the Lagim Divedown in the Mark.

Not everyone in the city is a scholar. The area closest to the lake is home to a large number of fishers, waterwielders, boaters, and divers.

SALACHIA

Located at the deepest point of the Sere Marica, Salachia, commonly called the Salt City, is an immense underwater structure in the shape of a wheel. Covering more than 2 square miles (5 sq. km) and located at a depth of nearly 1,500 feet (460 m), the city is lightly populated, with fewer than 1,200 inhabitants.

Salachia consists of a large outer circle of what look like enormous nautilus shells, connected to one bigger shell in the middle by a series of limestone tunnels. The entirety of the city is enclosed by a semiporous membrane that permits the passage of some gasses, but no liquids or solids.

The city's inhabitants live in the shells that make up the outer circle. Multiple families occupy each shell, using the individual chambers as their homes. The

most prestigious family has the honor of living in the main chamber, which also happens to be closest to the tunnels.

All of the tunnels are built through a process that turns minerals in the saltwater into limestone. They average 10 feet (3 m) across and 15 feet (5 m) high, but they're jagged and sharp-edged from being built and rebuilt. Unlike the shells, the limestone tunnels must be repaired constantly, and sometimes they fall in at a moment's notice.

The massive inner shell is the city center, in more ways than one. All commerce, eateries, schools, and community gardens are located in the innermost shell.

The entirety of Salachia is covered in multiple layers of crystalline creatures that make the city seem to shimmer and writhe in the depths. These tiny masses, called chiffons, are no bigger than a human's hand and are attracted to the shellac of carbon dioxide released by the residents. As long as there is carbon dioxide for them to eat, the chiffons attach to the city's exterior and exhale oxygen back into the atmosphere.

Most inhabitants have no special water-breathing abilities or saltwater skills. To leave Salachia, a resident must encourage a chiffon to seal itself across their mouth to provide oxygen. The only way to reach the surface is the hyponome—a long bubble tube—operated by a creature dubbed Sal. Sal is the city's protector, and those who wish to use the hyponome must get her permission or risk a malfunction during their journey through the tube.

Currently, the city is in something of a crisis: fewer Salachians are having children, and more young people are venturing out for other parts of the world—all of which means less carbon dioxide to attract the chiffons. The city's mayor and creator, **Hiberz**, recently passed a law forbidding citizens from leaving for more than two days at a time. He is also offering a bounty of 5 shins for every new citizen invited (or otherwise brought) to the city.

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

Hiberz is heralded as the savior and condemned as the executioner of Salachia. He's the one who discovered the process

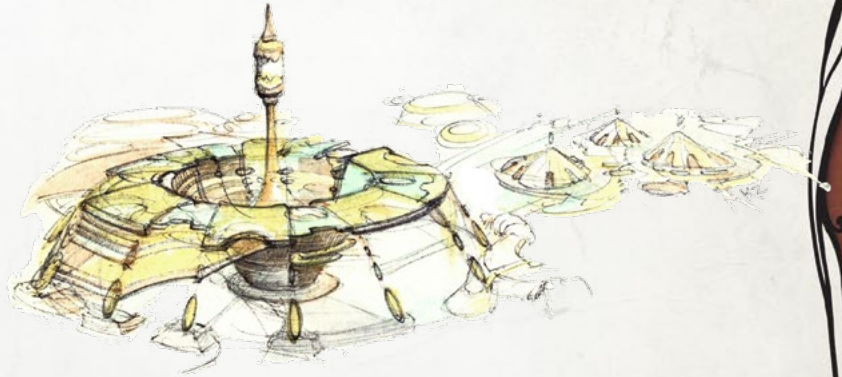
Hiberz has nano stats (page 155). In addition, he wields a carbon dioxide torcher relic.

for turning saltwater into limestone, which allowed the city's original crumbling shell tunnels to be replaced with the current tunnels. Those who praise Hiberz consider him to be the city's leader, although he takes to the task with reluctant humility. Those who scorn him would prefer to see him dead so they might build the city properly, with tunnels that don't have such a high risk of collapsing.

Short and squat, with a bulbous nose and an overly small mouth, Hiberz spends most of his time in his laboratory at the center of Salachia. He rules when he must to preserve the city, but otherwise he prefers to study the compounds of the saltwater and minerals. He is addicted to huffing chiffons, which he believes increases the oxygen to his brain and makes him a better scientist.

Sal, the city's guardian, is a mollusk woman who resides in the main chamber of the center shell, where the circle of the hyponome is connected to the much larger passage out of the city. Although Sal's whole body is rarely seen, those who visit her chamber might glimpse her reddish-brown head with overly large eyes on either side. Nearly a hundred tentacles writhe at the edges of her face, and she uses two of them to speak to others. By placing the tentacles on the sides of someone's face, she can pick up the other person's olfactory signals and understand their meaning. She responds through her own scent, which can be an unpleasant and confusing conversation for those not used to dealing with her kind.

From interacting with Sal, it's clear that she is ancient, but the passage of time is different for her than for others. She still mourns the loss of her real family—the



CARBON DIOXIDE TORCHER

Relic, rare

This handheld device with a big tank and long metallic tubes emits an odorless, colorless gas that displaces breathable air when you activate it as your action. Each creature within 20 feet of the device other than you must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or take 14 (4d6) poison damage.

A carbon dioxide torcher has a depletion of 1 in 1d20.

original inhabitants of the shells—and keeps Salachia safe in the hope that they will return to take their rightful places. (Whether she realizes that they are long dead is another matter.)

Sal protects the city structure at all costs, even if it means destroying the inhabitants. Those who wish to leave through the hyponome must provide solid reasons to do so. If someone attempts to use the hyponome without Sal's permission, they take 4 psychic damage per round until they reach the surface of the lake. It takes four 4 to travel from the point of origin to the surface.

Calabe is the leader of the resistance group, those who wish to take back the city because they believe that Hiberz is destroying Salachia with his shoddy tunnels. Her father was killed when a tunnel caved in on him during the first of the Great Collapses. She was very young at the time and has harbored her bitterness like an oyster harboring a grain of sand. In every respect, Calabe is a stunning young woman, and she wields the power of her looks to gain more followers for her cause. She always wears a black cape with the hood up, perhaps to highlight the breathtaking beauty of her face—or perhaps to cover the dual sets of gills located just behind her ears.

Despite Calabe's lack of training, her fierceness makes her a formidable opponent. In a confrontation, she first attempts to charm and soothe with her beauty. If that fails, she quickly becomes a dirty fighter, using whatever is at hand to attack.

Sal has deadly warrior stats (page 151), though she uses tentacles that work like the warrior's longsword attack but deal bludgeoning damage rather than weapons.

Calabe has diplomat stats (page 152)

Many enterprises are more than willing to sell underwater breathing apparatus and airtight vehicles for a high price to those who wish to travel to Salachia. Unfortunately, that high price is no guarantee that the devices will work below a few hundred feet.

QUESLIN

"Ah, Queslin. What can one say of a town such as this, where the salt runs freely and the brutal tempers with it? I make me home here, for where else could I come upon as many bodies in need of attention, as many fists and faces broken beyond repair? Except, of course, they're not beyond repair at all, are they? For my Machines of Mastery shall soon have you up and about, as good as new—or nearly so—and on your way back to the stinking, brawling blackness from whence you came."

—Orator and Repairist Hedley Staffield, owner of Machines of Mastery

"We don't have a problem. The salt runs freely."
—Queslin Overseer Wilbhur Brandle

"Maybe I did used to live in that pit-hole of a place. Read some flyer promising me riches and posterity if I worked them salt mines. Didn't know what posterity was, but I wanted me some riches. There was kids down there. Tiny babies hooked up to that black machine, drowning in saltfeed. I'll never forget their faces, long as I live."

—Former Queslin resident who refused to be named for fear he would be hunted down and brought back to the mines. He claims to be the only "free retiree" of Queslin's work-to-live program.

Want adventure? Wish to experience the delights of travel and the joy of discovery? More interested in making your way in the world? Whatever your heart's desire, whatever your waking wish, you can have it in Queslin.

We're looking for those who are willing to work hard to increase Queslin's prosperity—and their own! Those who commit five years to our work-to-live program will be well rewarded.

Don't waste any time. Don't ask around. Don't let anyone else in on your special secret to success. Just come to Queslin, where the salt runs free.

—from a Queslin flyer

Don't go to Queslin. This is the thing that no one says. But the only reason they don't say it is that their mouths are stuffed with salt.

The tiny town of Queslin swoons at your arrival, beckons you, urges you to fall in love

with its pretty houses, its kind and delightful merchants, its pleasant view overlooking Sere Marica.

But enter Queslin's gates and all is lost, for the houses are not yours to have, nor the merchants yours to bargain with. And the beautiful view? That is not for the likes of you to gaze upon.

Only the **Overseer** and the **Privs** live above ground in Queslin. Beneath the city, extending far out in all directions, is the Salt Maze, a vast mining operation that never ends and never sleeps. Run by genetically modified beasts made in the Overseer's likeness, the caverns and holding pens of the Salt Maze are carved out by large, remote-controlled beetles. These creatures also mine the salt.

What, then, are you needed for? You are to become a salteater, one of thousands of creatures captured beneath the sunken swell of the earth, your body trussed up, your mouth pried open to receive the saltfeed. In time, the leeches will be attracted to your scent. Then they will draw the salty sweat from your body until they become a perfectly brined delicacy, a salty and savory snack fit for only the most royal of tables.

If you survive the experience long enough, you will, as promised, be well rewarded—probably with a little house in Queslin that overlooks the shore.

THE CROMULUS RANKS

From far away, there appears to be a small mountain range on the southwestern shore of the Sere Marica. Getting closer, you can see that the peaks, while extraordinarily steep, are also extraordinarily regular. Thus, they are called the Cromulus Ranks, named for a long-dead warlord who forced his troops to maintain perfect marching formations at all times.

The peaks are not mountains at all, but rows of pyramidal structures, each 2,000 feet (600 m) across at the base and more than 1 mile (1.5 km) high. Over time, enough sediment and erosion has occurred that the once-white pyramids can pass for weird mountains. In places, vegetation even grows on them.

The Overseer has Aeon Priest stats (page 150).

Privs has glaive stats (page 153).

Cromulus led his armies on a trail of conquest throughout the southern regions of the Beyond more than 80 years ago. Due to his depravations in the villages and towns that he conquered, a surprising number of people in that region can correctly claim to be his descendants.

These ancient edifices are buildings with hundreds of interior levels, each with enough space to house hundreds of thousands of people, although the original builders and inhabitants might not have been human. Relics and cyphers abound within, but gaining entrance to any of the peaks is difficult.

Some of the pyramids rise out of the water at the edge of the sea. These peaks, in particular, teem with vegetation, nesting birds, and other life.

LHAURIC

If a soul walks the glass streets of Lhauric on a quiet night, when all others within its massive walls slumber, the chattering of the Challifani can be heard. The million gods bicker and quarrel constantly, their knowledge great, but always contested.

—Vullerian Fol, *The Million Gods*

Probably the largest city in the Beyond, Lhauric claims a population of 80,000. This theocratic city-state is ruled by the **Priest-King Tharimalles**, speaker for the million gods of the Challifani. The people of Lhauric use both the Salter River and the Sere Marica to their benefit, working as fishermen and merchants. North of the city, they have built a number of gently turning mills on the river for processing grain, wood, cotton, and other commodities, including metal and synth brought in by the local drit sifters.

The streets of the central part of the city are paved in small pieces of volcanic glass, giving them a distinctive black sheen. The grey stone buildings usually rise two or three stories in height, though a few towers and grand buildings are even taller.

Deep below Lhauric is a hidden cavern. If you can find this cavern, you will discover a huge pool 50 feet (15 m) across. A living creature lies within the pool, looking very much like a gigantic human brain. Tubes and cables run from the creature out of the cave, but were you to follow them, you would discover that they run back up to the surface of Lhauric—specifically, to a lower level of the Challifani Temple. The brain is a deranged biological construct from ancient

times, and the Challifani are various facets of its fractured personality.

These gods demand blood sacrifice. They mandate that **Challifani priests** and adherents practice flagellation, mutilation, and torture. The people of Lhauric believe that these horrific rites keep their gods happy and thus keep their city blessed. In reality, the Challifani have no power other than knowledge—the brain has sensors throughout the region and grants Tharimalles and the lesser priests scattered bits of information from its observations. These revelations, as well as the gods' gory commandments, come to the priests in the form of drug-induced visions that they receive while being tortured in the lowest portions of their temple.

After generations of commandments from the million gods of the Challifani, the people of Lhauric have grown accustomed to the bloody practices of their religion. In fact, many secretly or openly revel in the gore and violence of it.

The priests are men and women who command both terror and respect. Most are maimed and scarred from their communal sessions with the brain. The priests, mounted on massive, tigerlike beasts called **razorcats**, lead their holy knights through the streets, selecting victims as needed. To resist a priest, or to aid a chosen victim, is to oppose the divine will of the Challifani, a sin punishable by death and the assurance of a horrific afterlife.

The Drit Sifters: In the villages to the north and east of Lhauric, many people earn their living by sifting through the artificial soil and collecting valuable bits of metal and synth. They bring their valuable drit into the city in wagons. There, the materials are smelted or reprocessed so that they can be used by craftspeople or for manufacturing. Most of these sifters also worship the Challifani.

Challifani priests have legionary stats. In addition, they have proficiency on all Charisma (Intimidation) checks.

Priest-King Tharimalles has arch nano stats (page 155). In addition, the priest-king has advantage on all Charisma (Intimidation) checks.

Razorcats, page 148



Automaton sentries have type five basic automaton stats (Arcana of the Ancients, page 246). In addition, they have advantage on all Wisdom (Perception) checks.

THE WEAL OF BAZ

Unit-A29-##2• begin sequence relevant

Code 4881: Baz

“Baz” signifies organic language designation of original, primary unit

“Baz” equates to organic language term “savior.”

Appropriate refrain 923/3K: “All thanks and praise to Baz, whose mercies sheltered us from the merciless world. Power, processing, and storage to him.”

Analysis: “Baz” synonymous with “machine messiah.” Accuracy: 9.99987 out of 10.

Located far out in the Beyond, on the calm shores of the Navae Marica, sentries watch over the only entrance to the Weal of Baz. This hidden refuge is a haven for intelligent machines. Fully organic creatures are allowed access very rarely, and then only for a short stay.

Baz was a vastly powerful artificial intelligence that used special abilities to carve a small town out of a cleft in a rocky cliff face. Only one pass connects it to the outside world, though access across the water is also possible.

It’s not known whether Baz survives into the present day.

The Weal of Baz is like no other aldeia. The entrance is through a narrow cleft in an overgrown cliffside, concealed by holograms and guarded by a pair of vigilant **automaton sentries** equipped with vision-enhancing hardware and armed with long-range projectile weapons manufactured in the town.

Many of the automatons and intelligent machines found here exist in various states of disrepair. They are, as a whole, a factious lot, barely able to communicate with one another. Some are more than a million years old. Others claim to be far older, created by very different hands for very different purposes. Some are potent and dangerous; others exist as cobbled-together messes of spare parts that barely function. But they all seem to share a single unifying factor: a fear, hatred, or loathing for intelligent organic beings. There are exceptions, however. Rarely, an intelligent machine in the outside world will give a deserving organic creature a small card, disk, or patch that bears a strange, complex symbol. This symbol is a pass that allows the individual to enter the Weal of Baz.



DIVIDED SEAS HEARSAY

War of the Machines: Ormakal of Astaria wants to conquer the Weal of Baz—or rather, he wants his people to do it for him. First, however, he needs some explorers to find the refuge. Any travelers who stop in Astaria are likely to be asked to do so.

Salty Assailants: Our Order of the Lady of the Salt Way has a standing agreement with Gweneal Der, a trader on the outskirts of Seshar, for a shipment of fresh fruit and vegetables at regular intervals. However, Gweneal recently arrived at the island without her wares, claiming that she was attacked along the way by dark, sinister creatures of mist and muck, barely escaping with her life. She refuses to continue working the trade route until she can be promised safe passage.

Amphibious Migration: Large swarms of *gorjans*, freshwater amphibians with large, strong jaws and a habit of spinning prey in the water to strip off their skin, have started crawling

out of the Navae Marica. They seem to be heading west and are largely aggressive in their migration.

THE WEIRD OF THE DIVIDED SEAS

The Scent of Memory: A woman named Lororme lives aboard a floating machine in the Sere Marica. She goes from shore town to shore town, offering to play the machine, which she calls a scent organ. She promises that she can play any scent—from a favorite food to an ardent affair—and it will evoke a memory so vivid you will feel that you have relived the moment.

Missing Person: Along the outskirts of Queslin, the outline of a prone body is drawn in white. Wires hang in the air, jutting out at odd angles as though still attached to the person who might have been there.

Symbols and Shells: Fishers have been pulling shelled creatures out of the Navae Marica that have odd symbols inscribed in various colors on their shells. If the creatures are killed, the symbols transfer to whomever or whatever caused the demise.

Inside the community, a traveler will find some of the finest machinesmiths and technicians in the Beyond, as well as an enormous stockpile of spare parts. This stash, known as the Hoard, is probably one of the greatest sources of mechanical and technical parts in the Ninth World. Next to the Hoard stands the Dragon, a tower-sized generator fueled by sunlight. At any given time, dozens of machines gather around the Dragon, recharging their own personal energy through a wide array of cables, jacks, or receivers. For obvious reasons, the inhabitants value the Dragon and even revere it as a god.

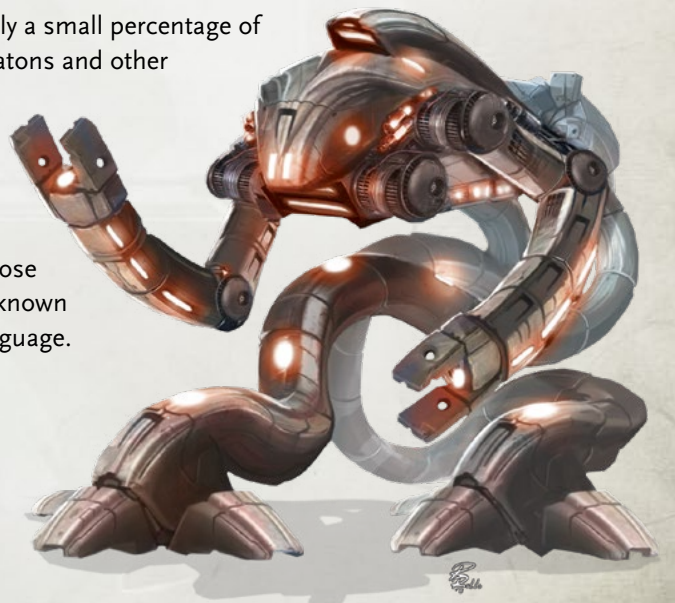
A few manufactories exist in the Weal of Baz, producing weapons, tools, and parts needed for some of the machines. Due to technological, resource, and material limitations, they can't produce everything they need, so agents of the refuge journey into the wider world to gather parts by scavenging, trading, or theft. The Hoard is proof that the agents have been gathering for a very, very long time.

Most days in the refuge, automatons wander, relax, communicate with one another, or sift through the Hoard, searching for needed parts. The inhabitants don't have individual homes, so they use communal shelters to stay out of

the elements when necessary. Despite the natural harbor, they ignore the great body of water nearby except to watch it for intruders.

Organic visitors to the Weal of Baz will not find comforts they might normally expect, such as food and beds suitable for living beings. Still, for those who can find and gain entrance to the refuge, the machines are a nearly endless source of information, assuming they can be convinced to communicate, and assuming a means of communication can be found—only a small percentage of the automatons and other machines here were created to speak, and only some of those speak any known human language.

Gorjans have defender stats (page 152). In addition, they can breathe air and water.





