Numenéra

WEIRD DISCOVERIES
TEN INSTANT ADVENTURES™ FOR NUMENERA

BY MONTE COOK

INTRODUCTION

It's Friday night. Your friends have gathered at your house. Someone asks, "What should we do tonight?" One person suggests watching a movie, but everyone else is in the mood for a game. You've got lots of board games, and that seems like the obvious solution, because they don't take any more time to prepare than it takes to set up the board and the pieces.

Those of us who love roleplaying games have encountered this situation a thousand times. We'd love to suggest an RPG for the evening, but everyone knows you can't just spontaneously play a roleplaying game, right? The game master has to prepare a scenario, the players need to create characters, and all this takes a lot of time and thought.

But what if that didn't have to be the case? What if you could say, "Hey, I know. Let's play Numenera," without any preparation? What if you could sit down at the table, hand out some pregenerated characters, and—in the time it takes the players to get familiar with their characters—be ready to run a scenario that will last the evening?

That was my goal when I sat down to create this product. Basically, I had to recreate what a published adventure was and how the GM interacted with it. (I say "interact with" rather than "read" because there isn't time for the GM to read the whole thing carefully—that's the point.) When I did, I realized that the crux of the issue—the real challenge—involved pacing. This will come as little surprise to those who have read some of my other notes about game mastering, because I stress that good pacing is probably the most important trait a GM can have.

The easiest way to deal with pacing is to make adventures completely linear. First the PCs do thing A, then thing B, and finally they reach the climax at thing C. However, not only can that kind of railroading feel heavy-handed, sometimes it just doesn't work. The PCs might do A and B, and then head off on their own initiative and never reach C. That's why it's so much better to empower a GM to handle things more broadly. In other words, don't script out the adventure so that it must go exactly as the designer planned. Instead, give the GM a general plan of where things might lead and what the NPCs and whatnot might do, and then let her go.

For example, say the PCs are looking for a lost explorer in the wilderness, and they come upon a strange automaton in a valley that knows where the explorer is. Rather than create a script where the PCs have to ask precisely the right questions, it's far better to tell the GM what the automaton knows and how likely it is to share that information. She can take it from there.

But what if the PCs don't talk to the automaton at all? What if they hide from it, blow it up, or do something no one could have expected, like fly over the valley using a cypher and never encounter it at all? Is the whole adventure thrown out the window?

Well, unless the GM wants to abandon the adventure altogether, she needs another way to get that information to the characters. That fact drove much of the development of the format for *Weird Discoveries*. The players should be allowed to go where they want to go, do what they want to do, and find interest in whatever they want. But at the same time, the GM needs to guide things along at least enough so that the group doesn't spin its wheels and get frustrated. This meant that in each scenario, certain key factors—which we just call keys—needed to be identified to create a possible throughline so that something interesting happens while everyone's at the table.

These keys, however, needed to be flexible. The PCs must be able to obtain them in multiple ways and probably multiple places. The keys might even come in different forms—a bit of loot scavenged off a fallen foe, something interesting found behind a secret panel, or a nugget of information learned from talking to the right person.

The door to the room where the cool treasure lies is locked, and the key is in the desk in the mayor's office. But what if the PCs never go to the office? The system presented here allows the GM to quickly determine that the key might be elsewhere: in the pocket of the wandering warrior or in the lair of the six-legged beast. The GM makes sure it turns up at the right time (pacing). She makes sure that the key is in a location where the characters have a chance of coming upon it. That doesn't mean she forces the players' hands—just that the PCs have a chance to find what they need to succeed. That actual success (or failure) is still very much in their hands.

We've all seen it happen while running games. The PCs find some weird object and obsess over it, even though in the original plan (either the GM's or the designer's) it had little meaning. At the same time, the characters ignore the actual clue they were supposed to find. What's a good GM to do? She quickly changes things up so that the object everyone is so focused on *is* the clue they need. Why? Because if she doesn't, things get bogged down and the adventure ends up in a dead end with a table of frustrated players. In other words, she does it to control the pacing of the session. It's still up to the players to use the clue properly.

Weird Discoveries assumes that the GM will do that kind of thing, and it empowers her to do so. Each scenario has a number of keys. Either the keys are important to the flow of the scenario or they're things that are just so cool that you don't want the PCs to pass them by—perhaps a challenge to overcome, a bit of amazing treasure, or something the characters will really need.