THE AMORPHOUS FIELDS

Stretching for more than 200 miles (320 km) across a mostly open plain, the Amorphous Fields churn, twist, and undulate in dangerous, unpredictable, and unsettling ways. The fields are a strange mixture of rock and earth that moves and churns almost like a semisolid substance, with pockets of organic soup that occasionally harden into a solid or semisolid form, making the region a place where organic and inorganic masses undulate together. It goes without saying that the fields are extremely difficult and dangerous to cross. With no warning, the ground at your feet can turn to pools like quicksand, rise up with a sudden thrust, or open like a yawning chasm. Explorers who have spent time here speculate that the Amorphous Fields are actually a solid or semisolid crust over a viscous sea of organic liquids. A few suggest that the region is a single living entity.

No normal plants grow in the Amorphous Fields, but here and there clouds of fungal spores find purchase on a solid or semisolid surface and quickly grow bulbous gardens

of fruiting bodies found nowhere else in the world. Some of these are poisonous, but a few have valuable medicinal effects.

Understandably, hardly any people or creatures live in the area. However, the region does have a few natives, most notably the *ligoshi*, which appear to be house-sized, bioluminescent jellyfish that swim in the liquid soup beneath the ground and emerge when the crust breaks or opens into a semisolid pool. The *ligoshi* near the surface produce lighter-than-air gasses so that when they burst forth, they float into the air, sometimes for hours at a time. Although they subsist on the organic materials found here, they seem to enjoy wrapping their long, paralyzing tentacles around creatures from other realms who have wandered into the wrong place.

A small number of hardy human settlements exist on patches of continuously stable ground, like islands in the churning soup. These people know (mostly) safe routes across the fields and hunt the *ligoshi* as well as gather the valuable fungus that grows here. Most outsiders consider them mentally ill.



THE TWISTED SPIRE

Near the center of the Amorphous Fields, a tower of living, greenish flesh reaches 1,000 feet (300 m) toward the sky. From far away, this twisted spire looks like stone, but it's actually organic tissue. Interior vessels carry vital fluids to the top of the tower, pumped by massive, heartlike organs that can be seen beating within it as you approach. Other than this undulation, however, the spire does not shift and move the way the surrounding fields sometimes do.

The Halo: About three quarters of the way up, the spire is encircled by a ring of metal. This ring, called the Halo, is a circular structure that slowly turns around the spire. It has many green-tinted circular windows on all sides, including the top and bottom. Reaching the Halo requires flight or levitation, but if that can be accomplished, numerous hatches and ports allow entry. Within the ring is a numenera treasure trove—and ancient dangers as well. Explorers report waves of radiation, poisonous gases, and molecular-rearranging energy fields.

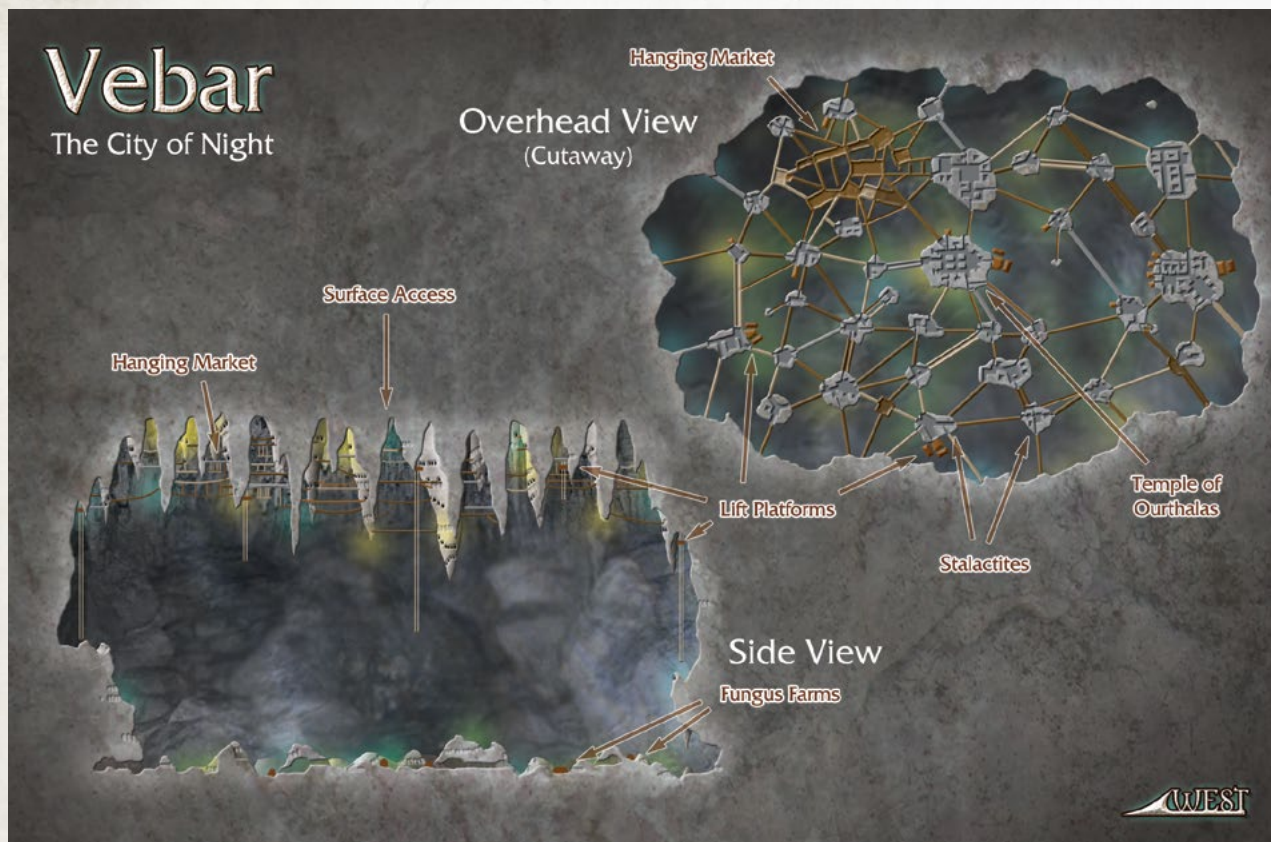
VEBAR

Vebar is an underground city located in a vast artificial cave. The buildings are of ancient design and hang from the cavern's ceiling. The place is so old that limestone formations have begun to transform the city, making the buildings more like massive stalactites. Vebar is home to about 8,000 people, who enter and exit the city through a series of winding passages that lead up to the surface.

The populace moves around the city through tunnels at the top, above the suspended buildings, or on bridges and walkways that connect the structures below the level of the ceiling. Some people travel on cables and chains alone; just about everyone here is an adept climber. Vebarans like to decorate their city by hanging interesting objects from cords or chains, and the city is filled with dangling ornamentation.

Vebar, sometimes called the City of Night, is lit by a series of artificial lights positioned throughout its inverted thoroughfares. Most





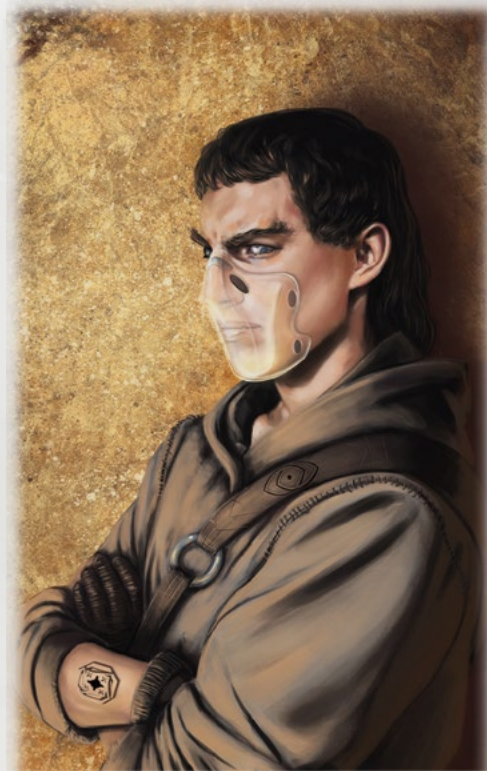
of the inhabitants have grown to dislike the surface, in particular the light of the sun. If they do visit the surface world, they prefer to go at night.

The people of Vebar farm fungi in the lower part of the cavern. They harvest it for food, textiles, and a wide variety of medicinal uses. Rope-and-pulley elevator platforms connect the buildings with the fungus farms far below. The farms are lit by glowglobes and other artificial lights, so that from the city, looking down, the bottom of the cavern seems like the night sky. Conversely, the farms look up at the city the same way.

Near the center of Vebar is a huge temple to the local god, Ourthalas, and the homes of his blind wife-priestesses. Ourthalas is depicted either as a huge, spidery thing with sprawling legs or as a tentacled monstrosity with many arms extending into the darkness. He is said to dwell in the “Cave of Life-Giving Shadow.”

Dalthius, a well-known figure in Vebar, is an interesting man with mysterious origins. He was found in a metal cylinder in a cave not far from the city. He seems to have difficulty in the open air and direct sunlight,

so he remains in Vebar as much as possible. Dalthius is helpful, friendly, and liked by everyone, and he is first to jump to the city's defense in times of need.



Dalthius has deadly warrior stats (page 151).



THE AMORPHOUS FIELDS HEARSAY

Ancient Eggs: Sometimes, gigantic, egglike capsules emerge from beneath the Amorphous Fields. When one of these eggs bursts, a strange creature is found within. Many people believe the creatures come from various points in the world's past. Recovering an egg and bringing it out of the fields before it hatches might be a task that a biologist or scholar would find extremely valuable.

Viva la Revolution: The people in and around Tastim, a large town south of Hayrest, have had enough of their tight-fisted, law-breaking rulers and want to overthrow them. However, to do so they need weapons, organization, and, perhaps most of all, a champion.

The Empty Village: The village of Torin, southwest of Vebar, has been discovered abandoned. While all the buildings are intact, every inhabitant is gone. A strange greenish mist clings to the ground in places, but there are no other clues to what might have happened here.



SESHAR

The land of Seshar is an extension of Matheunis, the Cold Desert, but two factors set it apart.

First, it was a separate kingdom ruled from what had been its capital, Nebalich. The ruling family could not sustain its holdings, however, and the kingdom collapsed more than 250 years ago. Second, Seshar's length and breadth are marked by a series of canals, which date back to the prior worlds and are arranged in a mysterious, almost mazelike pattern. The canals are all deep and regular, with smooth, 50-foot (15 m) escarpments on either side, often showing baroque embellishments and even graven images. The people of Seshar simply call them canals or rivers and regard them as if they were natural.

The canals are vital to Seshar's well-being. Small barges and ships allow trade between the villages of the region. These villages are built on the high embankments of ancient design, or they nestle in clefts cut into the side of the embankments. As you move away from the canals, the land becomes arid and lifeless other than scorpions, insects, and the occasional desert bloom. **Margr**, however, are a real scourge in the area, and raiding marauders pose a serious threat. Thankfully, they rarely come too close to the canals.

NEBALICH

If there is a haven for civilization in the Beyond, it might be the city of Nebalich. Its king and queen rule justly from their silver and emerald palace that overlooks the sea, royal banners fluttering in the wind. **King Falton and Queen Sheranoa**, although short, stout, and unattractive by conventional standards, are two of the most loved rulers in the Beyond (and perhaps the Steadfast as well).

Nebalich has approximately 35,000 people and includes a fairly large number of varjellen and a few lattimors. A maritime city, Nebalich is also the beginning of the canal trade routes. It boasts citadels of white marble and wide plazas filled with bright and noisy markets and festivals.

But like most cities, Nebalich has its dark side. A group of professional thieves operates out of the community, preying on the citizenry, the people of the surrounding area, and even the riverboat traders. They call themselves the Yellow Serpent, and chief among them is a man named **Diario Mardain**, who works not as a thief but as a master assassin. He is an attractive man with platinum hair who uses a variety of numenera weapons and tools to accomplish his commissions as efficiently as possible.

THE WEIRD OF THE AMORPHOUS FIELDS

(Arguably, the whole place is pretty weird.)

Searchers: On very rare occasions, melon-sized spheres of red metal, covered with lights and what appear to be sensors, fly over the Amorphous Fields, seemingly searching for something.

Fungal Scholar: At least one of the patches of fungus growing amid the fields is intelligent, communicates via spores, and has sporadic knowledge of the last few million years of history.

The Flying Village: In a village at the western edge of the Amorphous Fields, the local Aeon Priest clave has discovered the means to make gravity-defying harnesses in large numbers. Everyone in the village has one, so all residents float and fly—continuously.

Those who make the long trek to Seshar to visit Yrkallak Tower—renowned as a place of great learning and study—find only the twisted remains of its run-in with the iron wind.

King Falton and Queen Sheranoa have aristocrat stats (page 151).

Diario Mardain has jack stats (page 154). In addition, his melee and ranged weapon attacks inflict an additional 10 (3d6) poison damage.



Margr, page 197



REDSTONE

Redstone is a moderately sized village carved into the side of one of the canals in a slope. A quarry at the top of the slope gives the village its name, as it's the source for an interesting red stone that always seems to contain a pattern of multiple straight lines with regular angles.

MATHEUNIS, THE COLD DESERT

Wild and untamed, the vast region south and east of the Steadfast, stretching from the coast of the ocean to the edge of Seshar, is known as Matheunis. Some call it the Cold Desert. For the most part, it's a dry land of stone and sparse vegetation. Large black carrion birds fly overhead, looking for creatures that have strayed too far from safety in this realm of little sustenance.

Over the last fifty years or so, many folk from the Steadfast have moved south to villages free of empires and kings. Of course, this growth has influenced some rulers, such as the Empress of Pytharon, to begin to look southward with interest.

Free of large cities other than Nihliesh, Matheunis is dotted with isolated aldeia



SESHAR HEARSAY

The Power of the Hand: Along the canalways of Seshar lies one village no one wants to travel past if they can help it. Tirrum's inhabitants are cannibals who waylay travelers and eat them—all except their hands. The people of Tirrum revere hands and hang them from cords in their homes, wear shrunken hands as totemic jewelry, and use them to adorn weapons and tools in creative, albeit disturbing, ways.

THE WEIRD OF SESHAR

Man from the Stars: In a small village called Everen lives a man named Yrk. He claims to be an extraterrestrial fugitive hiding from others of his kind. Yrk appears to be completely human, although his understanding of the numenera is impressive.

Margr Chief: Bastoon, the leader of one of the larger margr tribes, wears a collar that looks like it was meant for an animal. In truth, it allows him to create duplicates of himself that last about 10 minutes, freeing him to do two things at once. Bastoon doesn't seem to know how to operate the collar properly, however, so the duplicates appear randomly.

that keep to themselves almost to the point of xenophobia. The people of the land are herders and subsistence farmers. One of the most common types of produce raised is ice candles, a melonlike fruit that grows better in cold temperatures rather than warm.

Matheunis is also the domain of many dangerous beasts and marauding abhuman tribes, particularly *margr* and *murden*. For reasons unknown, the region has far more than its share of mutants.

One thing that many Matheunis folk share is a fascination with *drakka*, insects that grow to 1 foot (30 cm) in length. Drakka are similar to bluebottle flies but a bit more intelligent, and they can be captured and domesticated as pets. Some people use drakka to help herd the brown-wooled umlan goats or as watch animals trained to alert their masters to signs of trouble spied from on high.

NIHLIESH

An ancient machine, likely once a mobile vehicle-city of some kind, lies half buried in the caked earth. More than 200 years ago,

nomads explored its interior and found—among other things—a pair of massive devices that they brought back to life. These resurrected mechanisms produce a thick orange-brown fluid now called churn. It can be shaped and molded easily, and once dry, it's harder than stone but fairly light. The nomads began to build atop the half-buried vehicle, raising curving towers, impossible spans, and shapely domes of churn painted in vibrant colors. They named their new city Nihliesh, after a word in their language meaning “tiers.”

Today Nihliesh has three tiers. The first and lowest is the machine itself, where workers maintain the churn-producing devices and shape the material as it comes out. The original buildings erected atop the machine compose the Second Tier. These haphazard, squat structures are so crowded together that when you're within and among them, you'd swear that you were underground. Atop this tier are the elegant, artistic buildings that Nihliesh is best known for, with tall spires reaching high into the sky. Residents call it the Third Tier or the Upper Tier.



Margr, page 197

Murden, page 204

Drakka have uncommon animal stats (page 148).



Each tier is ruled by a powerful entity. These leaders come from a group called the Fahat, the descendants of some of the original explorers of the machine. The Fahat are mutants, many of them horribly disfigured, but each is revered as a member of the city's upper class. In fact, the people of Nihliesh venerate mutation in general. Some nonmutants intentionally disfigure their bodies in ritualistic displays of adoration.

Nihliesh is the largest city in the Cold Desert, the home of more than 20,000 people. About 5,000 of them live and work in the First Tier, where they rarely see the sun or breathe air not tainted with the fumes of churn production. They live short lives of hard work, debilitation, and disease, yet their position is coveted, for some of them, or their offspring, become Fahat.

Another 5,000 people live in the dark tunnel-streets of the Second Tier, although some of them spend as much time as possible in the Upper Tier. The residents of the Second Tier are the lowest caste of the city, living neither in the light of the Upper Tier nor among the prestigious machines of the First Tier.

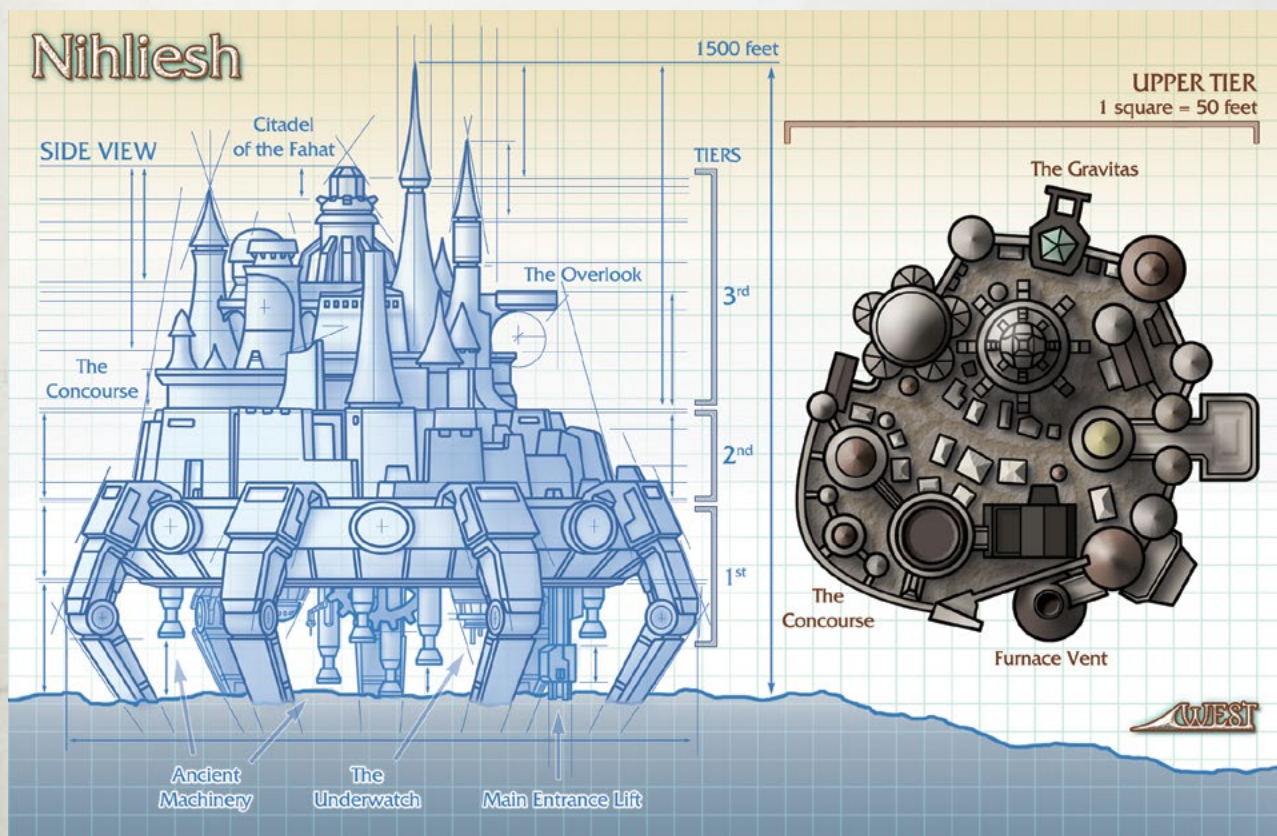
Half the city's populace dwells in the Upper Tier, where the wealth of Nihliesh is clear. Glass and glowglobes of various sizes and shapes have been worked into the towering buildings and graceful domes. Powered elevators allow residents to reach the highest floors of the towers quickly and easily. Shops and markets stock much of what the Steadfast can offer, as merchant caravans from throughout the lands come into and out of Nihliesh heavy with goods and wealth.