So keys help with pacing, give a GM a way to manage the flow of things without being draconian, and don't require a lot of prep time. Obviously, the scenarios needed to be short—just a single session—so the GM didn't have a lot of reading. Basically, if something doesn't involve what happens in that session, it didn't need to be in one of our "instant adventures." We also didn't want a lot of book referencing or page flipping, so as much as possible, once the GM spends about five minutes reading the basic info, she never needs to look at anything but a single two-page spread at the heart of each scenario. The spread has a map or a graphic to show the possible progression of events. Any text pertaining to a spot on the map is right there on that page. No flipping.

To make this work, the scenario write-ups had to be short. Even if we put in a few extra pages of additional notes and whatnot for people who wanted to use these scenarios outside of our low-prep goal, we knew we could still pack a lot of them into a relatively short book, like the one you have now.

The scenarios in *Weird Discoveries* require a GM to do a little improvisational game mastering so she can take a very brief encounter write-up and flesh it out where it needs fleshing. But frankly, every GM needs to be ready to do that anyway. Rather than a designer trying to cover every contingency or crazy scheme the players might come up with, perhaps it's better to arm the GM with the basics and let her come up with more when needed. If the PCs sneak by the abhumans, for example, a lengthy discussion of their battle tactics isn't really needed.

After figuring out the ideal structure for our scenarios, we realized that we had essentially rewritten how published adventures are typically presented and used. And our playtests showed that they are easy and fun to run. We hope that you find that to be true as well.

Throughout this book, you'll see references to Show 'Ems. These images are designed to be shown to your players at just the moment they come upon a particular scene in the adventure. Show 'Ems are found toward the back of the book, starting on page 72.

For ease of use, this book includes the Numenera Cheat Sheet (page 82) and six pregenerated characters (page 83). GMs should feel free to copy or print those tools ahead of time for players.

IMPROV GAME MASTERING

If you're a game master, you've done it without thinking about it. The players came up with some idea—big or small—that you weren't ready for, and on the spot you came up with a response, a judgment call, an answer, or whatever was needed. You used improvisation to run your game, and more than likely, it worked out wonderfully.

Many GMs prefer to run a game with little preparation, making it all up as they go along. Some find this harder. *Weird Discoveries* is an attempt to bridge that gap by empowering those who don't want to spend a lot of time preparing while still informing those who don't want to make it all up on the fly.

Before we go any further, here's the best bit of advice you'll get on this subject: don't be afraid. Don't be afraid to come up with whatever the game needs. Fear leads to hesitation, and that slows down the game. It also means that you might not make the best decision. Don't think ahead—just come up with what's needed at the moment. Don't think about what another GM would do. Don't think about what the players will think of you. None of that will help—it will only slow you down.

Don't worry about being cliché or obvious. Neither of those things ever ruined a game. In fact, sometimes they're just what is needed (clichés are used often for a reason). You can always inject a nice dose of creativity or weirdness later.

GMs are called upon to make things up on the spot all the time—NPC names, place names, little details (of people, places, and things), game stats, NPC reactions, the consequences of actions, and more. Sometimes whole adventures. But it's not hard. In fact, it's just the opposite. As the GM, you almost can't make the wrong choice. If you say that there's a bakery in the village, then there is one. Poof! No one can tell you there's not.

GAME MECHANICS

Mechanically, Numenera offers a lot of advantages in improv GMing. NPC stats are a breeze and require no preparation—just give them a level. If you want to get all fancy, give them armor or something special, but that's not necessary—level tells you everything you need to know. A task, an object, or a challenge of any kind simply needs to be rated on a scale of 1 to 10. We do that kind of thing naturally. Just think about it: on a scale of 1 to 10, how comfortable is the seat you're sitting in right now? On a scale of 1 to 10, how hard would it be to jump up and touch the ceiling? See? Using improv in Numenera game mechanics is no harder than that.

USING LOGIC TO GUIDE YOU

Logic is your friend. Make things logical when you create them, and you'll always do well. Things should generally operate the way it seems like they should. Water flows downhill. Animals flee when frightened. Stone walls are more durable than wooden walls. People don't like it when you start murdering in the middle of their town. And so on. The only time you should go against logic is when you're trying to make things weird. Any of the previous statements turning out to be untrue would be weird. (And weird is good in Numenera, but most things should not be weird.)

Don't let game concerns trump logic. Particularly in a game like Numenera, don't worry about "breaking the game" or some such. If it's logical that the wealthy NPC whose house the PCs just broke into would have lots of valuables to snatch, then he does. It's probably also logical that he's got a guard, an alarm, or the like.

The scenarios in this book assume that the GM will use logic, so most of the time, they don't provide those kinds of details. If the PCs go into a cave, it's likely dark and damp and has uneven surfaces. If they go into a tavern, it will have tables, chairs, a bartender, and plenty of drinks. Facts like these are rarely given in the descriptions in *Weird Discoveries*.

FLESHING OUT THE DETAILS

The devil is in the details, of course. The players want to know how big the town square is, what the water in the pool tastes like, or what happens when they try to activate the crystalline device while holding it upside down.

If you're not sure of a detail, don't flip through the book looking for the answer—come up with it on your own. For example, in *Beneath the Pyramid*, the PCs find the severed leg of a biomechanical beast and use it as a sort of tracking device to lead them to the creature. Does the leg give pulses when pointed in the right direction? Does it move and point in the direction of the beast? Does it send mental images of a direction and distance to anyone who holds it? That's up to you. Go with whatever seems most appropriate or most interesting. It's the kind of detail that any GM can come up with on her own, and by not writing a long paragraph describing how it works (text that the GM needs to read, absorb, remember, and likely later reference), we can make the adventure easier and faster to run.

We've got your back. If there *is* a detail you need some help with, we'll provide it. But if it isn't provided, make it up! We'll give you a solid framework, but it's the GM who builds the facade that goes over it—the thing that people see and admire. We'll make you look good.

Sometimes the best adventures are simple ones. A lot of clutter and background get lost without the players ever really discovering or remembering it. Sometimes a good adventure is just starting at Point A, a good reason to get to Point B, and a handful of interesting things that occur on the way.

DEVELOPING LOCATIONS

You're in charge of what places look like. If you want the leaves of the trees to be orange, they're orange. Liven up any and all scenarios with weird descriptions as the mood strikes you. A weird tentacled bird in the tree will surprise and delight the players, even if it has no impact on the scenario.

If there are no details about a house or another inhabited place, use logic. A hermit's cabin isn't going to be bare—he lives there and probably has for years. He'll have food, tools, and some useful equipment like rope or a glowglobe. Never worry about access to mundane items unless it's somehow important to the scenario to do so. The PCs might think of getting a glowglobe as "treasure," but that doesn't mean you have to manage it.

At the same time, don't worry about describing everything in a location. Allow the players to do some of that for you. Let them say, "I could use more rope. Did the old hermit have some lying around?" If it seems logical, say, "Yeah, he has some stashed with some tools under the bed."

DEVELOPING PEOPLE AND CREATURES

Do the same thing with NPCs that you do with places. Maybe you have nothing more than a name, a level, and a few small details for an NPC, but once she's on stage, so to speak, and in the game, she's a person and you've got to portray her as such. That's easy (and often unimportant) if she's a cobbler in the village, but it's more challenging if she joins the PCs on their mission and stays with them throughout a whole session or more. Now you have to delve a bit deeper and give her a personality. Likes and dislikes. Goals and motivations. (If you know an NPC's goals, you always know how she'll react in a given situation. That's why Numenera creature stats include motive.) You should also give a little more thought to what she looks like, what she's wearing, and what she's carrying with her.

The same is true of creatures. You might know how a beast acts in battle, but occasionally throw in a random detail like how it smells, that it has a huge scar over its eye, or something similar. This affects nothing, but it makes things more interesting.

The place you can get tripped up is when the PCs interact with a person or creature in a way you weren't expecting. They might talk to the ravenous beast and try to calm it, suddenly threaten the mayor of the village, or sneak around the guards rather than fight them. You've got to use logic to figure out what the creature or NPC will do. How will it

USING THE KEYS ◆ ▲ ● ✦

The biggest difference between running the scenarios in *Weird Discoveries* and running typical published adventures is that you need to manage when and where the keys show up. A key might be an object, a person, or a bit of information. Regardless, the GM determines when it shows up in the scenario rather than letting the scenario make that decision.

Another way to look at it: the players and the GM working together to create a story is what determines when a key makes its appearance.

There are two kinds of keys: those that are probably necessary for the completion of the scenario, and those that just make things more interesting.

Keys that are probably necessary. If the PCs need a device to open a way into the black pyramid in the first scenario (*Beneath the Pyramid*), that device is one of the keys. Since the device is crucial to the forward motion of the session, the GM should pace things so the characters at least have a chance to find it. However, the GM might decide that the device shouldn't show up too soon, for fear that the session will end too quickly. This is her prerogative and is up to her sense of pacing. Some GMs, for example, might want to reward smart play by enabling the PCs to reach their goal early, pacing be damned.

Keys that just make things more interesting. These keys are almost their own kind of GM intrusion. Such a key might be a device that causes harm or makes things more complicated. It might be something that helps the PCs (perhaps undoing a key that inflicts harm or complication) but isn't directly related to reaching a successful end of the scenario.