The Upper Tier also hosts the Citadel of the Fahat, where learned researchers study evolution and mutation, which are both beneficial and detrimental.

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

The ruler of the First Tier is **Gayv-oreth**, an obscenely obese man covered with pustules that ooze various fluids. Through concentration, he can control the composition of these fluids, allowing him to produce life-giving elixirs for his faithful followers as well as streams of powerful acids to defend himself. Gayv-oreth is a kind and compassionate ruler, but

Gayv-oreth has warlord stats (page 159). In addition, he has the abilities noted under his name in the sidebar on page 111.



THE FAHAT

The familylike caste known as the Fahat are the central figures in a quasireligious faith that reveres the blessing of mutation. They are the equivalent of divinely touched luminaries, considered saints or demigods even if they have no beneficial mutations.

The researchers that work for the Fahat in their Nihliesh citadel strive to fully understand mutation and why it is caused by some of the numenera. They secretly hope to one day control it, making new, tailored Fahat with appearances and advantages of their own design. The Fahat themselves do not relish the randomness of mutation, even though it is a core tenet of the

faithful who revere them. If they ever achieve the control they desire, they would likely never reveal it to the general populace, instead using it to create better and stronger Fahat members as proof of their organization's blessings and power.

The Order of Truth does not like the growing influence and adoration of the Fahat. There is every reason to believe that if the Amber Papacy were not so preoccupied with its crusade against the Gaians, it would use force to squash the Fahat "religion" before it roots too deeply in the heart of the large and important trade city of Nihliesh.

his appetites sometimes get the best of him, transforming him into a dangerous, insatiable monster. Still, his people love him and habitually forgive his crimes.

The ruler of the Second Tier is **Ni-chodoss**, an armless, eyeless, multibreasted woman whose elongated torso is almost like a snake's tail. She has an array of telepathic and telekinetic powers, and her network of telepathic spies, thieves, and assassins allows her to control the tier as well as exert

silent influence in the Upper Tier. Unlike the people she rules, Ni-chodoss is extravagantly wealthy, thanks to her thieves.

Mada-liviss rules the Third Tier. Almost 8 feet (2.5 m) tall and inhumanly lithe, she is devastating with unearthly beauty despite her six-fingered hands. Mada-liviss is quite old and growing feeble, a fact she hides well. However, people have begun to notice that she appears in public less and less.

Mada-liviss has diplomat stats (page 152).

Ni-chodoss has deadly warrior stats (page 151). In addition, she has telepathy in a 1-mile radius and the psychic supremacy ability.

ADDITIONAL GAYV-ORETH ACTIONS

Variable Fluid. As his action, Gayv-oreth can produce from his body either a healing elixir or an acid stream, assuming they are charged.

Healing Elixir (Recharge 4–6). As his action, Gayv-oreth can produce a spray of fluid that restores 7d8 hp to up to three living creatures within 15 feet of him that he selects, assuming the spray is able to contact some portion of their skin.

Acid Stream (Recharge 4–6). Gayv-oreth sprays fluid in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 31 (7d8) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

ADDITIONAL NI-CHODOSS ACTIONS

Psychic Supremacy. As her action, Ni-chodoss can either mind scan, mind lift, or mind blast, assuming they are charged.

Mind Scan (Recharge 3–6). Ni-chodoss attempts to learn the surface thoughts of a creature she can sense within 100 feet for up to a minute while she concentrates. To resist, a creature must succeed on a DC 16 Intelligence save.

Mind Lift (Recharge 4–6). Ni-chodoss attempts to move a Huge or smaller creature—or an object that weighs up to 1,000 pounds—as her action. The target must be within 100 feet of her and something she can sense. If affected (creatures gain a DC 16 Strength saving throw to resist once each round), she can move the creature or object up to 30 feet in any direction so long as she concentrates. An affected creature is restrained, and if lifted upward on the previous round, may be suspended in mid-air.

Mind Blast (Recharge 5–6). Ni-chodoss emits psychic energy in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 16 Intelligence saving throw or take 22 (5d8) psychic damage and be stunned for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

CITADEL OF THE IRON SAINT

A tall, rocky precipice provides a perch for a dark castle known as the Citadel of the Iron Saint. Its inhabitants are anything but saints, however. A second, numenera citadel floats next to the castle, tethered by cables and guy wires.

The **Soul Court** is a group of five individuals, none of whom lives in the citadel full time. They hail from throughout the Ninth World. When the members meet in the castle, they use an extraordinary relic to tap into the power of the ancient structure. It allows them to send their conscious minds throughout the world, inhabiting the bodies of whomever they come across. They experience the world through the senses of their hosts and completely control the hosts' actions. If their unwilling host dies, is grievously harmed, or otherwise ceases to be useful or entertaining, they simply move on to the next available body. Although it's possible that a few members of the Soul Court use this power in the service of their own goals, for the most part, they simply relish in the dark entertainment of it.

Few people know of the Citadel of the Iron Saint, and even fewer realize that the Soul Court exists. If the members were discovered, they could be slain easily while in the trancelike state they enter while possessing other bodies.

FOUNDATION STONES

Legend has it that the Foundation Stones are the oldest relics on Earth, dating from the earliest of the prior worlds. There is no evidence to support this claim, but it remains a firmly held belief, particularly by the folk of Matheunis.

The seven stones float high above a particularly desolate area of the desert filled with ancient edifices that have been eroded by aeons and covered with so much sediment that they are easily mistaken for natural cliffsides and plateaus. The largest of the stones, shaped like a diamond and almost 1 mile (1.5 km) from top to bottom, is called the Stone of Margul. It floats nearly a half-mile (1 km) above the ground. Perhaps more interesting, however, is the Symbol Stone, a much smaller flat-topped rock that floats 2,000 feet (600 m) in the air. The Symbol Stone draws water from an otherworldly source in a portal at its heart and pours it down in four separate streams, creating a narrow river that runs through the desert to the sea. At the top of the stone, a holographic projection of a mysterious symbol floats, lighting the night sky for a mile around as though it were a second moon.

The Foundation Stones are so named because Ninth Worlders sometimes suggest that they serve as the foundation of the sky, holding the heavens aloft.

Soul Court members have the stats of whatever creature they are currently inhabiting, or nano stats (page 155) if their original bodies could be found.

If you stand precisely equidistant between the Foundation Stones and the Amber Monolith, you are more likely to get a glimmer.





THE SOUTHERN WALL

Bordering the southern end of Matheunis is the Southern Wall, a glacial formation of nigh-impassible peaks and sheer cliffs. Surrounded by frozen lakes and often covered by snow and hailstorms, the wall seems less a product of its environment than the other way around. In fact, some people speculate that the wall is what generates the bone-chilling conditions that infuse everything in the Cold Desert.

Those who brave the deadly freezing air to approach the Southern Wall report that the temperature drops rapidly with every step. The sharp retort of creaking and cracking resounds constantly from deep within the ice.

Those in the north see the Southern Wall as a seemingly impassible barrier of ice, but it's possible there are others on the southern side who view it in much the same way. The wall is, in fact, honeycombed with ice passages and caverns for those who have the expertise and courage to find them.

THE FIELDS OF FROZEN FLOWERS

*My love, my love,
your heart you do swear
so I beg of you show it
with a bloom for my hair.
Not golden, nor crimson,
nor any other hue.
For the heat of your heart,
frost alone shall prove true.*

~“The Frost Flowers”

Here, among the icy lakes, perhaps more than any other place in the world, hearts are broken, loves are lost, and futures are drowned—all in the pursuit of a flower that will last no longer than the time it takes to pluck it from its watery garden and carry it away.

Deep in the Cold Desert, far southeast of Nihliesh, reside the Fields of Frozen Flowers. Consisting of three interconnected salty lakes that are lightly frozen half the year, the fields are a place of mystery, love, and death. During the times when the wind is dead quiet and the world is covered in frost, ice flowers form and float over the

Some believe that beyond the Southern Wall, there lies a hidden city secluded within a rift in the massive glaciers that consume the region. Rumors say that this city, if one can reach it, is uncannily warmed in some fashion, a sort of secret paradise.

thinly frozen water of the lakes. Born when the lakes' salt and bacteria combine with the moisture from the still air, every frost bloom is as different and temporary as a flake of snow. Thus, they are considered by many to be the only tangible evidence of the vast diversity and delicacy of true love.

In many parts of the Cold Desert and beyond, young people memorize the poem "The Frost Flowers," and a common conversation among new couples is to wonder whether a frozen bloom has begun to form along the thin ice of the lakes. Symbols of the frozen flowers are used in jewelry, writings, and tattoos to prove the strength of one person's feelings for another.

Although the flowers are abundant, they are difficult to gather and even harder to retain. The ice beneath the blooms is thin for walking and may drift with the wind, and the temperature of the salty water is far below freezing. The briny liquid swims with all manner of sharp-toothed and snake-headed creatures, hoping for a snack. If a suitor manages to survive the water and its inhabitants, success is still unlikely; once

the flowers are plucked and in hand, they begin to fall away immediately, sometimes leaving little more than a single snowy drop on the palm.

So many young lovers are lost to love's watery garden that there is a myth of bodies building up below the surface, creating a bridge to walk on. There are other myths, too, of the dead men rising from beneath the surface, their hands now frozen enough to carry the flowers all the way to their beloveds.

More than one young man has been sent to bring back a flower by a lover who hopes that he will not return. And many young men who have gone off to "bring back a flower" have been found in other parts of the world, living happily with no thought of the one they swore true love to.

Along the shores of the lakes, villages have sprung up to support (and profit from) those who take the lover's swim. Most services offer hearty drink, warm clothes, weapons, and numenera designed to ease the task, but a few places provide lodging and celebration for the rare couples who make it through the trials of true love.



MATHEUNIS HEARSAY

The Hundred-Year Flood: Washing down out of the highlands to the west, a flash flood has swept through the lowlands, devouring entire villages. People are stranded and in need of rescue, or at least food and medicine.

Mechanized Rampage: A war machine from days long past has reactivated and roams the countryside, killing everything it finds. Leaders of local villages have put out a call for anyone who can stop its reign of destruction, offering all manner of rewards.

Lost Loot: A group of bandits raided a wealthy village of its valuables, but then they turned on one another. A few bandits survived, but laden with so much loot, separated and alone, they reportedly all came to lonely ends. The valuables now lie somewhere in the desert, waiting to be found by intrepid explorers who can return them to their proper owners or claim the riches for their own.

THE WEIRD OF MATHEUNIS

The Warming Column: A tall, beautifully decorated column of sophisticated ceramics stands alone in the desert, radiating a comfortable heat. Travelers who know of it use it as a familiar waypoint at which to make camp at night.

The Black Pool: A small black pond in the eastern part of the desolate landscape is fed by no noticeable source. Its waters are poisonous to drink, but if a creature is immersed in the dark pool, it emerges glazed in a protective coating that provides a +1 bonus to AC. However, the coating feeds on the flesh of the creature, dealing 1 acid damage per round.

Devilweed: A plant that grows sporadically throughout Matheunis can be used as a powerful narcotic with addictive qualities. Those under its influence experience similar hallucinations of a strange land with three moons in the sky, inhabited by odd avian creatures.

GURAN: THE CITY OF THE MISSING

By all outward appearances, Guran is as normal a town as you're likely to find anywhere in the Steadfast or the Beyond. In fact, Guran was considered so devoid of personality and unique characteristics that the first Steadfast who graced its borders dubbed it the City of the Missing. Of course, every small town has its secrets and hidden back alleys, if you take the time to look. Still, the moniker has stuck.

Located at the southernmost point of the Black Riage, Guran has the best natural resources at its fingertips: its location in the Tolay Valley protects it from the elements, the Ech River brings a flow of fresh water down from the mountains, and the marshland around Yesterday's Lake is perfect for orchards and dossi grazing.

Guran owes its inception to the great Bauble Rush, which brought baublers from all over hoping to make a quick buck by excavating the luminous blue baubles from the nearby mines. Unfortunately, the baubles were so numerous that they were of little value. Today, all of Guran is lit with mounds of abandoned baubles.

RULERS

Guran has a single leader, **Mylian Acan**, a councilman and Aeon Priest who works hard to balance the use of the numenera with the needs of the townspeople. Mylian has the support of most of the residents, although he is often at odds with the more fervent Aeon Priests.

The Council of Guran, a group of three tradespeople and three seculars, assists Mylian with decisions and governing. They are authorized to rule together as a single entity if something happens to Mylian, in which case they have one week to choose a new head of town.

Additionally, the council employs a dozen guards to keep the peace.

SECTIONS OF TOWN

The Clave: Once the entire town was located within this district's rudimentary wall of thorned rose shrubs, which was carefully

cultivated to deter intruders. Now, the town has grown beyond this small area, and the rosewall is maintained by two elderly scholars who study dangerous plants.

The stone buildings of the original district cannot hide their true age, but their wear and tear has been minimized by attentive hands. Many of these former houses and shops have become headquarters for the town's organizations, places of official city business, and areas of worship.

A small cemetery rests at the Clave's southernmost edge, the stones etched with surnames that live on in today's residential areas, street names, and businesses. Here you'll find Beckers, Moreks, Statins, Errols, and, in the oldest section, three small stones bearing the name Guran. The oldest section of the cemetery is the most populated, with rows and rows of stones bearing the same year. In addition to names and dates, most of these stones are carved with a rose.

The cemetery also has an empty morgue. Clearly part of the town's original infrastructure, the morgue is made of crumbling brick and rusting metal. Its large wooden double door is closed but never locked. If you visit midweek, you'll notice that the front steps are littered with **skrips**, all of which have been marked with various sizes of red circles and held down with blue-grey stones the size of fists.

The skrips are left by devotees of She as peace offerings against the return of the Rose Plague, a spotted fever that wiped

Mylian Acan has diplomat stats (page 152). In addition, he has a +2 bonus to AC and advantage on all Dexterity, Intelligence, and Wisdom saves thanks to a numenera device embedded in his flesh

Skrips are large, flat, flexible scales that shed naturally from domesticated dossi. They are often used as writing surfaces for messages, flyers, and books.

A SHORT LIST OF WHAT GURAN IS MISSING

Despite being called the City of the Missing, Guran is actually missing a city. Based on its size and population, Guran is clearly a town, and not a large one at that.

The redstone statue in the eastern part of Midmarket is missing its head. And a name. And a history. Residents just call it "She."

Guran is known for its "drinks without doors" policy, meaning that the pubs and taverns in the Sweet End district never close. They are open day and night.

The city has a morgue without bodies. An empty morgue stands at the west end of the cemetery. It appears to have been built in the early days of the town but has never been used.

There is no darkness in the city of Guran thanks to its endless supply of baubles, which light the streets, businesses, and homes.

Hepter has specialist stats (page 158). In addition, they have proficiency in calligraphy tools.

Maggie and Marchie Yets have specialist stats (page 158). In addition, they have proficiency in weaver tools.

Joeffry Wesk has specialist stats (page 158). In addition, he has proficiency with an abacus.

Mecky has arch nano stats (page 155).

Flyte Deboit has specialist stats (page 158). In addition, he has proficiency with smith tools.

out much of Guran in its early years. The rumor is that during the plague, the city council ordered a morgue to be built quickly to handle the large numbers of the dying. Unfortunately, despite the feverish pace of construction, the morgue was completed too late; the Rose Plague worked faster than the laborers. By the time the morgue's final brick was laid, the last of the dying had long since succumbed to their illness. Now empty and unwanted, the morgue is considered a necessary but grotesque reminder of that awful time.

Midmarket: As the town's business hub, Midmarket is mostly a commercial area with a smattering of residences. Here, you'll find Main Way, along which permanent and traveling merchants offer their wares.

The general store, named **Wesk's Market** but which most people just call "the general," offers food, spices, equipment, and a free bauble with every purchase. The huge pile of discarded baubles outside the store's front door attests to their level of business. Here, you can haggle or trade with the stout, grey-haired owner **Joeffry Wesk** for anything in the store—including the store itself, since he's been trying to sell it for years so he can spend his days fishing on Yesterday's Lake. At the back of the store, behind the counter, is a hanging shelf filled with items that Wesk has traded for over the years in lieu of shins. The inventory changes constantly and consists of mostly useless trinkets, but from time to time, unusual numenera devices show up here.

For local armor and other metal and synthworkings, visit **Flyte's Armor & More**. The owner, **Flyte Deboit**, is a flame-haired man of a quiet nature, rarely saying more than is necessary. By incorporating the blue baubles of the area into his wares, he makes quality objects that are both beautiful and unique to Guran. However, he works slowly and charges quite a bit more (typically three times as much) than a typical craftsman of the area. Those willing to pay and wait are likely to come away with pieces that will serve them for a lifetime.

Next door, the **Downy Dossi** offers a wide variety of skrips, writing utensils, and inkpots, as well as printing services. Here, **Hepter** creates and distributes the town's monthly newsletter, The Guran Gazette. If you talk too much around Hepter, you might find yourself quoted in the next issue. While he usually gets your words right, you should expect that they'll be entirely out of context.

Two main tailors compete for the business of locals and visitors; they reside at opposite ends of Main Way. The **Fine Thread**, run by **Maggie Yets**, sits at the south end and specializes in beautiful stitches and unusual fabrics. The **Threadfast**, run by her sister **Marchie Yets**, holds forth at the north end of the way and does a booming business in adornments with a scientific angle, such as clothing made of fabrics that sense and react to specific types of prey or that display your muscles, bones, and internal organs.

The Fishing House (not to be confused with Milly's Fishing Hole in the Sweet End) offers a wide selection of hunting and fishing accessories, including ammunition, nets, water weapons, and rowboat rentals for Yesterday's Lake.

The Rusted Relic is more of a junkyard than a store. It covers a wide swath of land just off Main Way and is surrounded by a wooden fence that seems constantly in need of attention. Here, among numenera heaps, junk parts, and scraps of materials, you'll find the cantankerous creature known as **Mecky**—a tall, lithe woman with a curved scar along the side of her mouth that is only visible in certain light. Although she won't tell you the story of her past, everyone in town knows that she was once a well-known nano in the Steadfast, the right-hand woman of one of its leaders. How she fell (or leaped) from favor is anyone's guess, and Mecky isn't inclined to reveal the truth. Some say she is looking for a specific numenera device, the one thing she needs to kill the person who shamed her. Others whisper that she remains in the loyal service of her leader and that she works undercover in Guran, her junkyard a ruse for something far more sinister. However, most people think that she



is little more than a broken old woman, as useless and confusing as the junk she hawks.

Midmarket is also the site of one of Guran's two inns, a bunk-and-breakfast establishment known as **Gee's**. The owner is a grizzled man named Lestel, but his three pale blonde daughters run the place. It's known for being clean, expensive, and almost always empty. Travelers can stay the night in one of the inn's twelve upstairs rooms for 5 shins and can purchase dinner and breakfast for an additional 2 shins. The only time the inn gets busy is during its weekly dance, when **Lestel's daughters** provide free dance lessons to any who wander in. The Ghost Group, a local quartet, provides the haunting musical accompaniment to the lessons.

Lestel's estranged wife, **Kir**, runs a successful bakery next door, offering sweet and savory pies as well as a variety of morning-after drinks. Rumor is that she has a way with herbs and spices designed to alter a man's virility, increase passion's flame, and bring about—or prevent—pregnancy. But you won't find those offerings among her regular wares.

The Hatchet: This triangular-shaped section of town covers a large, flat area with the river on one side and the start of the hills on the other. This prime location would make it the second-most coveted residential spot, just after the Eaves, if not for the area's populace. Every city and town has its slum, and Guran is no exception.

Originally the location of the bauble shanty town, the Hatchet is rife with mish-mashed buildings, makeshift shelters, odd tangles of tunnels, and unexpected open holes. At the Hatchet's center resides a pit built of brick and blood, about 50 feet (15 m) across and 100 feet (30 m) deep. Imprisoned at its bottom is an ancient **ravage bear**, driven mad by its captivity and the taunting of those above.

Supposedly, a mutant named **Jirlin** and his wild gang rule the Hatchet with a fiery fist, and those who disregard or challenge his rule become the next hot meal for the ravage bear. Jirlin and his band make their camp around the pit, building crude shelters out of whatever materials they can scavenge and steal. Jirlin is never seen outside the Hatchet, but his **gang members**

KEY

1. Mine Shafts
2. The Eaves
3. The Hatchet
4. The Pit
5. Last Way
6. Errol's Bridge
7. The Upper West
8. Midmarket
9. She
10. Main Way
11. Rose Way
12. The Lower West
13. Sweet End
14. The Rose Wall
15. The Clave
16. That Place
17. Morgue
18. Cemetery
19. Sweet End Orchard
20. Yesterday's Lake
21. The Wash
22. Becker Farms



Lestel's daughters have specialist stats (page 158). In addition, they have proficiency in Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks and Dexterity saves.



Ravage bear, page 227

Kir has specialist stats (page 158). In addition, she has proficiency in cook's utensils.

Jirlin has warlord stats (page 159). In addition, his melee attacks deal an additional 3 (1d6) points of damage.

Jirlin's gang members have guard stats.

travel to other parts of Guran, usually on missions for their leader. When they steal food and equipment, which they do as often as they can get away with it, they leave a calling card in the form of the letter J spelled out in glowing baubles.

The Eaves: This gently sloping area is filled with newer, larger homes built of ebony stones carved from the tunnels of the Black Riage. The walkways are made from the same stone, giving the impression that they're always wet. Nobles would live here—if the town had nobles. Instead, the Eaves are home to the rich and the pious and, of course, to those who are both. The only notable Guran dignitary who doesn't live in the Eaves is **Mylian Acan**, who lives in his family home in the Clave.

Mylian Acan, page 115

The Upper West and the Lower West: These two districts have no marked boundaries, and the line between them moves almost daily, depending on who is having a disagreement with whom. Always, the Upper West and the Lower West engage in good-natured (and sometimes not-so-good-natured) ribbing about which of them is better.

At the annual fair, the two districts send their strongest, but not necessarily their smartest, residents to compete in tournaments of arm wrestling, drinking games, and fingerfishing—a sport in which participants stick their pinky fingers just below the surface of the water as bait to attract biters, a species of fish with extraordinarily large teeth. In the morning, after the headaches have passed and the fingers have been stitched, no one can remember who won the contests, so the battle rages on for another year.

That Place: Everyone refers to this bit of forested corner land simply as “that place,” as in “I'm going over to that place to do some hunting.” It's thick with trees and wildlife, with only a few dirt paths weaving through the dense underbrush. Used primarily for hunting, it's also a favorite spot for young couples (or anyone looking for a clandestine rendezvous). Unfortunately, this causes a number of individuals to be

accidentally injured, especially those who are moving erratically, as a wild animal might. It happens so often, in fact, that there's a local term for it—“getting bucked.”

Sweet End: A tangled sprawl of circular walkways, dead-end streets, and hilly paths, Sweet End is where you'll find entertainment of the sort that isn't family friendly. Forever Street is the main thoroughfare in this area. Lit constantly by huge numbers of baubles, which are stacked and cemented into shapes, letters, and place names, Forever Street never closes. Four bars, two eating establishments, and a tiny theater all line the street.

Milly's Fishing Hole (not to be confused with the Fishing House) offers lovely women and a few equally lovely men who are happy to entertain residents and visitors, provided they have a couple of shins to spare. Milly's also has a barroom and eatery where local bands perform. Perhaps the most popular musician is **Will D'aevo**, who plays a variety of stringed instruments and sings bawdy songs of Guran's history in a silver-tongued voice. A tall, lanky man with olive skin, disheveled dark hair, and watchful, near-black eyes, D'aevo's music seems to enhance the senses, leading listeners into a trancelike state. Because his music allows him to meld into the background, nearly unnoticed, he sees much of the town's hidden underside. Those who talk with him find that he is a font of useful information and oddly well connected to those with darker dealings about town.

The Marchet is the largest and most popular bar along the strip. Best known for its specialty drink, the Kiss (made of crushed berries, four kinds of alcohol, two kinds of juice, a secret ingredient, and the kiss of the one who serves it), the bar is also infamous for its regular fights over who's kissing whom. The owners, who also work as the barmaids and thus as the kissers in question, are two pairs of sisters: Simple and Serene, the daughters of Maggie Yets, and Temperance and Tranquility, the

Will D'aevo has shadow knight stats (page 157). In addition, he has proficiency in several musical instruments and Knowledge (History).

daughters of Marchie Yets. All four women are close in age, smart as whips, beautiful, and nearly identical. To say they occasionally create havoc by intentionally confusing guests as to their real identities would be a wild understatement. The girls, who were raised together, are as mischievous as their names are not.

Unwitting and unruly guests may find themselves kissed, trussed up, taunted, dropped into Yesterday's Lake, or subjected to any number of other pranks. Often, guests wake up with their pockets empty but for a note that says their goods have been donated to Charcee, the woman who oversees Guran's organization for the unfortunate. Yet no one seems to mind, and some people consider it a badge of honor to be Kissed. By evening, the Marchet is booming again, and if you listen closely, you can hear guests bragging about their exploits at the hands of the Yets girls.

Sweet End Orchards: Along the southeastern edge of Sweet End lies the Sweet End Orchards. The orchards surround Yesterday's Lake, a large body of fresh water that's a source of fish year-round and a spot for migrating birds in the warmer months.

Once a year, under the fullest moon, Guran hosts a large picnic and fair at the lake, complete with a fishing contest, homemade fireworks, and a fiery alcoholic concoction called Cross-eyed Jack, which is made from **crossels** and a flammable liquid.

Becker Farms: Once a single farm owned by the Becker family, this area now hosts a number of smaller farms, most of which raise dossi for skrip and meat production.

The Wash: A swamp at the south end of town, the Wash is the perfect growing region for crossels.

The Red Man of the Marsh is rumored to live there, and children hear bedtime stories of his crossel-stained skin and his appetite for disobedient youngsters. ("Good children," mothers say, "taste bitter to him, but bad children, oh, they taste like pies and cakes, and he eats them all up.") The Red

GURAN HEARSAY

Revenge Is a Dish: A young man bearing the name of Doctorish Omash Minkle recently arrived in town. He claims to have a device that will give a nonlethal ailment of your choice (provided you choose one of the six ailments on his list) to one of your enemies for just 10 shins. He calls it a miracle cure, swearing that after he does his work, your feud with the person in question will end. After "treating" a dozen or so people, Minkle was kidnapped by Jirlin and his gang. If his device works the way he claims, it's now in the hands of Guran's most dangerous resident.

Mining for Baubles: Mylian Acan's youngest son, Mylo, has gone missing. Against his father's orders, the child spent a lot of time in the bauble mines, coming home with stories of violet-eyed creatures and worms as big around as an adult is tall. "I watch them from the high shelf where the eyeman lives," Mylo told his father. "I'm safe up there."

To quell the boy's adventures, Mylian ordered stronger, more secure barriers to be built at each of the two mine entrances. Unfortunately, there's a chance the boy might have slipped inside and now cannot get out. Mylian is offering a reward of 100 shins to any individual or group who safely returns his son.

Silver Tongues Set to Wagging: Two members of Jirlin's gang have been frequenting Milly's Fishing Hole and harassing the musician Will D'aevo after his performances. He claims he doesn't know what they want, but he appears nervous about their constant presence. Recently, one of the men was found dead in the Wash, his throat cut as if by a thin string.

Man and his pack of water hounds wander the marshes when the fog is thick, looking for children to snatch. There is another tale, less told and whispered only among adults, that if you go to the Wash during the first water storm of the season, find the Red Man among the fog, and offer him something he's never seen before, he will bequeath you one of his water hounds, which will work to protect you for the rest of its life.

Bauble Mines: The Black Riage mountains end at the northernmost tip of Guran, and the twists and turns of the old bauble mines are located along this part of the range. No longer used, they are firmly boarded up at each of their two main entrances. The mines have numerous levels and dead ends, so it's hard to know how extensive they really are.

The Downy Dossi keeps a single copy of the mine maps for reference, but it never leaves the store. Even during emergencies, the map stays mounted behind unbreakable transparent synth. Guards are required to memorize it as part of their training.

Crossels are a stimulating berry that, once picked and dried, provide energy in the form of drinks, edibles, and healing elixirs, pills, and potions.



BEYOND THE BEYOND



THE CLOCK OF KALA

This impossibly tall, impassable mountain range makes a nearly perfect ring around the region known as **Augur-Kala**. Viewed from above, the range looks almost like a clock face, interrupted by one perfectly straight, wide pass called the Sheer. Other than the Sheer, the snow-capped peaks of the Clock rise 30,000 feet (9,150 m) or more and afford no passage. Even traveling over them is difficult thanks to powerful storms that rage with a constant ferocity.

Augur-Kala, page 122

Far to the east of the Clock of Kala, intrepid explorers will find the area known as Greater Garravia, a land of forests, mountains, and transdimensional terrors—as well as extraordinary discoveries.

During the winter, the pools and streams around the Sheer fill with pale, blind squid. Having spent their adolescence beneath the mountains, the adult squid attempt to propel themselves up the waterfalls to spawn. If captured, they produce a dark green ink that lasts for many years.

THE SHEER

No knowledge of geology is needed to recognize that the Sheer is an artificial path sliced through the Clock of Kala. It stretches for 320 miles (515 km) and is a uniform 73 miles (117 km) wide, with perfectly smooth, vertical walls cut through the mountains. The ground of the Sheer is generally as smooth as the walls, although the aeons have brought about minor changes due to falling rocks, geological upheavals, and so on. Still, after however many millions of years it has existed, the Sheer remains more like a corridor than a mountain pass.

The walls of the Sheer are frequently punctuated with waterfalls that drop the entire height—about 10,000 feet (3,000 m) on average—and collect in pools and streams that disappear beneath the mountains again.

At each end of the Sheer, people have built a trade city. A single road connects



these two cities, offering the only means of traveling between the Beyond and the otherwise sequestered land of Augur-Kala.

NOROU

A town built at the western end of the Sheer, Norou is a waypoint for travelers and

The area north of the Clock of Kala is known as Vralk, the Red Kingdom, named as much for the blood that's shed by its people as for the sulfurous, crimson air and volcanic desolation.

merchant caravans before they make the 320-mile trek to Wislayn (or after they arrive from that city). The Sheer has no real stops along the way, so Norou is the last place to resupply before heading east.

A great deal of trading occurs in Norou. Merchants and customers exchange the exotic goods of Augur-Kala flowing from the east with wares from the Beyond or even the Steadfast coming from the west.

The ruler of Norou is a tyrannical despot who calls himself **Lord Abellor**. He expects a high tribute from all merchants traveling through his town, and while he has soldiers to back up his demands, he also does so with his own power. Abellor no longer has a human body. He exists as a brain within the interior of a powerful automaton that he controls. Behind his back, the people refer to him as Lord Iron-Pants.

The population of Norou is about 6,000. While most of these folks are merchants or service providers catering to travelers (with inns, brothels, pubs, and so forth), many are beggars and thieves.

“Iyene Who Knows” is a knowledge broker who calls herself a hunter of information. She has worked as a spy and a thief in the past, but now she gathers and trades information in Norou. Known by the criminal element of the city, by those in more legitimate work, and even by people in distant towns, she does not value money or items but instead wants information in exchange, always increasing her primary commodity.

WISLAYN

“At one end of the Sheer lies the trader town of Norou. At the other end is some kind of crystal tree that they try to pass off as a trader town as well.”

—Nalla, a traveling minstrel

In the middle of the eastern end of the Sheer stands a tall structure of violet crystal that resembles a tree, a tentacled sea creature, or perhaps a polyp 80 feet (24 m) tall. This strange relic is used by approximately 1,000 people as a sort of

Iyene Who Knows has diplomat stats (page 152). In addition, she has double proficiency on all Intelligence checks regarding knowledge, information, and lore.

Lord Abellor has glaiue stats (page 153).



CLOCK OF KALA HEARSAY

Seeking Passage: A mysterious trader seeks a way across the Clock of Kala without traveling through the Sheer. She offers any explorer their weight in shins (or the equivalent thereof in other valuables) to discover such a means.

Inverted Mountain: On the eastern inner curve of the Clock of Kala is a mountain unlike the others. Impossibly, the peak is narrow at the bottom and wide at the top. Whether reinforced with an internal artificial structure or supported by gravity manipulation, the mountain is clearly a relic of an earlier time. What other numenera-related secrets it might hold, no one knows.

THE WEIRD OF THE CLOCK OF KALA

An Eye Toward the Future: A one-eyed woman has recently come down out of the peaks, claiming that she found a still mountain pool of intelligent water that offered to take her to the future.

Good Hunting: Small, rodentlike creatures called seterdins live in burrows throughout the Clock of Kala. Strangely, one in ten has a numenera implant in its brain. The implants seem to be inactive, but some people claim to be able to use them to create interesting cyphers.

Synth Rods: Scattered throughout the Clock of Kala are blue synth rods, each about 10 inches (25 cm) long. When two rods are brought close to each other, they snap together, either lengthwise or forming a right angle. It would seem that if all of the rods were brought together, they would combine to form some kind of lattice or structure.

Her Dread Majesty Queen Auster, the ruler of Vralk, the Red Kingdom, maintains a fortress near the mouth of the Sheer. Rumor is she has plans to build a new fortress not far from Norou. Her spies are everywhere.



Rumors say that there is a transdimensional warp that connects Wislayn with a secret location in Ancuan, in the Steadfast.

“The so-called Augurs of the Augur-Kala region are in some ways as alien to the humans of the Steadfast as we varjellen are. Curious, don’t you think?”

~Visixtru, varjellen philosopher

town. Slightly more than half of these people are Augurs.

Touching the crystal transports you into an extradimensional space that appears to be inside the “tree.” The sky and ground are deep purple, hard and smooth. The space is about a half-mile (1 km) across, and inhabitants have erected buildings of wood brought from the outside. Many resemble normal structures with walls, doors, and roofs, but others are hastily constructed barriers of light wood and cloth, since there is no need to keep out the elements—the space has nothing resembling weather of any kind. Walls in Wislayn are merely for privacy.

Newcomers appear in an open plaza at the center of the town. At any given time, anyone in Wislayn can mentally access the “exit” and simply appear back in the normal world, next to the crystal tree.

The ruler of Wislayn calls herself the Ghostis and acts as though the town is her private home in which she hosts visitors—and to her, everyone in town is a visitor. She is beautiful and elegant, very likely an Augur,

but her appearance is almost certainly artificially enhanced and maintained. Most of the time, she wears a white, diaphanous gown of sheer fabric that trails well behind her. Gossip says the Ghostis has the ability to eject visitors from the extradimensional space instantly, as if they had willed themselves to leave, and can prevent them from reentering.

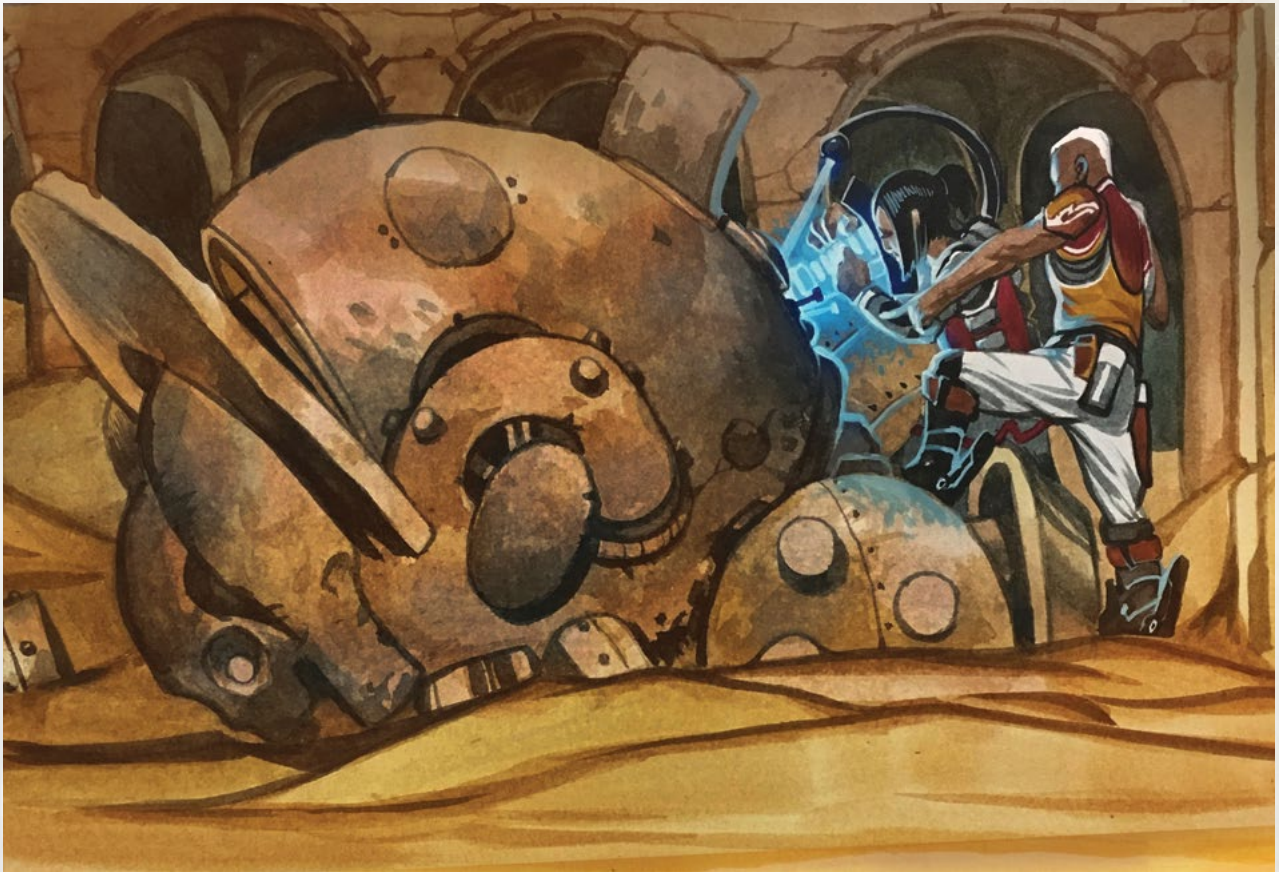
Those who believe the rumor further speculate that her intelligence was uploaded long ago into the Wislayn crystal itself, and the body she uses is an artificial creation. If true, the Ghostis might not be human or from the Ninth World at all—who can say?



AUGUR-KALA

Not technically part of the Beyond, the land known as Augur-Kala is as exotic and strange a place as anyone in the Steadfast could imagine.