These keys are not crucial, but they make things more fun. What's more, they inject drama into the metagame. If the PCs find a strange-looking device, they shouldn't know automatically that it's directly related to the plot. Maybe it's just a strange device. Worse, maybe it's dangerous. They've got to look at it closely to figure out which.

react? What will it do afterward? This is your opportunity as the GM to do some honest-to-goodness roleplaying. Put yourself in the NPC's place and decide what it would do, just as you would if you were playing it as a character in the game—because you are.

WHEN IT TURNS VIOLENT

You never know when an encounter might become a combat encounter. Sometimes, all you know about an NPC is the level. Always feel free to assume that an NPC is equipped logically. If she is in a location or a situation where danger is likely, she's probably wearing armor (usually Armor 1). Lots of people, not just warriors, can produce some sort of weapon in a fight by pulling a knife from a boot or grabbing a heavy candlestick from a table. Remember, it doesn't matter what weapon is used, even if it's just a punch or a kick—NPCs inflict damage equal to their level unless described otherwise.

THE FORMAT OF THESE SCENARIOS

The scenarios in *Weird Discoveries* are designed to be easy to use and easy to grasp with just a quick skim. Each starts out with a brief summary and a few paragraphs that add more detail. Then the most important salient points are called out again, this time in a bulleted list to help you remember them (and to help you reference them later). *You must read all of this and absorb it before play starts.* Fortunately, these sections are short and written for easy comprehension and retention.

Next, you'll find a section that details the keys involved in the scenario. The book's introduction explains how keys work.

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

After the keys, all you have to look at are the Starting Point and Wrap-Up sections, which are pretty self-explanatory.

All encounters that the PCs will experience in the session are found on a two-page spread, organized in a map or chart (which can be followed just like a map). The encounters are designed to be short and easy enough to skim through before play starts.

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

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

Finally, each scenario ends with notes for GMs who want to incorporate it into an ongoing campaign or place it specifically in the Ninth World. You'll also find ideas for further development if you want to keep things going after the adventure is done. This includes awarding experience points (XP) for discoveries and actions. *None of this needs to be read ahead of time.* Don't even bother with any of it until the session is over.
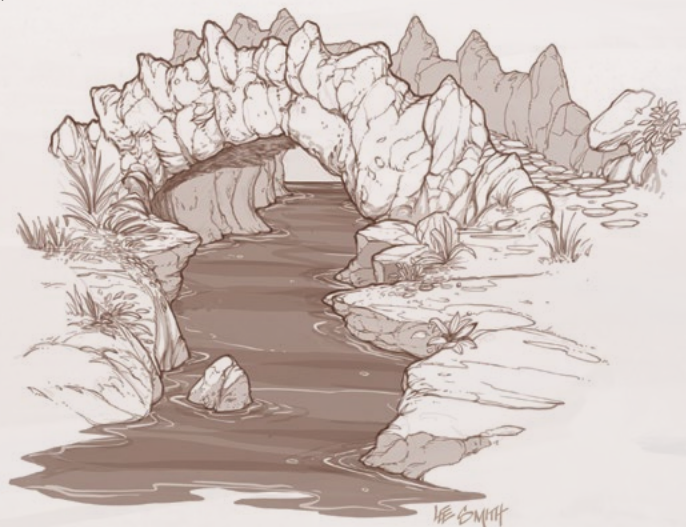
BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

I know you. You're a GM who doesn't necessarily want to use these adventures as impromptu game mastering opportunities. You're going to sit down and read this entire book ahead of time. You're going to prepare for these low-prep scenarios.

That's okay. It's your book. Use it however you want.

The best way to prepare for when the PCs don't do what you expect? Don't build expectations ahead of time about what they'll do. Don't prepare for them to do one particular thing because then you're not caught by surprise when they do something else. Keep yourself open.

This book is divided into ten "scenarios." You will also read the term "session" many times. In this case, the two terms are synonymous. The idea is that each scenario is the equivalent of one four- to five-hour game session for three to five players.

BENEATH THE PYRAMID

BRIEF SUMMARY

Valuable creatures are stolen away by a mysterious mist, and the PCs investigate a ruined city beneath an ancient floating pyramid in hopes of retrieving them.

DETAILS

East of the town of Codun lies a racetrack a half mile around. Here, locals race 14-foot (4 m) biomechanical insects called rukomol. The PCs happen into town and spend some time at the races. They get to know the most prestigious racer, a man named Uolis, and share in his celebratory

All rukomol racers are very small in stature. Two racers ride each beast, one steering the head and one prodding the back to get the creature to run faster.

dinner. That night, however, the rukomol belonging to Uolis and two others mysteriously disappear when a thick blue mist rolls in. Uolis begs the PCs to help find his prized mount.