The people of this realm are called Augurs. Although they appear no different from the humans of the Steadfast and the Beyond, they come from entirely different



stock. They are, on average, smarter, stronger, faster, more attractive, and far less prone to disease. The expected lifespan of an Augur is 300 years. In the extremely rare event that an Augur mates with an outsider, procreation is possible but highly unlikely.

Augurs have a strong affinity for the numenera, but unlike the people of the rest of the world, their knowledge of it seems to be declining rather than increasing. Long ago, generations of Augurs had such a close relationship with the ways of the ancient past that they almost seemed like the people of a prior world themselves. But with each passing year, their expertise fades as older folk die and take more and more knowledge to the grave.

As if to punctuate this decline, near the center of Augur-Kala is a large metal structure that appears to have burst violently from the earth long ago. Legend has it that the Augurs descend from people who dwelled within this structure, sleeping underground for aeons. If true, it happened so long ago that no Augur has any memory of it, nor memory of anyone who did.

Augurs have their own language, but some—mostly traders and merchants—speak the Truth. Occasionally, they use speaking machines to translate what they say and hear.

The land of Augur-Kala is green and fertile, with rolling hills, babbling streams, and pleasant weather. Villages and small communities are rarer here than elsewhere in the Ninth World, with a higher percentage of the population living in cities. Many cities exist, but the two best known to outsiders are Urzat Zarteri and Sada Emidu (although, technically, the trade city of Wislayn on the eastern end of the Sheer is largely an Augur community).

Augur-Kala is not without its dangers, of course, but most of its beasts, abhumans, and creatures are different from those in the Steadfast or the Beyond. Perhaps most terrifying of these are the Lug Sorek, which resemble great winged **cragworms** more than anything else.



Cragworm, page 155

URZAT ZARTERI

Urzat Zarteri is an Augur fortress-city built on a high plateau and surrounded by a tall wall of artificial stone. The place is stark and functional, its primary function being defense. The city is extremely wary of strangers.

Stretching out from the wall, the land is a vast bog patrolled by guardians called **Narit Gresh**. These sentries appear to be ancient, floating cylinders of rusty metal topped with the grafted heads of beasts, fleshy tendrils, and an array of sensory apparatus and weaponry.

About 15,000 people live in the multileveled city, although at least 2,000 of them are soldiers who wear chainmail armor and are trained in the use of sword-staves as well as the occasional numenera weapon. The commander of the troops and the city itself is known as the **Allagos**, a title

won through experience, appointment, and formal combat. The current Allagos is a tall, broad-shouldered woman with short hair and a series of scars on her face and neck.

SADA EMIDU

In the language of the Augurs, Sada Emidu means “River City.” It has a population of 100,000 and teems with unique spindle towers of metal, crystalline domes, and buildings made of energy rather than matter. Serving as a sort of capital, the city is the home of the ruler of Augur-Kala—the **Zealitor**, a title that equates roughly to “prince.” The Zealitor is a being of engineered flesh fused with synth enhancements in body and brain. His grand palace is built atop a number of bridge-like spans that cross the Indygel River; the entire structure is poised above the rushing water.

Narit Gresh have dissector stats (Arcana of the Ancients, page 169).

The zealitor has quotien stats (Arcana of the Ancients, page 224).

The Allagos has deadly warrior stats (page 151).



AUGUR-KALA HEARSAY

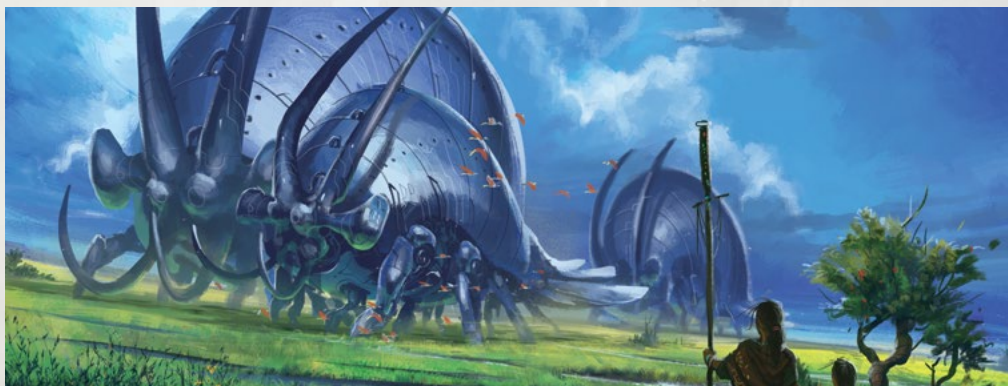
Cure for What Ails You: A scholar among the Augurs believes that their people are slowly devolving. He seeks explorers willing to travel to an ancient ruin and find a formula that he can use to stop the deterioration from continuing into further generations.

Divided Camps: A group of Augurs seeking independence from the rule of the Zealitor has gathered in an armed camp outside of Sada Emidu. In response, the Zealitor is reportedly threatening to unleash troops and his personal war machine—a hovering, armored dreadnaught with long-range disintegration artillery—to quell the rebellion.

THE WEIRD OF AUGUR-KALA

Stampede of Ghosts: A horde of ultraterrestrials, only partially in phase, moves en masse through the land from time to time, distorting reality like a finger drawn across the canvas of a wet painting. Their passing leaves a bizarre wake in the wilderness.

Dead Machines: In the southern region of the land, a number of wheeled metal machines lie dormant, damaged by weapons that inflicted terrible heat. Portions of the machines have been entirely melted.



OTHER VILLAGES, SETTLEMENTS, AND COMMUNITIES

This section describes some of the other towns and villages scattered throughout the Ninth World. Use them whenever you need a unique, interesting place where the players' characters can rest for the night, restock supplies, or find that perfect numenera item. These locations will never appear on an official Numenera map, so feel free to place them wherever you'd like and to use any or all of the information as benefits your campaign.

AENDRI

Population: Slightly more than 500

Significant Feature: Most of the buildings in this small town are built of stronglass and thus, transparent. Four tailors in town work to keep the homes well covered with curtains and roof garbs.

Person of Interest: *Dashma Erg* is a breeder of flying creatures—specifically, insects that are genetically engineered to carry coded messages—and he's made a good business of his offerings. He owns a large house near the center of town and has no curtains.

Creatures of all sizes and shapes flutter about inside and rest against the clear walls.

Hearsay: *Saya Morepin*, a wealthy eccentric who lives in a four-story stronglass home, owns a small device that she calls the *Portcullis*. It prevents people from entering or leaving a discrete, defined place through a subtle use of energy fields. During one of *Saya's* lavish parties, someone stole the *Portcullis* from her collection room and is using it to keep *Saya* locked in her home. She is offering a large reward for its return and her subsequent release.

The Weird: One of the fountains in the center of town features a pair of hands made of an unknown material. The water that flows over the hands seems to change color, and the palms have tattoos that form a map when viewed side by side.

BROLEY

Population: 500

Significant Feature: Most of the buildings here are made of living greenwood, a biologically engineered material that quickly grows over a temporary shelter to create a permanent structure. This gives

the majority of buildings a softly rounded silhouette, as air-filled fabrics are used to create the mold for the structures. The creator of greenwood, *Holeon Ferre*, still lives in Broley and occasionally takes on apprentices in the craft.

Person of Interest: *Camila Beyett* leads a group called the *Cosmicologists*, whose members bring their bodies in tune with the cosmos through the use of specialized movements such as fighting stances and interactive stretches and duels. *Camila* leads movement practice every day in *Desoni's Square*, and her following has grown to nearly half the town, as well as outsiders who arrive from beyond its borders.

Hearsay: The *Revelry of Wonder*, an annual event in Broley, is just days away. The celebration includes competitions in strength, weaponry, crafting, and other skills. Those who specialize in the numenera will appreciate the *Wonder Race*, where participants are given a random pile of parts and materials and must create something workable in a few hours. The winners are awarded a special prize, and the winning pieces are added to *Holeon Ferre's* growing numenera collection.

The Weird: On *Cheslet Street*, a block of absolute darkness approximately 8 feet (2.5 m) high floats a few inches off the ground. While walking through it, you can't see, hear, or smell anything. The block vibrates slightly.

DYMATH FORDYE

Population: 1,200

Significant Feature: The town is built in the middle of *Snakemoor Marsh*, with all of the buildings set high on stilts. Only one bridge—a precarious stone walkway—leads into town.

Person of Interest: *Malik Harcrow* runs the local tavern. She is a retired thief and keeps a large collection of maps and keys in her storeroom. She, her inn, and those who seek shelter there are well protected by her *thuman*, *Duror*.

Hearsay: One of the town's most eligible bachelors, *Edmugh Folcey*, was discovered dead, apparently from an odd bite on his face. A piece of what looked like a metal

Camila Beyett has *glave stats* (page 153).

Dashma Erg has *specialist stats* (page 158).

Malik Harcrow has *shadow knight stats* (page 157).



Thuman, page 238

tooth was lodged in his cheek. Several local women and at least one man are devastated by his death and offer various rewards for the capture of his killer, be it man, beast, or something else.

The Weird: A herd of strange animals, tough-hided creatures that snort sapphire-hued smoke, has moved into the marsh. They mostly gather beneath the stilted home of the town's mayor.

ESSEARNIN

Population: 800

Significant Feature: The town sits on the banks of a river spanned by several bridges. Each bridge is built of a different material and has a unique shape.

Person of Interest: The Inn of the Blue Barker hosts regular duels, with a 2-shin entry fee and the prize of free room and board for a week. **Malia Noke**, a tall, quiet varjellen, has held the title for four years running. She is threatening to retire due to boredom and the lack of worthy competition. Argel, the inn's owner, is desperately searching for someone to give Malia a good fight, as the event's entry fees pay for his addiction to **cockle gambling**.

Hearsay: Tinkerers have built a contraption to capture a person's image and project it in reverse on a flat surface for a few minutes. Recently, the contraption has started showing images of odd, alien beasts instead of the person who paid to have their likeness captured.

The Weird: Essearnin is built around a pyramid of purple stone. On warm days, the top of the stone splits and spouts a stream of freezing water. Residents call it the Icebreak.

IMALOV CASTLE

Population: 25

Significant Feature: A lone keep with high grey walls, this castle sits in the middle of a desolate stretch of wilderness. The massive iron doors are always closed.

Person of Interest: Lady Perrix stands over 6 1/2 feet (2 m) tall and wears heeled boots and an elaborate headdress to accentuate her height. She is leery of strangers, but those granted entrance are given a gracious but imperious reception. Everyone else in the castle is her servant or slave.

Hearsay: Lady Perrix is a fallen Angulan Knight, ousted from the order years ago. She may well be mentally ill. However, many people believe that she knows the secret to entering a hidden, subterranean complex from the prior worlds that lies near her castle.

The Weird: Lady Perrix has a time displacement device in her headdress that allows her to disappear for a few seconds or a few minutes and then reappear as if she had never left.

SONGDUEL RUINS

Population: Just under 1,000

Significant Feature: This village is built on top of a much larger city and a battlefield of legend. It is said that long ago, two great songstresses met here to fight for the hand of the man they both loved. Their songs, in their deadly beauty, razed the city to the ground and ensured that nothing would grow for ages to come. (Of course, it's also possible that the soil could have been tainted by the poisonous spray weapons they used on each other during the infamous duel, the residue of which seeps up each time it rains.)

Person of Interest: **Jesra Cris** is the village ruler. Ancient and blind, she mostly leaves the running of Songdual Ruins to her six grandchildren, who range in age from five to eighteen. While they're wreaking havoc on the village as only young unchaperoned rulers can, Jesra has been seen walking the streets late at night, looking at the sky and wearing an odd device on her head.

Hearsay: Resident Stepfan Salink recently acquired a pair of **bounding boots**. Animals of all sorts are attracted to this numenera item, and a large pack of creatures, both tame and wild, has begun to follow him through the streets. He doesn't want to give up his boots, but he can't figure out how to stop the animals from trailing him.

The Weird: In the marketplace is a deep, water-filled shaft left over from the past. The round opening has been boarded up since long before the battle that created Songdual Ruins, but those who pass by it hear electronic beeps coming from the shaft. The sounds are becoming more frequent. Whether they are a code, a distress signal, or a form of music is the subject of much speculation.

Malia Noke has glaive stats (page 153).

Cockle gambling isn't illegal, but it's frowned upon due to its high stakes. Those who wish to join a game must start their pot with the promise of a heart from a living creature. They must show proof that they can get—or have already gotten—the heart before they can play.

Jesra Cris has steward stats (page 158). In addition, she is sometimes blinded, unless wearing a special device that allows her to see normally, but only a night.



Bounding boots, page 56

Lady Perrix has warlord stats (page 159). In addition, she has a temporal blind.

Temporal Blind

Relic, rare

This handheld device, when activated as your action, pushes you forward in the time stream up to 10 minutes. A temporal blind has a depletion of 1 in 1d20.

ORGANIZATIONS

Despite its divided and isolated nature, the Ninth World has many powerful and influential organizations. This section describes a few of the most prominent groups and the benefits enjoyed by members. If a player character joins one of these organizations, they can take the benefit rather than taking advantage of the Ability Score Improvement feature the next time they would otherwise increase an ability score by 1.



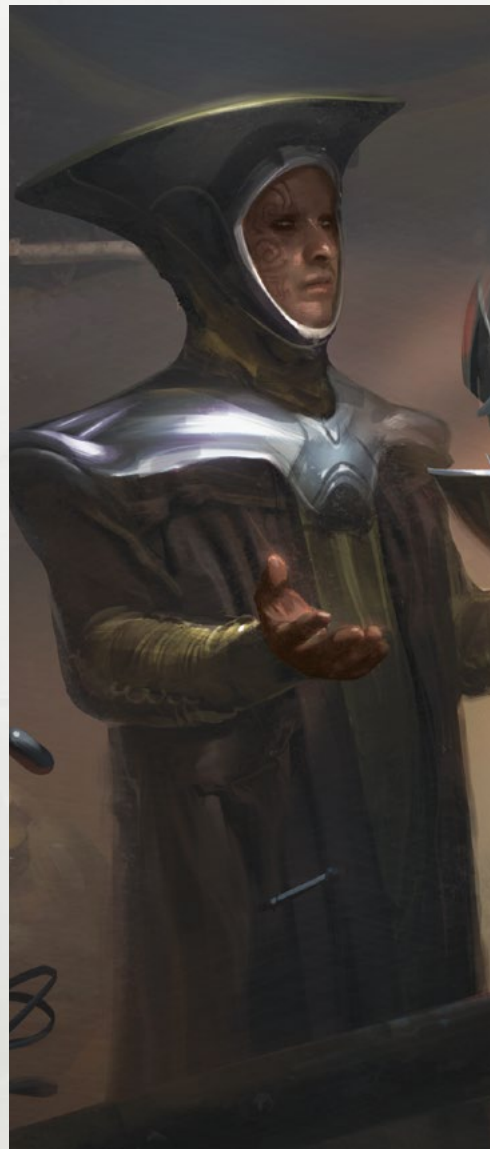
THE ORDER OF TRUTH

Almost certainly the strongest and most dominant organization in the Steadfast—and possibly the Beyond—the Order of Truth was established by the original Amber Pope, High Father Calaval, about 400 years ago. Its members are called **Aeon Priests**, and they are the most trusted experts in handling, identifying, and using the numenera and other lore. In most communities, Aeon Priests are the local “wise folk,” looked upon with respect as leaders and advisers in the important facets of life.

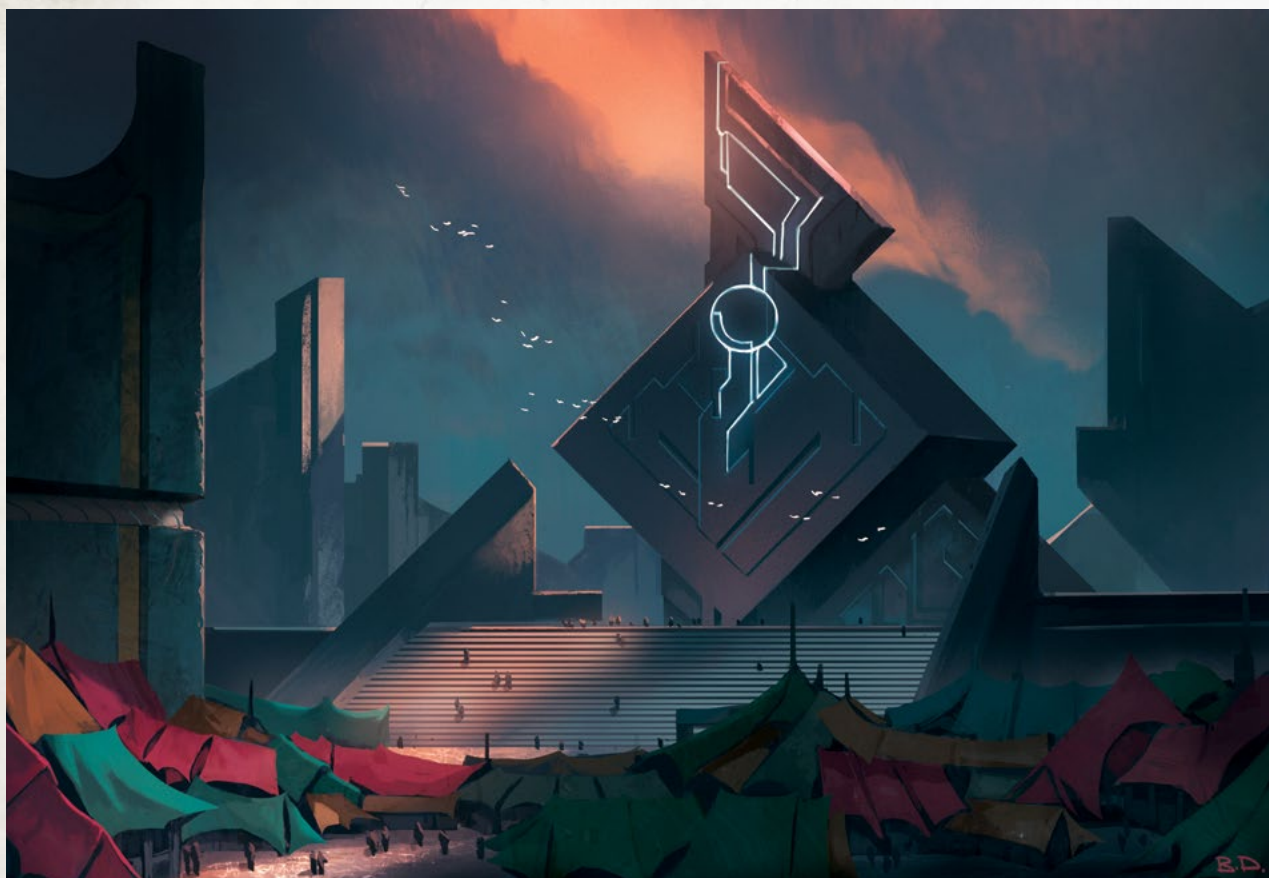
Although the Order of Truth seems like a religion, technically it’s not one. The papacy has a structure like a priesthood and calls its members “priests,” but it’s not a religion—it’s a veneration of intellect, understanding, and the wonders that arise from such things: science, technology, and the numenera. In fact, under the current Amber Pope, Durragnet VI, the Aeon Priests have discovered that the people of the Steadfast are more likely to respect, admire, and obey the Order of Truth if they think of it as a religion. Thus, in larger cities, the Order has begun holding quasi-religious services to encourage this idea. They

ritualize their teachings to respect and understand the numenera as the key to advancing humanity into the future. They praise the past and those who lived in it for their intelligence and understanding.

Regular people who revere the Order are usually not members, but rather



Aeon Priests, page 150



“adherents.” In their eyes, the Order is focused on worshipping the past and the ancients who created the fantastic devices and strange discoveries that fill the Ninth World. And over the last century or so, the Order has done little to discourage this idea. The Order maintains a small army, as well as a large organization of agents, observers, clerks, scribes, and other personnel. The headquarters lies in the city of **Qi**, in a complex known as the Durkhal. They also have a secret fortress called the Citadel of the Conduit that lies in a parallel dimension and can be accessed by any high-ranking Aeon Priest.

Qi, page 38

Many Aeon Priests find Gaian Animism—in which Gaians believe that a limitless number of supernatural spirits inhabit humans, creatures, objects, locations, and even concepts—a perplexing and possibly threatening way to view the world.

Durragnet VI has nano exemplar stats (page 156).

MEMBERS OF NOTE

The most notable Aeon Priest is the Amber Pope.

Amber Pope, Durragnet VI: The current Amber Pope, **Durragnet VI**, wears shining garments of scarlet, white, and gold, and a peaked cap that emanates an aura so profound that most people can’t recall the features of the Pope after meeting him, or even his specific words and mannerisms,

though they do recall his advice and commands. Durragnet VI and the Order of Truth hold the Steadfast together. The Amber Pope uses all the pressure his influence can muster to keep the so-called Nine Rival Kings from warring among themselves. To this end, Durragnet VI has called for a crusade against the recently discovered people in the far north who live beyond the Cloudcrystal Skyfields. These people call themselves Gaians, and they are **animists**, believing that supernatural spirits inhabit all natural things. They revere these spirits, an act the Order believes to be an abomination of truth. Nine years ago, when Gaian explorers first ventured into the Skyfields and the northern parts of the Steadfast, the Amber Pope branded them enemies of truth and declared a holy war against them. The first conflicts of this war, waged in the Cloudcrystal Skyfields, were small skirmishes. However, the Order has commanded a large force of warriors to go north and defeat the Gaians in their homelands—and in so doing, divert any interest or ability to wage war far from the



Steadfast, for peace is the best way to foster the truth.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Only a select few PCs can become full members (and be considered Aeon Priests), but anyone can become acolyte, if they prove themselves worthy.

Symbol: Square entwined in four-lobed design

Motto: Glory to the originators of truth and understanding.

Badge of Membership: Pin, amulet, or tattoo of symbol

Member Benefits: Being an acolyte of the Order grants advantage on any Charisma (Persuasion) check made to creatures that revere the Order of Truth (and disadvantage to those that despise them). In addition, a member who receives about a month of diligent training has proficiency on any ability check for understanding or using a numenera device. If you already have proficiency with the the check, you can double your proficiency bonus for that use.



THE CONVERGENCE

If the Order of Truth has an opposite, it would be the Convergence. Like the Aeon Priests, members of the Convergence revere the knowledge of the past, but they seek to use it to grant power to themselves, not to help others. Each member wishes to use the numenera to gain influence not only over the people of the Ninth World but also over the universe itself. They understand enough of the numenera to realize that it has more potential than most Aeon Priests know. Matter, energy, space, time, and even the laws of physics can be shaped to their will if they determine the means. In this pursuit, Convergence members are ruthless, using coercion, deceit, and violence to get what they want. They let nothing stand in their way.

A small organization, the Convergence boasts a membership of approximately one hundred men and women, but with underlings, guards, lackeys, and slaves, the total is ten times higher. Many members are nanos, and some are Aeon Priests who renounced their order. All are scholars,

"In the long history of Earth, other sentient species have evolved, lived, and died here, but humanity seems to share a particular bond with this place."

—Visixtru, varjellen philosopher

tinkerers, machinesmiths, and theorists who understand the numenera.

Members of the Convergence are called magister or magistrix. Each typically wields an array of numenera weaponry and devices. Most have given up on society at large and dwell in secret, whether alone or in small groups, toiling at their dark goals. The Convergence has three main bases of operation, which they call their sanctums.

These are the **Scorpion Sanctum**, the **Empty Sanctum**, and the **Golden Sanctum**. Each is joined to the others by a series of space-bending gateways. About one-third of the organization operates directly out of these sanctums.

Scorpion Sanctum, page 73

Empty Sanctum, page 76

Golden Sanctum, page 30

Convergence Magister/Magistrixes have Aeon Priest stats (page 150).

In addition, many wield a terrorizer.



New members are inducted in one of the three sanctums. A candidate must have a sponsor already in the Convergence, must be extremely intelligent, and utterly remorseless in the pursuit of ultimate power—morals and ethics be damned.

MEMBERS OF NOTE

Convergence members of note are magisters and magistrixes. Though each has unique qualities, they also share many things in common.

Convergence Magister/Magistrix:

Convergence magisters and magistrixes typically wear hooded robes and a heavy medallion bearing their eyelike symbol. Members are driven people, usually of the opinion that the ends justify the means. Those ends are the attainment of personal power and knowledge. Mostly, they are power mad and ruthless in their pursuits. Some are more than willing to talk, barter, or negotiate. Few actually enjoy conflict. But if conflict is called for, most carry a relic called a terrorizer that wracks living targets with incredible pain.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Symbol: Entwined eye

Motto: Exploit the past for personal power.

Badge of Membership: Pin, amulet, or tattoo of symbol

Member Benefits: Members who spend at least a few months in a Convergence sanctum can derive a benefit from their prolonged exposure to reality- and mind-bending technologies and bizarre mental techniques. This benefit grants them resistance to psychic damage.

TERRORIZER

Relic, rare (requires attunement)

When this rod is activated as your action, a beam targets one creature within 120 feet. On a failed DC 13 Intelligence saving throw, the target takes 6d8 psychic damage and is stunned on their next turn from fear. On a successful save, targets take only half damage. Once used, you can't use the rod again until after your next rest.



THE ANGULAN KNIGHTS

The Charter: Humanity has once again been granted dominion of the well-used and often misused Earth. The Ninth World is the Last World. We shall call it Midgard and defend it in the name of humanity. These are the aspects of the world that stand in the way of humanity's dominion: creatures from elsewhere, predatory horrors lingering from a nonhuman past, humans that have turned by committing crimes against their own kind, and any who prevent the greater good anywhere. These aspects of the world shall be eliminated by sword or flame, in the name of Midgard and the spirit of Angule.

Throughout the Steadfast, justice is sometimes meted at the end of a blade unaligned with any king or prince. The Angulan Knights are an order dedicated to the advancement of humanity as a species. They not only ignore local governments, class distinctions, and religious differences, they abhor those things. Angulan Knights feel empowered to right wrongs, pass judgments, and see justice done, and few stand in their way.

A woman named Angule founded the order more than 350 years ago, and her teachings have spread such that at least 800 knights now roam the Steadfast. More than a century ago, the knights made a pact with Thuquera, known as the Great Drake, whom all xi-drakes revere. Today, the knighthood and the xi-drakes work together in their duties.

The Angulan Knights have no centralized leadership. Instead, members advance through a series of thirteen ranks until they achieve the title Grand Knight, the highest one can rise. There is no limit to the number of Grand Knights the order can have. The ranks are: Red Devotee, Blue Devotee, Black Devotee, Knight Seeker, Knight Avenger, Knight Defender, Knight Marshall, Knight Justice, Knight Commander, Master Knight, Knight Consul, Lord Knight, and Grand Knight.

The knights have the blessing and support of the Order of Truth, and even Aeon Priests outside the Order give them respect and aid if need be. However, the knights, true to their charter, do not afford the priests any special treatment. Many



Xi-drake, page 241

The pact between the knighthood and the xi-drakes is what prompted the saying, "A friendship as close as a knight and a dragon."

Sanctuary of the Eye, page 37

people mistakenly believe that the two groups are officially related or that the knighthood answers to the Amber Pope, but neither is true. Once inducted into the knighthood in the **Sanctuary of the Eye** in Ghan, the order's central base of operations, a knight is charged to go out into the world and enforce the charter.

Angulans typically despise mutants in any form and swiftly root them out, putting them to the sword. They don't care for visitants, either, but suffer them to live if the creatures do not directly oppose the knights.

MEMBERS OF NOTE

Angulan Knights could be encountered almost anywhere, pursuing their quests. But they are always found in Ledon, in the Sanctuary of the Eye. And anyone who enters there is likely to interact early and often with **Castellan Vinabas**.

Castellan Vinabas has glaive stats (page 153).

Castellan Vinabas: Whipcord thin and tall despite his grey hair and lined visage, Castellan Vinabas (who holds the rank of Grand Knight, in addition to his role in the citadel), sees to details both minor and crucial within the Sanctuary of the Eye. That includes interviewing important visitors, whether they be potential members or those who are suspected of being secretly in league with mutants. Though he's a fair man, Vinabas won't violate his code when it comes to seeing that the Angulan philosophy is carried out.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Symbol: Crossed swords on field of green, red, and yellow

Motto: For humans

Badge of Membership: Pin bearing member's rank

Member Benefits: After passing through all the proper initiations to become a Red Devotee, a member of the knighthood deals 1d6 bonus damage when they feel as though their combat is working toward upholding the charter. (The player and the GM can decide whether a particular situation warrants the bonus; usually, it can only be applied when fighting mutants.)



THE JAGGED DREAM

“War is a crucible from which one forges strength, courage, and mettle. That is the dream sent from the fire. Ours is a dream of jagged edges, blood, bone, and the cries of pain. Only through war can we advance. The ancients knew it. They waged wars throughout the long history of our aged world. They waged wars with entirely different worlds. When those wars ended, they sought new worlds, and even whole new universes to fight. The ancients knew. It is how they grew strong.

“Now we are here, and the fires of the crucible send us the Jagged Dream. We cannot shirk this responsibility. It is our destiny to grow great as the ancients grew great. And we can only do that through bloodshed, violence, and war.

“That is the Jagged Dream.”

—*Gia Soeman, dreamseeker*

The Jagged Dream is a secretive cult located throughout the Steadfast and the Beyond. Its membership is small but widespread, with hidden cells that meet in secret for fear of being discovered before they are ready.

The Jagged Dream wants to engineer conflict on a massive scale. Their leaders, called dreamseekers, claim to have had a dream sent to them from “the fire” or “the flames,” a representation of evolution and natural selection sped up through intensive conflict. In short, they want war and nothing but war. To the cult, peace is death because it means that the species and culture stops advancing. They're not interested in small-scale conflict—only large battles and long-term wars truly test a culture. Individuals don't matter to their plan, only large groups of people.

To this end, cult members attempt to secretly manipulate events toward war. They infiltrate other organizations and reach positions where they can whisper into the ears of the leaders (or become leaders themselves). They try to stimulate weapon development and production. They found military academies. As their timeline advances, they engineer mistrust and alienation among people and seek ways

to cause famines or other events that drive groups into conflict.

In the Ninth World, it's easy to foster mistrust—almost too easy—but it can be difficult to rally people together to create an army of any great size. So while on one hand some members of the Jagged Dream seek to divide people, others work to bring groups together. They want to create nations, not isolated villages or tribes, and then guide those nations to war.

The cult organizes itself into small, isolated cells. Often, a member of one cell won't know the members of any other cell. Sometimes, however, members wear a secret sign on their clothing or tattooed on their flesh. These symbols include a small knife with a serrated blade, a counterclockwise spiral around an open hand, or a silver or black raptor swooping downward, talons extended.

A typical cell includes one **dreamseeker** and four or five other members. The cell rarely has a permanent headquarters, instead meeting in secret in different places. The dreamseeker brings a portable shrine, which looks like a large wheeled trunk, to meetings. Members pray to the fire, seeking clarity and vision. However, they don't think of the fire as a sentient entity like a god. They recognize it as a fundamental force in the universe, beyond conscious thought, choice, or intent.

At a meeting, the dreamseeker coordinates the actions of all cell members. Despite the desire for war and bloodshed, the dreamseeker stresses patience. Slow movements and manipulations are needed to achieve their goals. Because the Jagged Dream's outlook is so much larger than that of any one individual, the cult's goals stretch over lifetimes.

The secretive members value hidden advantages. Many undergo surgeries (often performed by the cell) to gain subdermal weapons, defenses, and enhancements. The scars from such treatments are highly valued and respected by the cult, although they are hidden from the rest of society.

MEMBERS OF NOTE

Because most cells operate in secrecy, it is rare for any of them to become known as members of the Jagged Dream—rumors and speculation are the norm.

Arias Folon: Arias Folon runs a large cell of twenty members in Qi. This flint-eyed dreamseeker dresses in layers of grey and brown, and often wears a large four-eyed snake around her neck. Many cultists recognize her as the de facto leader of the Jagged Dream, but she would deny it.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Symbol: Silver or black raptor swooping downward with talons extended, knife with a serrated blade, or a counterclockwise spiral around an open hand

Motto: The flames inspire us to make the Jagged Dream a reality for the world.

Badge of Membership: Hidden symbol stitched into clothing or tattooed on flesh

Member Benefits: Cult members can have a weapon or device that they possess implanted in their body by Jagged Dream chiurgeons. The item is completely hidden and always goes unnoticed. An implanted knife would be retractable from the wrist. An implanted force shield generator could never be taken away.

Arias Folon has glaive stats (page 153).

Dreamseekers typically have scholar stats (page 157).

VISITANTS

The default assumption is that all player characters are human. However, the Ninth World is a strange place, and other options are available, although they should be extremely rare.

Visitants hail from . . . elsewhere. They are the descendants of travelers who came to Earth during a prior world, when interstellar—perhaps even intergalactic—travel was commonplace. At some point, the travelers were marooned here, perhaps because the civilization that supported their technology collapsed or disappeared. Sometimes visitants, particularly the varjellen, suggest that the Earth once served as the hub of a vast empire of thousands of worlds. However, there's no way to be certain of that, and it hardly seems relevant now, a hundred thousand or even a million years later.

Regardless of how they got here, visitants now call the Ninth World home. They have dwelled on Earth for a thousand generations or more and have long forgotten any useful knowledge their ancestors may have had about science, technology, or the universe. Instead, they have adapted, biologically and culturally, to survive in their new home. They know no other life and no other place, but remain keenly aware that they are at best transplants and at worst castaways.

Visitants sometimes integrate into human societies in the Ninth World, but more often they keep to themselves in their own small communities. They are relatively rare compared to humans. In fact, many humans have never encountered a visitant, and some don't believe they exist, dismissing them as tall tales or the result of numenera-based deformities or transformations. Although visitants

and humans differ greatly in outlook and personality, dwelling on the same world, facing the same dangers, and having the same experiences has made it possible for them to understand each other and get along. Most visitants speak the same language as the humans that live in the same region, although particularly isolated communities have their own language, just as remote human groups do.

Visitants can't interbreed with humans or with visitants of another type.

Players can create visitant characters if the GM allows it.

Visitant characters also present roleplaying challenges, so it's recommended that new players do not create visitant PCs.

VARJELLEN

"I knew a varjellen that carried a notebook with sketches of human facial expressions—smiling, frowning, and so on—so it could practice them and its human friends could understand what it was feeling."

—Hauk Ironbones

Varjellen are enigmatic beings who are often seen as cold and aloof, but they are just passionate about things in different ways than most people. Fascinated by the relics of the past, they study the numenera, create their own kinds of art, and value their own culture, sense of justice, and family.

ALIENS AMONG US

Tall and angular, the varjellen would never be confused with humans. They have a violet-red hue to their flesh; bulbous, yellow-cast, contralateral eyes; a tall, thin crest atop their head; and a broad chest with

The word "varjellen" is both singular and plural.

two limb-like structures that open a cavity within their chest. This cavity protects their heart and gives them access to it and other internal organs. Humans have likened a varjellen's chest to a cage with doors that can open and close. The varjellen call this protected cavity their "crucible."

Having access to their own internal organs provides them with a unique benefit. By gently massaging and subtly rearranging their organs in a manner understood only by the varjellen brain, they gain control over their entire physical structure, modifying their bodies on a cellular level as needed.

In other words, a varjellen can make itself faster, stronger, and even smarter when it needs to. But there is a price. To increase musculature of one kind, another must be diminished. To improve brain structures, tissue from elsewhere in the body must be sacrificed. When a varjellen becomes smarter, it becomes slower or weaker. When it becomes faster or more graceful, it becomes less hardy or less intelligent, and so on. The process of alteration is called reforging.

Varjellen are sexless until they wish otherwise, at which point they can adapt their organs to take on either a male or a female gender for reproductive purposes. Obviously, once a varjellen becomes pregnant, she retains female characteristics until she gives birth approximately six months later. They typically reproduce only once, always giving birth to twins.

They are herbivorous and cannot digest meat. By human standards, they prefer particularly spicy food and very strong liquor. Most diseases and toxins that affect humans affect the varjellen as well, although there are rare differences. Their eyesight is at least half again as good as a human's, but their hearing is a bit worse. They have no sense of smell.

DISPASSIONATE BUT UNPREDICTABLE

The varjellen share some general personality traits (though individuals obviously differ). Humans often find them cold, ponderous, and unemotional most of the time, but they can be unpredictably warm, impassioned,

or erratic. Guarded around strangers, the varjellen are freer with information and casual behavior among those they trust. But often, a varjellen's trust is difficult to win.

Although they are reluctant warriors, the varjellen do what they must to protect themselves. They are almost never the aggressors in physical situations, but if necessary, they can be as devious or ruthless as any human (again, this varies from individual to individual).

They value equality and fairness but may define these concepts differently than humans do. The varjellen need for justice gives them a deep desire to right wrongs—vengeance is well known among their kind.

Humans are incapable of discerning any difference between the varjellen who take on gender and those who do not.

Because it spends most of its life in a sexless state, a varjellen might always refer to its gender as "it" or "they," even if it is currently female or male.



Varjellen wear clothing not unlike human garments, always covering their crucible. Individuals typically paint, tattoo, or otherwise decorate their crest and head to express their own personality.

CLOSE COMMUNITIES

Varjellen form family-like pairs or small groups to raise offspring, alternating which of them are to give birth in order to stagger the responsibilities for infant care. Because they are so long-lived, varjellen communities tend to have a large network of extended families that support each other; regardless of how old a varjellen is when it has children, there is usually a more experienced parent (who might be much younger than the new parent) available for advice. Because almost all varjellen are twins, they're used to having someone around who is their age and quickly learn the need to share space, food, and other resources. A varjellen usually has close ties to one or more "cousins," who are just as likely to be a generation older than themselves (comparable to aunts and uncles in human villages).

Many varjellen enjoy working with tools and are fascinated by devices of the past. They care little for the events of history, preferring to focus on the present and the future. They enjoy visual arts and music, but they have no concept of poetry or prose and don't care much for stories. They'd rather draw, paint, sing, or take up a craft that lets them create physical works (tools, weapons, and so on). Instead of personal anecdotes about events and feelings, a varjellen's personal journal tends to include sketches of things it discovered and ideas for things it wants to do or learn next. A varjellen living outside of its community is likely to be an inventor, crafter, or someone who repairs and maintains objects and simple machines (such as water wheels, mills, and ships).

CURIOSITY AND TRAVEL

Varjellen are drawn to mystery and exploration. They usually return home every few years to share discoveries and lore that others would find interesting or useful. Those with a creative bent might seek out

new materials they can use to craft things—unusual wood to carve, rare pigments to paint with, exotic clays to shape—or new songs and musical instruments they can learn. For many, the experience of traveling is the appeal, not as a competition with others or to stake a claim, but just to witness something their discerning eyes have never seen before.

DISTANT BUT CURIOUS

Varjellen seem cold, but it's nothing personal. This makes it all the more surprising when they allow others to see them excited or angry.

Humans: "We do not always understand each other or agree with their interpretation, but they have similar emotions as us and it is worth tolerating their excesses."

Lattimors: "We appreciate them best when their minds are in balance, because the contemplative neem restrains the bursk's aggressive and competitive energy."

VARJELLEN NAMES

Varjellen are given names at birth, usually multisyllable ones. Adults sometimes split their names to make it easier for other species to use, so Deverlaush becomes known as Dever Laush.