A little investigation reveals the severed leg of one of the missing creatures in the caves used as stables near the racetrack. Further, it acts as a sort of sensor, indicating which direction to travel to find the rukomol it belonged to.

The PCs can follow this biomechanical divining rod to a ruined city of stone beneath a glistening black pyramid from the

prior worlds. The pyramid floats 80 feet (24 m) above the ground, and the 100-year-old abandoned city lies directly beneath it. This is called the City in Shadow. In the ruins, the PCs must discover a way to reach and enter the pyramid, for that is where they will find the stolen beasts, the device that created the mist, and the perpetrator.

Jiale is an odd numenera expert who explored the black pyramid with two bodyguard companions. When he found the device that created the blue mist, he sent it out to retrieve mechanical parts he needed to repair one of his cyphers. About ten hours before the PCs arrived in Codun, the mist reappeared in the pyramid with three rukomol. Jiale turned his attentions elsewhere in the pyramid, assuming the blue mist retrieval system to be faulty. It isn't. As biomechanical creatures, the rukomol do have the components he needs, but he doesn't realize it.

SALIENT POINTS:

- Codun's racetrack and the rukomol stables (found in a series of caves) are east of the town.
- Uolis is one of the premier rukomol racers.
- The leg of one of the biomechanical creatures was severed in the mist, and it can lead the PCs to the missing rukomol.
- The city beneath the pyramid is abandoned, but of human construction. The pyramid is from the prior worlds.
- The PCs need to get inside the pyramid.
- Very likely, the PCs can't get inside the pyramid without the right key.
- The blue mist is part of a numenera system in the pyramid for retrieving mechanical parts at a distance.
- An explorer named Jiale used the blue mist to capture the rukomol, but it was essentially an accident.

STARTING POINT
Reveal *Show 'Em A* to the players.

Show 'Em A, page 72

Traveling two days from Codun, the PCs see the black pyramid nestled in a break in a stony ridgeline. As they get closer, it becomes clear that a ruined city of stone walls and towers lies beneath the pyramid.

The city was built by Ninth Worlders precisely in the shadow of the pyramid when the sun is directly overhead, leaving most of it perpetually dark. Why they did this, and why they later abandoned it, is unclear. The city has three entrances: on the west, on the north, and on the south. The PCs can use whichever they wish.

Describe the ruined city like a maze of interconnected buildings, all without roofs.

THE WRAP-UP
Inside the pyramid, the room next to the entrance (the one Jiale and his companions now occupy) has a level 6 device that creates the blue mist. It can also return the components (the rukomol) to the place where it found them. The rukomol are in the chamber and are generally unhappy and confused. Getting them out of the pyramid and back to Codun conventionally will involve a lot of beast handling and careful planning on the PCs' part.

Rukomol: level 3; health 18; Armor 2; long movement

KEYS
This scenario has two keys. Both are likely devices found in the City in Shadow.

◆ Something that moves a character up to the floating pyramid. This is a psychokinetic effect, and after its main use, the key functions as a level 3 artifact that can move a human-sized object or creature a short distance if it is within long range. It has a depletion of 1 in 10.

▲ Something that allows access to the interior of the pyramid. This probably just opens a door on the underside of the structure.

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

CODUN

The town has a population of 10,000 and lies at the edge of a desert.

The blue mist that steals away the rukomol comes at night. The journey to the City in Shadow takes about fourteen hours of travel—the better part of two days.

GM Intrusion: A group of eight margr ambushes the PCs while they travel through the desert.

CORPSES

Three dead humans lie decaying in the ruins. They have been dead for a few days and are infested with maggots and other carrion eaters. In addition to standard gear and weapons (including three explorer's packs), the PCs can find a device or a clue to the location of a device that serves as either one of the KEYS. The corpses also have 11 shins and a random oddity.

The City in Shadow

THE MAD WOMAN

Lyra (level 4) lives in the otherwise abandoned city, sustaining herself with rats. She rants and raves but is surprisingly hardy and capable. However, she might have a device or know of one in the city that serves as either one of the KEYS. Getting that information out of her is a difficulty 6 task and certainly can't be done quickly.

Lyra has a dart thrower, four darts poisoned with level 4 poison (4 points of Speed damage that ignore Armor), and two random oddities.

ENTRANCE

The PCs can enter the abandoned city from any of these locations. From the entrance, they can see two towers near the center of the city that reach halfway up to the pyramid.