Genderless Names: Deverlaush, Ioxu, Kasanth, Kel, Koukehry, Lagim, Lesym, Lieos, Lirrad, Malianoke, Palianeir, Pliianvix, Skurvan, Strolrushy, Thrianelli, Vestiai, Visixtru, Wildern

VARJELLEN TRAITS

Your varjellen character has a variety of natural abilities from its biology and culture.

Ability Score Increase. One ability score of your choice increases by 1.

Age. Varjellen mature at the about same rate as humans, but on average they live 250 years.

Alignment. Most varjellen are lawful, having benefitted from the support of a community and family. They tend toward neutral or good, preferring to not interfere in others' lives and wanting to be treated the same in return.



Size. Varjellen range from about 5 1/2 to about 6 1/2 feet tall, and tend to be thinner than a human of the same height. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Reforing. You can manipulate your crucible to adjust your ability scores over the course of one hour, which can be done during a short rest. Reforining lets you reduce one of your ability scores by an even number (down to a minimum of 8) and increase another ability score by the same amount (to a maximum of 17). Each time you reforge, you can adjust as many ability scores as you want (it always takes an hour, no matter how much you change). For example, you could reduce your Strength from 13 to 11 and increase your Dexterity from 13 to 15, and reduce your Intelligence from 10 to 8 and your Dexterity from 15 to 17.

When reforining, you can also choose to change your gender to male, female, or your normal sexless state (this change has no effect on any of your character traits).

After you reforge, you may not do it again until you complete a short or long rest.

Weak Recovery. When you spend Hit Dice to regain hit points, subtract 1 from the number of hit points you heal per Hit Die.

Numenera Fascination. You have advantage when using the Arcana skill on numenera.

Keen Eyes. You have proficiency in the Perception skill when relying on sight.

Weak Ears. You have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing.

Anosmia. You automatically fail any ability checks that rely on a sense of smell.

Present and Future. You have disadvantage on Intelligence (History) checks.

Flat Presentation. You have disadvantage on Charisma (Performance) checks for poetry, oration, and telling stories.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write the Truth and Varjellen. Varjellen is full of compound words made of smaller words, and you might squeeze together words when speaking or writing in other languages.

Young varjellen who have just learned to reforge can do it in half the time, but as the body ages, the process takes longer, so an hour is average.

Changing your Constitution changes your Constitution modifier, and therefore your hit point maximum as well. See the game rules on Constitution under Using Each Ability.

LATTIMOR

Big. Humanish. Covered in reddish-orange hair all over. He was something called a lattimor. And the purple wing-shaped patch across his back was actually where his brain lived. That last one wasn't quite right, but despite him describing it to her multiple times in myriad different ways, she was still a little muddy on how it worked.

—Shanna Germain, *The Poison Eater*

A lattimor is the result of a symbiotic union of two different creatures: a large, muscular, hairy biped called a **bursk** and an intelligent fungus called a **neem**. They come together in synthesis to form a new being. Effectively, a lattimor is two creatures with one body.

BURSK AND NEEM

A typical lattimor stands about 7 feet tall, with broad, sloping shoulders, powerful arms, and short legs. It has two large and widely spaced eyes, plus four smaller eyes positioned high and close together.

Although its entire body is covered in brownish-blond, black, or white hair, the back of a lattimor has a flat, discolored area, almost like a massive bruise. Humans often think the area vaguely resembles a bat or an owl with outstretched wings. Closer inspection of the area reveals tiny waving hairs that are almost threadlike—very different from the hair on the rest of the creature's body. These small hairs are the outer manifestation of the neem, although by adulthood, the fungus has worked itself into the cellular structure of the main body of the bursk.

The synthesis of bursk and neem is imperfect. The symbiosis results in a single creature with a single mind, called the fugue state. While the bursk and the neem are enhanced by the union—the whole is far greater than the sum of the parts—sometimes the two creatures operate independently. In other words, the lattimor exists in a fugue state most of the time, but sometimes either the bursk or the neem is in control.

Without a neem, a bursk is little more than a beast, about as intelligent as a smart, well-trained pack animal. Without a bursk, a neem is aware and intelligent, but not nearly at a human's level; it's not capable of using tools and is barely mobile.

Lattimors are omnivorous and can digest organic material that a human almost certainly could not. They are strong creatures with keen senses. They breathe nitrogen but need only a small amount, so they can hold their breath for up to ten minutes without issue. Most inhaled toxins that would bother a human have no effect on them.

THREE PERSONALITIES

At any given time, a lattimor might be in a bursk state, a neem state, or (most commonly) a fugue state. The outlook of a lattimor depends on its current state and can vary from individual to individual. In its fugue state, a lattimor is careful but curious. Most humans would find it to be self-aggrandizing but not offensive. Typically, a bursk state is more prone to aggression, combat, and physical activity. A neem state



is contemplative and conversational. From a human's point of view, this can seem like a psychotic malady akin to multiple personality disorder, but to a lattimor, it's simply normal life.

In a bursk state, the creature is easily bored and focuses mainly on eating and proving its prowess (and worth) through physical acts, such as combat, feats of strength, or contests. These extroverts can be quite rash at times. In a neem state, the creature is timid, thoughtful, and introverted. It likes to talk but probably would rather just think.

Shifting from state to state sometimes happens unexpectedly. When the lattimor wishes to change state, the shift requires careful concentration. The bursk state, being more aggressive, is harder to shift out of than the other two states.

Not all lattimor pairings are harmonious. Rarely, a neem and bursk grow to hate each other and vie for control when not in a fugue state.

Playing a lattimor as a PC species can be difficult, as it is one character with three personalities and strengths. For an extra challenge, two players could play a single lattimor character together, with one in control when the creature is in bursk state, the other in control when in neem state, and the two working together when in fugue state.

FEELINGS, FAMILIES, AND TRIBES

Lattimors have complicated emotions affected by what state they're in. In a bursk state, they are unguarded and likely to speak and act openly about things and people they love and hate. In a neem state, they are more reserved, and feel more in terms of practicality, compatibility, and survival. In a fugue state, their emotions fall somewhere in the center, similar to what most humans experience.

Lattimors have male and female genders, but only because bursk do—the neem reproduce asexually. When two lattimors mate, the result is a bursk who is immediately joined with a neem so they grow together. If the union cannot be established within the first few weeks, it is unlikely to happen successfully. Male

lattimors are typically larger than the females and walk a bit stooped.

Communities of lattimors work together to keep individuals from spending too much time in a bursk or neem state, as excessive aggression and woolgathering is detrimental to the survival of the tribe. Individual interests and careers vary—guards, farmers, crafters, healers, and scholars are just as common among lattimors as they are among humans.

VOLATILE BALANCE

Lattimors have human-like emotions; they just tend to be a little more extreme about it. Even a fugue-state lattimor is very opinionated and ardent about their beliefs and interests, and enjoys conversation and debate about important topics.

Humans: “Our kind and theirs have different strengths and weaknesses, but their curiosity, prowess, and successes show they are not so different than us.”

Varjellen: “Do not mistake their coldness for indifference. They guard their emotions, but they feel as strongly as we do.”

MULTIFACETED PURSUITS

Bursk state lattimors seek out physical challenges and rewards so they can elevate their status and brag about their accomplishments. Neem state lattimors look for projects and intellectual curiosities that reward them with the resources to let them spend time contemplating and philosophizing. In a fugue state they try to find reasons to travel that suit both aspects of themselves.

LATTIMOR NAMES

A lattimor's bursk and neem each have individual names, with the union taking on both names. For example, a neem called Narlyen and a bursk called Fesh might combine to create a lattimor called Narlyen-Fesh.

Neem Names: Banem, Carstol, Gravish, Hanlan, Joran, Margel, Narlyen, Nax, Ungeym, Zester

Bursk Names: Dolin, Fesh, Fournal, Jorum, Mes, Morel, Orsk, Reg, Slan, Werl

There are reports of a neem being "burned out" of a bursk, reducing it to a bestial creature that can never again form the synthesis of a lattimor.

LATTIMOR TRAITS

Your lattimor character has a mix of abilities stemming from its neem and bursk parts.

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength and Constitution score each increase by 1.

Age. Lattimors mature slightly earlier than humans, and an average lattimor's lifespan is approximately 50 years. Usually, when one part of the combined creature dies, both die.

Alignment. Lattimors tend toward no particular alignment. They tend to be more chaotic in a bursk state and more lawful in a neem state, but their fugue state alignment is their normal alignment.

Size. Lattimors are about 7 feet tall and have strong builds. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write the Truth. Bursks do not have their own language, and neems seem to have abandoned any common language they had in the past for the Truth.

Lattimor Breathing. You add double your proficiency bonus to the number of minutes you can hold your breath and how many rounds you can hold your breath when you've run out of air or are choking. You have advantage on rolls to hold your breath and saves against poison you breathe.

Change State. You can change to another state (bursk, fugue, or neem) as your action by making an Intelligence saving throw against a DC of 12. The GM can modify the DC of the save to change state based on the circumstances; stressful situations increase the DC. Once you attempt to change state (whether or not you succeed), you can't try again until you finish a short or long rest.

Fugue State. This is your default state; you normally wake up in this state. When in a fugue state, you have the following additional trait:

Keen Senses. You have proficiency in the Perception skill.

Bursk State. Your bursk side is in control. When in a bursk state, you have the following additional traits:

Bursk Combat Training. You have proficiency with one melee weapon of your choice (such as battleaxe, longsword, or warhammer).

Confrontational. You have disadvantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks.

Destructive. You have advantage on any roll using your physical strength to break something.

Impulsive. You have disadvantage on Intelligence rolls (including to change your state).

Keen Senses. You have proficiency in the Perception skill.

Unfocused. You have disadvantage on rolls to have or maintain concentration (such as for casting spells), and any action that needs concentration requires you to succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw to do so.

Neem State. Your neem side is in control. When in a neem state, you have the following additional traits:

Conversational. You have proficiency in the Deception and Persuasion skills.

Focused. You have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to notice anything unexpected.

Passive. You have disadvantage on all attack rolls, and opponents have advantage on all attack rolls against you.

Thinker. You have advantage on any roll involving studying, concentrating, or contemplating.



PART 3: CREATURES AND NPCs



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CREATURES



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Creatures by Challenge Rating

Broken hound
(challenge 1/4)

Caffa (challenge 1/4)

Uncommon animal
(challenge 1)

Nibovian wife
(challenge 2)

Abykos (challenge 4)

Ithsyn (challenge 4)

Ghost crab (challenge 4)

*Pandimensional: existing
on multiple levels of
reality at once.*

This chapter contains a selection of Ninth World creatures supplementing those already described in **Chapter 4: Creatures of Arcana of the Ancients**.

ABYKOS

This shadowy, hazy, vaguely humanoid shimmer is often mistaken as a ghost. Actually, an abykos is a transdimensional entity. Usually incorporeal, it can change phase at will, becoming solid.

Harmless. Mostly. Most of the time, PCs have little to fear from an abykos. However, if they have any numenera that is transdimensional in nature, the hungry abykos will attack.

Alien. Because it's different, it's hard to determine an abykos's intelligence. It's adaptable and clever despite no sign of language or tool use. Telepathic communication yields no results, as if the creature does not exist. But an abykos is not mindless; it learns from its experiences.



ABYKOS

Medium monstrosity, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 54 (12d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Wis +5, Cha +2

Damage Resistances cold, lightning, poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Incorporeal Movement. The abykos can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object if it is not using Phase Shift.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The abykos makes two metallic claws attacks, or one Drain Numenera attack.

Metallic Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (3d6 + 2) necrotic damage.

Phase Shift. The abykos goes out of phase with reality, or returns to its normal phase. It remains visible, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything in reality, except by special **pandimensional** weapons created specifically to harm such creatures.

Drain Numenera (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). Treat as a metallic claws attack; however upon hitting, instead of taking damage, the target must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom save, or one relic in their possession is depleted and the abykos regains all its hit points.

BROKEN HOUND

The scourge of many wastelands, broken hounds travel in large packs. They resemble extremely gaunt hounds, but their heads appear more avian than canine, giving the impression of a bird skull mounted on a dead dog's body.

Savage Animals. These starving, vicious animals understand only hunger and fear. They cannot be reasoned with—not even by someone with the ability to interact with or train animals.

Dangers of the Pack. A large number of broken hounds can make a harrowing combat encounter for PCs. They often attack travelers on a road or those who wander into a lonely vale.

A broken hound lair contains the remains of previous victims and their equipment and valuables, including a cypher or two.



A beast lure cypher (Arcana of the Ancients, page 55) would allow someone to communicate, however crudely, with a single called broken hound.

BROKEN HOUND

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)

Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	2 (-4)	9 (-1)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Pack Tactics. The broken hound has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the hound's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (2d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Pack Bite. A pack bite is made like a normal bite, but if the attack was made with advantage, it deals an additional 5 (2d4) points of damage.



CAFFA

Large insects with unusually strong wings of iridescent goldgleam, caffas have learned to navigate at ground level and below, flying tight and low between and around spaces that seem far too small for their size. In tight spaces, caffas are formidable opponents due to their ability to dodge hits and slip through tiny areas to attack from unexpected directions. Caffas have a wingspan of 4 feet (1 m).

Caffa Larva. Caffa adults plant the seeds of their larvae with a special type of wing flap. The larvae crawl along the ground or dig into it, feasting on any flesh they find, whether living or dead. After feasting, they burrow into the ground and spin themselves into cocoons. They remain in this state for anywhere from a few hours to a few days before emerging as adult caffas.

Goldgleam. Goldgleam wings can be rolled up, carried, and sold at good prices to interested parties for decorating houses, armor, and other items. Alternatively, PCs can use goldgleam on their own items. Although it's a resilient material to carry and store, it's hard to work with; typically, eight or ten wings are required to decorate one small item.

CAFFA

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 10 (3d6)

Speed 20 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +5

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages —

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Tunnel Predator. In cramped, narrow, and confined spaces, the caffas's ability to maneuver and dodge in unexpected ways gives them advantage on Dexterity saves.

Wind Resilient. The caffas has advantage on saving throws against effects based on moving wind or air.

ACTIONS

Wing Stroke. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 10 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one prone target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.



GHOST CRAB

Ghost crabs live on the ocean floor in pairs, typically in places that are at least 1 mile (1.5 km) deep. They can grow as large as 5 feet (1.5 m) across but average about 3 1/2 feet (1 m).

Web Builders. Nimble hunters and intricate weavers, ghost crabs can build their silica webs along any jagged or uneven surface, including coral reefs, sunken ships, and ancient ruins. If no surface is available, they make one, killing large animals so they can build webs across the shells and bones.

Not true crabs, ghost crabs are spiderlike creatures that spin hard shells from the same silica they use to build their webs. Ghost crabs appear and disappear in the depths as though shifting realms. Their webs, too, are often invisible unless one knows to look for the glinting, off-white strings. Although ghost crabs are blind, their finely-honed sense of touch allows them to hunt and devour anything that gets caught in their webs.

Ocean Threats. Those exploring the ocean on a mission to recover treasure from a long-sunken construction site may notice ghostly creatures out of the corners of their eyes, scuttling through light and shadow. Further investigation reveals long, shining strands woven between the rotting underwater fixtures.

If one of a crab's front claws is smashed or removed, it can spin another as a replacement, a process that takes 2 rounds.

GHOST CRAB

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 97 (13d8 + 39)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +4

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 14

Languages —

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Amphibious. The ghost crab can breathe air and water.

Sense Resilience. The ghost crab has advantage on saving throws against illusions.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The ghost crab makes two claw attacks.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Web (Recharge 5–6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one Large or smaller creature. *Hit:* The creature is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained creature can make a DC 14 Strength check, escaping from the webbing on a success. Each round spent caught in the web inflicts 3 (1d6) necrotic damage. The effect also ends if the webbing is destroyed. The webbing has AC 10, 5 hit points, vulnerability to cold damage, and immunity to acid, bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage.

Although creatures called ghost crabs exist in today's world, the Ninth World version is not related to them in any way. In fact, the unique abilities of the Ninth World ghost crabs suggest they might have been bioengineered, although for what purpose is anyone's guess.



ITHSYN

Loud and horrible, the things called ithsyns appear to be the result of a genetic experiment gone awry. Possessing distinctive qualities of avians, reptiles, mammals, and fish, they seem difficult to categorize. In the end, however, they are unique in their own right.

Nesting Hunters. Ithsyns are egg layers that live in large communal nests comprised of at least three adults (and often more). They fiercely defend their nests—even unto death. These carnivores hunt in packs, looking for prey of any size. Ithsyns do not see or hear particularly well and rely on their long, snakelike tongues for much of their sensing. More times than not, a pack nests atop or in front of the entrance to an abandoned facility that lures explorers.

An ithsyn nest might have loot in the form of coincidental leftovers of prior victims.

ITHSYN

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	8 (-1)	17 (+3)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Senses darkvision 20 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The ithsyn makes two attacks: one bite with its trifurcated mouth and one kick.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Kick. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (3d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

REACTIONS

Confusion Gas(Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). When the ithsyn takes damage, it releases a dark greenish gas from orifices throughout its body. Each creature within 10 feet of it must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or become addled. Creatures immune to the poisoned condition are immune to this gas. Addled victims behave randomly on their next turn. Roll d100 and consult the table.

d100 Added Victim's Behavior

01–20	Run off in a random direction for a short distance
21–30	Attack the nearest creature with whatever means is closest at hand
31–60	Do nothing but cough and shout
61–80	Fall down and roll on the ground
81–90	Drop whatever is held and cover eyes and face with hands
91–00	Activate most powerful available ability, cypher, or relic that is not an attack (if none, roll again)



NIBOVIAN WIFE

These biological constructs appear to be beautiful female humans. As long as one gives a Nibovian wife what it wants, it is kind and eager to please. One can never be convinced to abandon its imperative (producing an alien doorway), but on other issues, they can be perfectly reasonable.

Alien Doorways. Nibovian wives, however, are made things. Their only function is to seduce male humans so they can get pregnant. Pregnancy in a Nibovian wife opens a transdimensional rift inside its womb, giving an ultraterrestrial (such as an *abykos* or any ultraterrestrial creature the GM wishes) access to this level of existence. The time required for “gestation,” which is actually the aligning of phase changes to create the rift, ranges from ten minutes to nine months.

Ultraterrestrial Birth. When the ultraterrestrial creature is “born,” the Nibovian wife nurtures it as if it were a child, even though it clearly is not. During this time, the construct defends the “child” fiercely. The young creature develops quickly, and its first and only compulsion is to hunt down and kill its “father.” Once it does so, it is free to do as it pleases in the world.

Abykos, page 142

Nibovian wives are likely the cause of many ultraterrestrials currently in the Ninth World.

NIBOVIAN WIFE

Medium construct, lawful evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)

Skills Deception +5, Persuasion +5

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages the Truth

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Nibovian wife makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its punch.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) bludgeoning damage.

Teleport (Recharge 6). The Nibovian teleports, along with its “child,” up to 500 feet to an unoccupied space it can see or that it has previously visited.



The inner workings of a Nibovian wife can provide cyphers for someone who attempts to salvage the remains.

One of the largest gatherings of Nibovian wives is in Hidden Naresh (page 76), a city in the Black Riage.

UNCOMMON ANIMAL

Analogous to common animals such as birds, squirrels, lions, deer, cattle, and more, exist in the Ninth World, and they often look much different, even if they have similar roles. In addition to innocuous wildlife, uncommon animals roam the Ninth World. These include dangerous livestock, companion creatures, and mounts.

UNCOMMON ANIMAL

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 26 (4d10 + 4)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	3 (-4)	11 (+0)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Keen Hearing and Smell. The uncommon animal has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

ACTIONS

Bite, Impale, Kick, or Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing/bludgeoning/slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

UNCOMMON ANIMAL TYPES

Though they have similar underlying stats, uncommon animals vary widely in look and behavior.