THE REPTILIAN BEAST

Scaly and red, this 12-foot-long (4 m) carnivorous lizard (level 5; Armor 2) eats anything it comes upon. If the reptilian beast has the KEY, it is a crystal that seems embedded in its head. While the beast is alive, the crystal gives it telekinetic powers, which manifest in two ways:

- Any physical ranged attack made against the beast is redirected back at the attacker.
- The beast can pull or push one creature or object of human size or smaller a short distance, as an action.

GM Intrusion: The fight with the beast causes a section of wall to collapse, trapping the character beneath it.

THE SHINY CYLINDER

This metal cylinder is 14 feet high and 3 feet across (4 m by 1 m). It is filled with an array of numenera components, but its overall function is a mystery. It can be opened through force or finesse, but doing so is a level 4 task. Either of the KEYS might be inside, along with 20 shins.

GM Intrusion: Opening the cylinder triggers an accidental discharge of energy that forces an Intellect defense roll (difficulty 4). Failure means that the opener sustains 3 points of Intellect damage, sits down on the ground, and takes no action other than to count quietly until those 3 points are somehow restored.
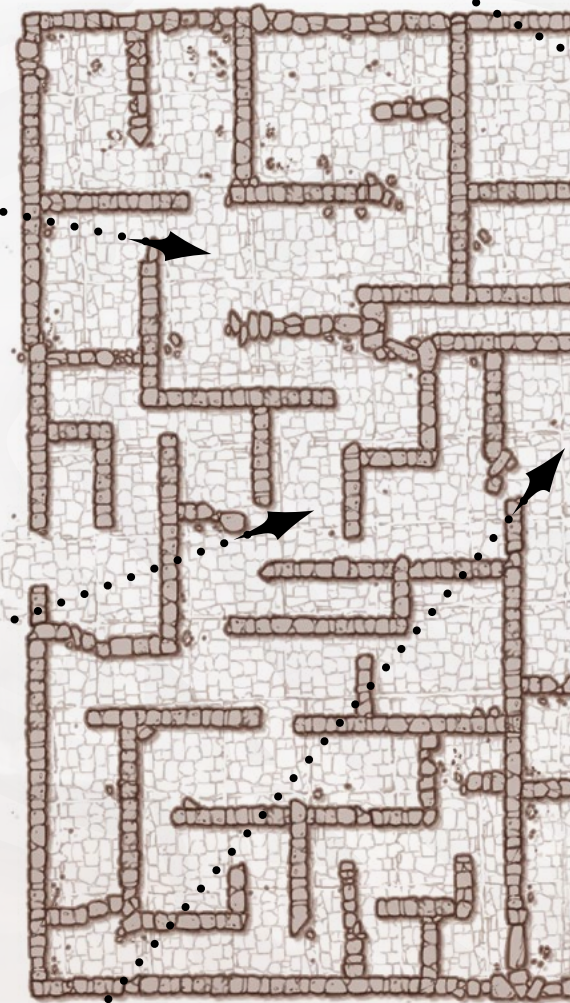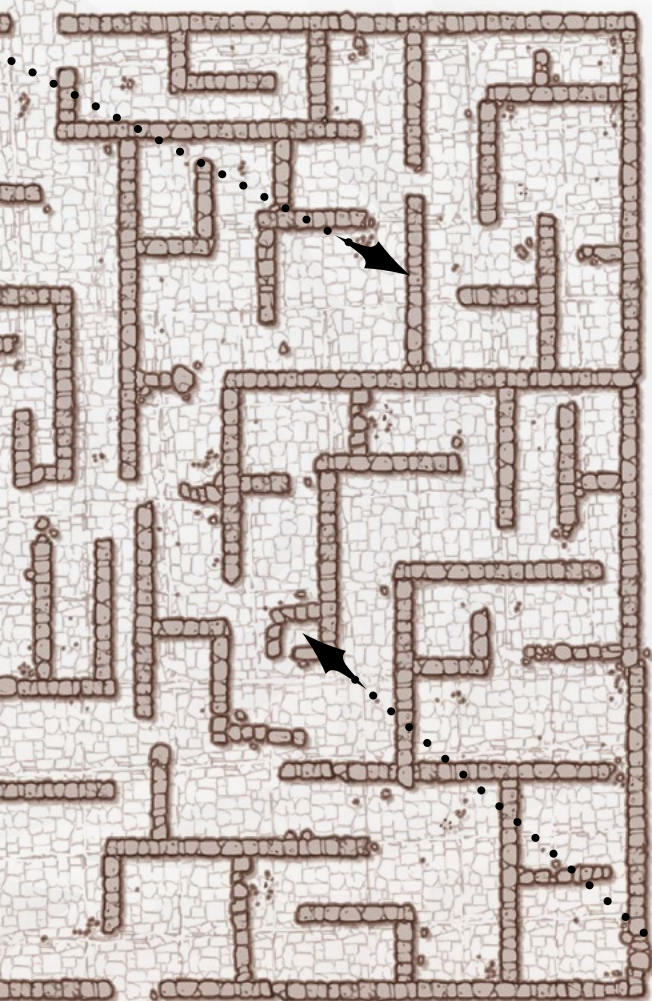
ENTRANCE

The PCs can enter the abandoned city from any of these locations. From the entrance, they can see two towers near the center of the city that reach halfway up to the pyramid.