Aneen: Tall and muscular, aneen are bipedal herd animals. These omnivores mainly eat grass, leaves, and, occasionally, small lizards or rodents. Aneen are often trained to accept a rider, or to pull wagons. They attack by kicking. In a herd, they can stampede, which can be dangerous.

Brehm: These reptilian coursers are fast and lightweight, making them great for long, quick travel. Brehm are often trained to accept a rider, but don't have the strength to pull or carry heavy loads.

Gallen: These long-bodied, herbivorous animals are revered for their meat and hides.

Razorcat: Massive, tigerlike beasts, razorcats are often trained to accept a rider. In addition, razorcats are challenge 2 and have a multiattack of two bite attacks.

Shiul: These massive, quite valuable "cattle" have four wide horns that they use to impale predators and foes. Shiul are sometimes trained to accept a rider.



5E CREATURES

In addition to the creatures presented here and in *Arcana of the Ancients*, you could—as broached in Chapter 1—supplement your game with certain 5E monsters to further expand your choices. The trick is to describe the creatures you choose using the science-fantasy language of the Ninth World.

Some broad guidance follows.

Aberrations are, almost by definition, ultraterrestrials that come from other dimensions or extraterrestrials from distant worlds, and could be found in the Ninth World. For instance, aboleths might be bioengineered warbeasts from a previous civilization that threw off the yoke of their old masters.

Beasts require little adaptation. Those with magical powers have the same abilities, but from a connection to the numenera. As an example, dinosaurs could be an additional variety of megafauna of the type that thunders across the Ninth World already. On the other end of the spectrum, you could directly use the stats for creatures like cats and scorpions, and everything in between, though give them a Ninth World twist (whether that's in coloration, sound, or other weird quirk).

Celestials could be a variety of ultraterrestrial. However, something like a pegasus resonates too much with fantasy and myth, and thus would not make a great choice.

Constructs require additional descriptive element that includes a machine element, like visible wires, an engine (or just the revving sound of one), or other mechanical element.

Fiends, like celestials, could be a variety of ultraterrestrial. For instance, a horned devil might be an example of an extra-dimensional super-soldier, bred to fight in multi-dimensional battles.

Humanoids are usually abhumans, especially those who have an inborn hatred of humans. Kobolds, for example, could be a great encounter in a science-fantasy context.

Oozes and **plants** could be included with little adaptation, for the most part.

The list of 5E creatures to mostly avoid includes dragons, undead, fey, elementals, and monstrosities because many of these creatures are too closely linked to standard fantasy or myth.



NPCs



Cyphers, page 40

Relics, page 45

Iron flesh, page 49



Optional Rule:
Intelligence (Ancients
Arcana), page 259

Order of Truth, page 127

A selection of Ninth World non-player characters. NPCs with abilities that surpass those of regular humans (and other humanoids) are gained by reliance on **cyphers**, **relics**, and most often, fused **iron flesh**. However, devices that allow an NPC their special abilities are not necessarily part of their loot or usable by anyone else; the GM must make a special exception for that to be true.

NPCs BY CHALLENGE RATING

- Scholar (challenge 1/8)
- Steward (challenge 1/8)
- Specialist (challenge 1/2)
- Tough (challenge 1/2)
- Aristocrat (challenge 2)
- Defender (challenge 2)
- Explorer (challenge 3)
- Legionary (challenge 3)
- Shadow Knight (challenge 3)
- Diplomat (challenge 4)
- Nano (challenge 4)
- Aeon Priest (challenge 6)
- Warlord (challenge 6)
- Glaive (challenge 9)
- Jack (challenge 9)
- Arch Nano (challenge 12)
- Deadly warrior (challenge 12)
- Nano exemplar (challenge 22)

AEON PRIEST

Medium humanoid (any species), any alignment

Armor Class 12 (16 with force armor)

Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +8, Wis +4

Skills Arcana +8, History +8

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages any two languages (including the Truth)

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

ACTIONS

Brilliance. The Aeon Priest uses iron flesh to generate a brilliant beam in a 30-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) fire damage and 21 (6d6) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Sleep Blast (Recharge 6). Each creature in a 15-foot cone of gas must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or fall asleep for 1

minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Fly (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The Aeon Priest gains a fly speed of 60 ft. for one hour.

Unseen (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The Aeon Priest turns invisible until they attack or use an action, or until their concentration ends. While invisible, they leave no physical evidence of their passage. Any equipment they wear or carry is also invisible.

Force Armor (1/Day). A protective force surrounds the Aeon Priest for 10 hours, providing a +4 bonus to AC.

Heal (1/Day). The Aeon Priest regains all hit points.

Aeon Priests are fonts of numenera knowledge who serve the **Order of Truth**. They are interested not in the details of past culture or history, but in science. They can identify cyphers, relics, and iron flesh at will and offer to purchase unwanted items from those they meet. In addition, if the PCs are going to encounter an Aeon Priest as

an adversary, provide the Aeon Priest with at least two useful cyphers, relics, or iron flesh (randomly or purposefully determined) and add it to the abilities they already possess.

ARISTOCRAT

Medium humanoid (any species), any alignment

Armor Class 15 (leather armor + iron flesh)

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

Skills Deception +4, Persuasion +4, History +2

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages any one language (usually the Truth)

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Hard to Sway. The aristocrat has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The aristocrat makes two longsword attacks, or uses an iron-flesh granted ability.

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage.

Dictate (1/Day). As its action, the aristocrat speaks a one-word command to a creature they can see within 30 feet. If the target understands and fails a DC 12 Charisma saving throw, it follows the command on its next turn.

Stillness (1/Day). As its action, the aristocrat speaks a one-word command to a creature they can see within 30 feet. If the target understands and fails a DC 12 Charisma saving throw, it is paralyzed for 1 minute. At the end of each of its turns, the target can make another Wisdom saving throw to end the effect.

Aristocrats are born of privilege, and as such have had far more access to schooling, training, and other advantages that ordinary people lack. Sometimes aristocrats are groomed for (or actually hold) positions of power. Other times, they merely while away their time on personal pursuits.

DEADLY WARRIOR

Medium humanoid (any species), any alignment

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 161 (19d8 + 76)

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +8, Wis +6, Cha +8

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from weapons not treated as magical

Damage Immunities lightning

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages any one language (usually the Truth)

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Numenera Weapons. The deadly warrior's weapon attacks are treated as if magical and deal an extra 14 (4d6) lightning damage on a hit (included in the attacks).

Resistance. The deadly warrior has advantage on direct effects created by numenera devices, attacks by nanos, and other effects that are treated as if magical.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The deadly warrior makes four melee attacks.

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage, or 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage if used with two hands, plus 14 (4d6) lightning damage.

Longbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 14 (4d6) lightning damage.

REACTIONS

Parry. The deadly warrior adds 4 to their AC against one melee attack that would hit them. To do so, the deadly warrior must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

The deadly warrior is an elite combatant who wields greater skill most other fighters. Although deadly warriors might command others, that is not their forte. They focus on personal combat and skill with their own blade, almost always relying on fused numenera devices to further heighten their effectiveness.



DEFENDER

Medium humanoid (any species), any alignment

Armor Class 14 (chainmail hauberk)

Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages any one language (usually the Truth)

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Dutybound. At the start of their turn, the defender can gain advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls during that turn if they are guarding that which they have sworn to protect, but attack rolls against them have advantage until the start of their next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The defender makes two longsword attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.

Defenders are a cut above average guards, and put duty before their own well-being.

DIPLOMAT

Medium humanoid (any species), any alignment

Armor Class 16 (chainmail hauberk)

Hit Points 66 (12d8 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)

Skills Deception +9, Insight +5, Perception +5, Persuasion +9

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages any five languages (including the Truth)

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The diplomat makes three shortsword attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Charm (1/Day). One humanoid the diplomat can see within 30 feet of it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed for 1 day, or until the diplomat charms someone else. The charmed target obeys the diplomat's verbal commands, but can repeat the saving throw if it suffers harm, ending the effect on a success.

Oath (1/Day). The diplomat can offer a target that can see and understand it the option to take an oath of service. If a creature takes the oath (which is usually to complete a task or obey a rule), and later breaks it for any reason, the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 32 (5d10 + 5) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Diplomats have many roles in the Ninth World. Some serve as envoys between kingdoms. Others actually rule towns, cities, or entire kingdoms themselves. Some just travel the world, looking for a place they can take over, or if good-aligned, deliver peace.



EXPLORER

Medium humanoid (any species), any alignment

Armor Class 16 (chain mail)

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (for 1 hour; cypher)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +2, Con +4, Wis +2, Cha +4

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +2

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages any one language (usually the Truth)

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

ACTIONS

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) force damage.

Force Blast (Recharge 5–6). The explorer uses iron flesh to generate force in a 30-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Explorers are tough, carry many cyphers and almost always rely on iron flesh to provide themselves further advantages as they explore the ruins of the Prior Worlds.



GLAIVE

Medium humanoid (any species), any alignment

Armor Class 17 (splint armor)

Hit Points 161 (17d8 + 85)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	15 (+2)	21 (+5)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages any one language (usually the Truth)

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Resistance. The glaive has advantage on direct effects created by numenera devices, attacks by nanos, and other effects that are treated as if magical.

Magic Weapons. The glaive's weapon attacks are treated as if magical.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Glaive makes four greatsword attacks. Alternatively, they make one greatsword attack and either Stunning Shout or Amazing Leap.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Stunning Shout (recharge 5–6). As their action, the glaive can target a creature within 50 feet that they can see with a thunderous shout. On a failed DC 15 Constitution saving throw, the target takes 10 (3d6) thunder damage and is stunned for one minute, or until they succeed on a save on their turn. On a successful save, they are still frightened for one round, but are thereafter immune for 24 hours.

Amazing Leap (recharge 5–6). As their action, the glaive can leap to a location within 30 feet that they can see, if their passage is not blocked.

Glaives are the elite warriors of the Ninth World, using weapons and armor to fight their enemies, usually relying on cyphers, relics, and iron flesh to accomplish their amazing feats.



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page 252





*Pandimensional
(Ancients Arcana),
page 70*

JACK

Medium humanoid (any species), any alignment

Armor Class 18 (iron flesh)

Hit Points 127 (17d8 + 51)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)	14 (+2)

Skills Deception +6, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +7, Perception +3, Persuasion +6

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Any two (usually including the Truth)

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Numenera Weapons. The jack's weapon attacks are treated as if magical and deal an extra 14 (4d6) force damage on a hit (included in the attacks).

Resistance. The jack has advantage on direct effects created by numenera devices, attacks by nanos, and other effects that are treated as if magical.

Regeneration. The jack regains 10 hit points at the start of their turn if they have at least 1 hit point.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The jack makes three shortsword attacks, or one shortsword attack and Phase Shift.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage, plus 14 (4d6) force damage.



Phase Shift. The jack goes out of phase with reality for up to 1 minute, or returns to their normal phase. They remain visible, yet can't affect or be affected by anything in reality, except by special **pandimensional** weapons. While out of phase, they can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. The jack takes 5 (1d10) force damage if they end their turn inside an object.

Jacks are intrepid explorers. They are jacks of all trades—hence the name—although the word also hearkens back to fables involving a wily, resourceful hero who always seems to be named Jack. Used as a verb, “to jack” means to steal, to deceive, or to get out of a tight scrape through ingenuity or luck. Jacks don't use one skill or tactic exclusively; they use whatever weapons, armor, special abilities, or anything else that might help them. They are hunters (particularly treasure hunters), con artists, skalds, rogues, scouts, and experts in a variety of fields.

LEGIONARY

Medium humanoid (any species), any alignment

Armor Class 16 (scale armor)

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

Skills Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages any one language (usually the Truth)

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The legionary makes two longsword attacks. If they have a shortsword drawn, they can also make a shortsword attack.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

A legionary is often commanding others, though sometimes simply serves as an outstanding guard.

NANO*Medium humanoid (any species), any alignment***Armor Class** 13 (15 with Force Armor)**Hit Points** 60 (11d8 + 11)**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Int +6, Wis +4**Skills** *Arcana* +6, History +6, Insight +4**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12**Languages** any two languages (including the Truth)**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)**ACTIONS**

Brilliance. The nano uses iron flesh to generate a brilliant beam in a 30-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) fire damage and 7 (2d6) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Charm (1/Day). One humanoid the nano can see within 30 feet of it must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed for 1 hour, or until the nano charms someone else. The charmed target obeys the nano's verbal commands, but can repeat the saving throw if it suffers harm, ending the effect on a success.

Fly (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The nano gains a fly speed of 60 ft. for 1 minute.

Force Armor (1/Day). A protective force surrounds the nano for 10 minutes, providing a +2 bonus to AC.

Heal (1/Day). The nano regains all hit points.

Nanos are similar to *Aeon Priests*, in that they dedicate themselves to the science of the prior worlds. However, they are not members of the *Order of Truth*.

In addition, if the PCs encounter a nano as an adversary, provide the nano with at least one additional useful cypher, relic, or iron flesh (randomly or purposefully determined) and add it to the abilities they already possess.

NANO, ARCH*Medium humanoid (any species), any alignment***Armor Class** 18 (iron flesh)**Hit Points** 104 (16d8 + 32)**Speed** 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Int +9, Wis +7, Cha +7**Skills** *Arcana* +9, Insight +7, Perception +7, and two other Intelligence skills at +9**Damage Resistances** cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks**Damage Immunities** acid, poison**Condition Immunities** charmed, poisoned**Senses** truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 17**Languages** Any four languages (including the Truth)**Challenge** 12 (8,400 XP)**ACTIONS**

Brilliance. The arch nano uses iron flesh to generate a brilliant beam in a 100-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) fire damage and 22 (4d10) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Heal (1/Day). The arch nano regains all hit points.

Sleep Blast (Recharge 6). Each creature in a 15-foot cone of gas must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or fall asleep for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Teleport. The arch nano teleports, along with any equipment it is wearing or carrying, to any spot up to 500 feet away, whether the arch nano can see it or not.

Consume (Recharge 6). The arch nano causes nanites in the air around a creature that they can see within 60 feet to consume it. The target must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. It takes 105 (10d20) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature killed by this ability is reduced to drit.



Optional Rule:
Intelligence (Ancients Arcana), page 259



Aeon Priest, page 150

Order of Truth, page 127



Unseen (Recharge 6). The arch nano turns invisible until they attack or use an action, or until their concentration ends. While invisible, they leave no physical evidence of their passage. Any equipment they wear or carry is also invisible.

The arch nano is a being with incredible mastery over the numenera. Some have delved so deeply that they have virtually fused their consciousness with the numenera, becoming more machine than living.

In addition, if the PCs encounter an arch nano as an adversary, **provide the nano with at least two additional useful cyphers, relics, or iron flesh** (randomly or purposefully determined) and add it to the abilities they already possess.

NANO EXEMPLAR

Medium humanoid (any species), any alignment

Armor Class 22 (iron flesh)

Hit Points 228 (24d8 + 120)

Speed 30 ft., fly 120 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	28 (+9)	17 (+3)	21 (+5)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Con +12, Wis +10, Cha +12

Skills Arcana +16, Insight +10, Perception +10, any other two Intelligence +16

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities acid, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 20

Languages Any four languages (including the Truth)

Challenge 22 (41,000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the nano exemplar fails a saving throw, they can choose to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Multiaction. The nano exemplar can use their Awesome Presence. They then use Brilliance.

Brilliance. The nano exemplar uses iron flesh to generate a brilliant beam in a 100-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, taking 28 (5d10) fire damage and 28 (5d10) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Awesome Presence. Each creature of the nano exemplar's choice that is within 120 feet of the nano and can see the nano must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or become blinded for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the nano exemplar's Awesome Presence for the next 24 hours. If the nano exemplar inflicts damage with Brilliance on the target, the effect also ends.

Force Blast (Recharge 5–6). The nano exemplar projects force in a 120-foot line that is 10 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, 78 (12d12) force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. On a failed save, the creature is pushed 30 feet away from the nano exemplar.

Heal (1/Day). The nano exemplar regains all hit points.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The nano exemplar can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The nano exemplar regains spent legendary actions at the start of their turn.

Unseen. The nano exemplar turns invisible until they attack or use an action, or until their concentration ends. While invisible, they leave no physical evidence of their passage. Any equipment they wear or carry is also invisible.

Teleport (Costs 2 actions). The nano exemplar teleports, along with their equipment and what they carry, to any spot up to 500 feet away, whether the nano exemplar can see it or not.

Brilliance (Costs 3 actions). The nano exemplar makes a Brilliance attack.

Nano exemplars are the epitome of what a creature can achieve by bending all their will, as well as the learning and mastery of many who've come before them, to mastering the numenera. They are ascended beings, though they know that for all their power and knowledge, the mysteries of the prior worlds are still larger and more terrifying.

In addition, if the PCs encounter a nano exemplar as an adversary, provide them with at least three additional useful cyphers, relics, or iron flesh (randomly or purposefully determined) and add it to the abilities they already possess.

SCHOLAR

Medium humanoid (any species), any alignment

Armor Class 12 (leather jerkin)

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills any one Intelligence skill +4

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language (usually the Truth)

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

ACTIONS

Dagger. Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) slashing damage.

A scholar is usually someone pursuing a path to knowledge, a researcher working on behalf of someone paying them, or just someone with a couple of hobbies.



SHADOW KNIGHT

Medium humanoid (any species), any alignment

Armor Class 17 (chain shirt, shield)

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)

Skills Intimidation +2, Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages any one language (usually the Truth)

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Ignores Impediments. The shadow knight has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, stunned, or put to sleep.

Shadow Assassin. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the shadow knight hits with it (included in the attack).

Surprise Attack. If the shadow knight surprises a creature and hits it with an attack during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) damage from the attack.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The shadow knight makes two melee attacks.

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) slashing damage.

Crossbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Shadow knights are often part of secret groups trained to sneak, deceive, and fight in the shadows. Sometimes spying, other times serving as assassins, shadow knights often have an outsize reputation.



SPECIALIST

Medium humanoid (any species), any alignment

Armor Class 13 (leather jerkin)

Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	9 (-1)

Skills any three Intelligence or Wisdom skills +5

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages any one language (usually the Truth)

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Cypher Surprise. For up to 10 minutes, the specialist can use the effect of a single cypher to deal an extra 7 (2d6) damage to a creature it hits with a weapon attack.

ACTIONS

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) slashing damage, or 6 (1d10 + 1) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Specialists are people with a singular focus on knowledge and wisdom who have made a particular set of skills their life's work.



STEWARD

Medium humanoid (any species), any alignment

Armor Class 12 (leather armor)

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Persuasion +2, History +3

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language (usually the Truth)

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Hard to Sway. The steward has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Stewards are not skilled combatants, but they often have a community that supports them, including those with far more skills in combat to defend them.



TOUGH*Medium humanoid (any species), any alignment***Armor Class** 14 (studded leather)**Hit Points** 19 (3d8 + 6)**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +3**Senses** passive Perception 13**Languages** any one language (usually the Truth)**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)**ACTIONS****Multiattack.** The tough makes three dagger attacks.**Dagger. Melee Weapon Attack:** +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Toughs make up many gangs or serve as guards in a pinch.

**WARLORD***Medium humanoid (any species), any alignment***Armor Class** 16 (scale armor)**Hit Points** 85 (9d8 + 45)**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12**Languages** any one language (usually the Truth)**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)**Warlord's Charge.** If the warlord moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then strikes it with their greatsword on the same turn, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.**ACTIONS****Multiattack.** The warlord makes two greatsword attacks.**Greatsword. Melee Weapon Attack:** +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.**Call Ally (1/Day).** The warlord creates a temporal clone with the same statistics. The clone appears in an open space adjacent to the warlord, acts just after the warlord in the initiative order, acts as the warlord's ally, and can't call another ally. It remains for 1 minute, until it or its creator dies, or until the warlord dismisses it as an action.

A warlord is a combatant of immense skill, with abilities augmented by numenera devices.





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