100 Feet
30 m

INSIDE THE PYRAMID

The pyramid is 80 feet (24 m) above the ground.

The interior chamber the PCs gain access to is lit. It's a cube approximately 50 feet (15 m) to a side, filled with numenera control panels, banks of machinery, and walls of mysterious devices. Metallic tentacles hang from the ceiling and wave around, grasping at the air menacingly. Wreckage and metal debris cover the floor.

Jiale and his companions are here, and they likely attack anyone who intrudes out of fear that thieves have come to steal their treasures. Explaining to Jiale that all the PCs want is the rukomol might convince him to negotiate, but the difficulty is increased by one step because he is selfish and paranoid, and he has an odd way of looking at things.

Reveal *Show 'Em B* (page 72) to the players.

The metal arms (level 3) increase the difficulty of all actions in the room by one step for all involved. This means that while attacking is harder, so is defending, so those actions are not affected overall. Any character can choose to ignore the arms and undertake an action normally (effectively decreasing the difficulty of attack and defense rolls for that round, assuming the opponent is still worried about the arms). However, anyone who does so must make a Speed defense roll or be struck for 3 points of damage and held in place, unable to act unless he uses a Might-based action to break free.

Dealing with all the metal arms at once (finding the controls to shut them down, for example) is a level 6 task.

Jiale (level 5; Armor 2) is a nano who can project blasts of energy up to long range that inflict 5 points of damage and turn the target's skin blue. The color fades after a few days. He acts as the leader of his group and constantly issues commands to his companions.

Cheale (level 3; Armor 3) is a straightforward warrior who never does as Jiale commands. Instead, she always attacks a different target, uses a different strategy, and so on.

Derroch (level 4; Armor 1) rarely speaks. He has a "sword" that is actually a stiff metal wire that produces an aura of energy around it. It is a level 4 artifact, functions as a medium weapon that inflicts 6 points of damage, and has a depletion of —.

Loot: Each NPC has an explorer's pack, 12 shins, and two random cyphers they scavenged from the pyramid.

THE DEACTIVATED AUTOMATON

The automaton is at the top of one of the two 40-foot (12 m) towers in the city. Any stairs have long since collapsed, so getting to the top requires other means.

The automaton looks like a metal sphere about 10 inches (25 cm) across with many small holes and nodules. Activating the automaton is a level 6 task. Once reactivated, it produces many spidery limbs and skitters about. If it is the KEY, opening the pyramid is its only function, and it will do so assuming it understands the command. Otherwise, the automaton seems to have no function other than to skitter about and be annoying.

GM Intrusion: Reactivating the automaton requires a power source—the sacrifice of a cypher or an artifact hooked up to it (a level 4 task).

MORE DETAILS

Read this section if you have time.

IN CODUN

If desired, you can start the scenario in Codun and play through the race, including gambling, interactions with the locals, and the excitement of a close race. Determine the winner of the race (and the outcome of the bets) however you wish—randomly or through use of narration.

Uolis is slight and getting on in years. His partner is Tallek, a much younger but equally small man. Uolis is wealthy from all his success and generous to a fault. If need be, he offers each PC 15 shins to recover his rukomol. Tallek is less likely to trust the PCs but does whatever Uolis instructs, including accompanying the PCs if they request it.

The leader of Codun is a woman named Hiathyn. She is old and gets around town with the help of two burly servants who essentially carry her.

The constable is Ghordra, a tall, muscular woman with long, straight hair, armor made from some kind of insect carapace, and an axe that hovers in the air when she pushes

a stud on the handle. Ghordra very likely suspects that the PCs are involved with the blue mist, as she doesn't trust strangers.

ON THE ROAD

The trip to the pyramid and the City in Shadow beneath it might be relatively uneventful, but GMs can add an encounter with dangerous creatures, weather, or another traveler, as desired. In general, it's warm and dry during the day and cool and dry at night. The region is filled with biting insects, and nameless creatures that look like winged grouper fish feed on the insects in the air.

IN THE CITY IN SHADOW

None of the buildings have roofs. Most of the structures are single story, although two towers rise up 40 feet (12 m) near the center of town. Navigating is like moving through a labyrinth, although climbing the walls isn't too difficult (a level 3 task).

There's an eternal chill in all parts of the city except the very edges during sunup or sundown. Tiny reptiles scurry about the edges of the city, but at its heart, it is

Uolis: level 2, rukomol handling as level 4

Tallek: level 3, rukomol handling as level 4

Hiathyn: level 2, Intellect-based tasks as level 4; health 2

Ghordra: level 5, interaction and perception as level 6; health 20; Armor 3

lifeless. Here and there, explorers find the remains of rotting wooden furnishings or old sculptures.

IN THE PYRAMID

Jiale and his companions have only just begun to explore the pyramid and probably used the same entrance the PCs did. They are a nefarious group, and Jiale is a little mad. Even if the PCs talk to them rather than engage in violence, these three likely try to bully, betray, trick, or steal from anyone they come across.

The interior of the pyramid is sprawling and weird, a maze of machinery and mysterious technology—much of it still active, but some quite ruined. The two chambers in this scenario are just the beginning. More can be found in *Inside the Pyramid* (page 18).

USING THIS IN A CAMPAIGN

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

In an ongoing campaign, the GM could take more time to create a friendship between the PCs and Uolis (and Tallek). This might occur as the PCs take part in other, unrelated explorations around Codun or perhaps guard Uolis after a racing rival makes threats against his life. The idea is to make the disappearance of his beloved rukomol so powerful that the PCs take on the recovery mission of their own initiative.

Codun could become a centerpiece to an ongoing campaign, with the PCs returning to relax and enjoy the races from time to time. One way to accomplish this is to have Uolis be so grateful for the safe return of his rukomol that he buys the PCs a house in town.

PLACEMENT IN THE NINTH WORLD

Codun and the City in Shadow can be located wherever the GM needs them. But in the absence of other constraints, Codun lies near the center of the southern border of the Pytharon Empire, and the City in

Shadow lies to the south, within Matheunis. This is a cold desert, with rocky, windswept terrain.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Read this section after the session is over.

The PCs should earn 2 experience points (XP) for discovering the rukomol (and returning them), and 2 XP for discovering the machine that creates the blue mist.

There are two ways to succeed at the mission. The PCs can use the device in the pyramid to return the rukomol to Codun, or they can get the beasts out of the pyramid physically and lead them back to town overland.

Further exploration of the pyramid is possible and in fact is the subject of the scenario *Inside the Pyramid* (page 18). After the PCs return to Codun, if the people learn some of what they found, Ghordra may wish to mount another expedition to the City in Shadow. If the PCs are willing, she and three other villagers go with them to explore the area further. The GM can introduce a new set of interesting encounters there, perhaps with more details about the inhabitants of the city, why they built it, and why they left. It is possible to dig around and find information about such topics, but the nature of the far older pyramid should remain mysterious.

A

B

NUMENÉRA
## WEIRD DISCOVERIES

Like What You've Seen?

There are ten complete adventures in the full version of *Weird Discoveries*.

Includes "Inside the Pyramid," which follows the events of the adventure in this preview.

Each adventure includes maps, NPCs, and all the details you need to run them, plus all the wild weirdness you expect from Numenera!

You also get twenty beautiful, full-color Show 'Em illustrations, to reveal to players during the adventures.

And six pre-generated characters, making pick-up games as easy on the players as they are on the GM!

NUMENÉRA
WEIRD DISCOVERIES
TEN INSTANT ADVENTURES FOR NUMENERA
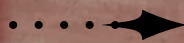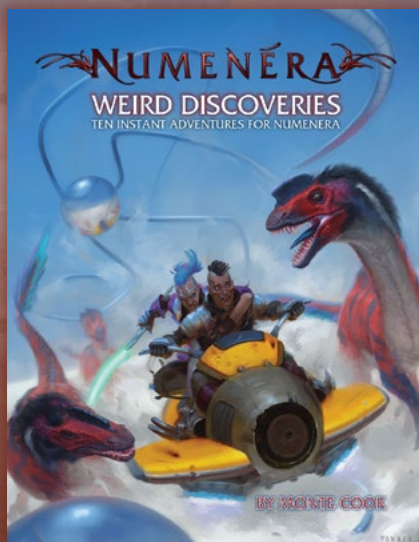
BY MONTE COOK

Available from the MCG web store:
www.montecookgames.com

MonteCook Games

fb.com/Numenera   @WeirdofNumenera