

# ANIMARUM



## TOME OF LORE

DIG

DARK ICE GAMES

LORE V 1.0 - ART IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE



## THE SEEKERS LIBRARY

Far deep into the greatest of all Cinerian ruins, lies the Living Repository, a trove of knowledge once accessed by its denizens to learn and spread information. It is now reduced to a mere sliver of its former glory due the “Cleansing” at the hand of the first Inquisition. By destroying the knowledge, and branding as heresy all scientific advancements unsanctioned by the Church, the Inquisition aims to protect humanity by preventing the same mistakes which caused the destruction of ancient Cineria.

Many scholars however have risked their lives to retrieve any remaining fragments buried deep within those ruins, to study and restore as much knowledge as possible, arguing that such information would on the contrary prevent humanity’s downfall by learning from past mistakes. Referring to themselves as the Seekers of Truth or Seekers, these scholars are now branded as heretics, and operates in complete secrecy, working endlessly to transcribe what was once lost and publish these findings within underground Libraries, only known to other Seekers.

The following recounts are based on those original findings, later reconstructed by years of studies and research. The retrieval of revealing artefacts and the widely spread knowledge of historical events recorded by many converging sources from all over the world, helps fill in those knowledge gaps. As it is often analysed, revised and debated by their many authors, it must be made clear for those with access to these forbidden resources that not all recordings can be verified.

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*“What defines reality is our conscious interpretation of its rules.  
We are not required to understand these rules to survive.  
What drives our survival and ultimately destroys it is fear.”*

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## CONCEPTION

In the beginning there was the word of the Goddess Ygo and her word was "I am". Then out of the endless depths of the sea of Primordial Myst came Kos, chasing the radiance of Ygo who rapidly swam away from his malicious reach. Ygo, also known as the Great Mother, embodies the awareness of all her creations, while Kos known as the Destroyer would seek to silence them all.

Even though the Great Mother had repeatedly escaped the malice of Kos' grasp, she would eventually succumb to his relentless chase and suffer his cruel assault as he planted his chaotic essence within her, causing her womb to swell with life to its limits, until it burst with amber light.

This birth was known as the Primal Shatter and with its ripples it formed a vacuum devoid of Kos' presence, birthing two overlapping realities - The Physical Realm where the amber fragments of Ygo's womb existed within a coherent set of rules governed by time, and the Hollow Realm - an abstract mirror of its twin where Primal Myst and the chaotic, formless essence of Kos, was trapped outside of time.

The countless shards from the Primal Shatter dusted throughout the Physical Realm became the Amber Angels - named so after their iridescent cores. Due to their nature which carried both the essence of Ygo and Kos, Angels were naturally drawn to one another into physical conflict, colliding with violent deaths, leaving their incandescent hearts behind which became the very stars of the cosmos. Their impacts would create all manner of celestial bodies and unique phenomena dusted throughout existence, but most importantly the ashes left by their corpses would cluster and form worlds, amongst which Carcassia, where smaller Angels became grounded and battled, further shaping its landscapes through violence.

When a powerful blow split the core of an Angel, it bled incandescent Amber, occasionally spilling over the ashen soil of Carcassia, from which the meek primordial beings known as the Bloodlings came to life. They walked aimlessly, attracted to light sources like moths without thought or purpose, until trampled by the battling Angels for they alone produced any source of light in this world - later this time became known as the dark times of Shadows and Ashes.

*"One day the tears of Ygo's pain will rain down and light up the skies of Carcassia, bringing about Dhalgum'var - The Awakening" - the end of days.*

## BONFIRE OF SOULS

While the Bloodlings dragged or stumbled their way thoughtlessly all over Carcassia, their bodies would occasionally find one another in the dark which caused something extraordinary to happen; they began wandering together as if they had a shared purpose. Over a long time these odd unions kept repeating and growing into collectives of mindless tribes, until just like a bonfire ignited by the union of many small sparks over dry logs, the hollow Psyche of each Bloodling resonated with one another and burst into flames, birthing individual consciousness which became known as "Anima".

Tribes with their own identity and sense of individualism began to form all over the world, each with their own culture and unique traits, however the conflicts between Angels raged on, giving the frightened and meek inhabitants of Carcassia a miserable existence. Much like the thoughts of a single individual, the Animas of all conscious beings are linked together to the realm in-between, known as the "Sea of collective consciousness" or "Animarium" from which strongly shared beliefs would surface and manifest within their own world. The Bloodings



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*"Within the hollow dream it took shape  
The passing pearls of Consciousness floated  
Sweeping over the ashen cerebral landscape  
Until reason was given and Willpower ignited"*

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began using this link by worshipping the Angels in their own ways such as reciting prayers or leaving offerings and sacrifices, in the hope that they would become noticed and life would improve.

Strongly shared beliefs such as justice, protection, fertility or mercy, took form within the Animarium and began igniting the hollow consciousness of those Angels, turning them into powerful deities known as Artisans - living embodiments of those values, responsible for many great and terrible things, such as the gift of the Sun by the Artisan known as Sultair or the destruction of rivalling tribes by war-minded Artisans such as Daephosangra. With the aid of the Artisans there was prosperity, balance and growth all over Carcassia, its people began maturing, their bodies changing but despite all that, the suffering of those harsh times endured.

As the population continued to expand, the "Idea of Evil" began growing subconsciously in the hearts of all Bloodlings like a cancer - it was a concept which they adopted in order to blame their hardships and suffering, this belief would unintentionally birth an abstract Entity affecting the free will of all conscious minds.

The omnipresent Entity festers deep within the Animarium, those with the gift of inward sight have tried to describe its abstract nature as a starfish-like being covered in eyes, with its arms wrapped around the astral manifestation of their heart, poisoning and confusing their thoughts, to affect or manipulate their will unless their heart is sufficiently strong.

*"As with all things in creation we are made by the blood and ashes of Angels, therefore we beings of consciousness are proof that the universe itself has gained awareness"*

-The lessons of Ygo

## THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

As one of the earliest civilizations to be ignited by consciousness, the ingenious Cinerians pursued scientific knowledge to learn about the world and life. With strong resolve not only they developed medicines capable of curing most common ailments and greatly extending their life, but they also became aware of the truths behind the universe's mysteries and of the secrets of Primordial Myst. They lived a prosperous, happy existence, ruled by a royal family known for being kind to their subjects, whose scientific foundations pursued the freedom of learning by establishing public, educational centres known as Living Repositories where anyone could access the tools needed to better themselves.

Unlike libraries filled with books or scrolls, these educational centres featured devices akin to talking statues known as Shinthar - Stones of Knowledge, directly linked to one another across the whole Cinerian society, allowing the flow of new information to be poured into them daily. The Shinthar is what made possible for the first Seekers to learn about ancient knowledge, but as time passes their reliability fades, which is why it was deemed imperative to transcribe as much knowledge as possible. Another tool of learning commonly used by those in training, were Dreamstones - small pebbles that when held with focus would make the individual fall asleep and directly seed knowledge into their minds, and so began the Age of Enlightenment (A.E.).

One ruler above all others stood out, Queen Arthea which became a beloved symbol of knowledge, kindness and life. Her popularity grew to the point that the collective consciousness of her people elevated her into something greater, an ageless divinity. She was not the only one to ascend however - it happened all over the world as other civilizations grew and found individuals worth worshipping through love, fear or hatred,

just as they once did with the Artisans. Over the centuries, Queen Arthea was eventually betrayed by her closest advisors who desired power and to push Cinerian society away from their dependency on outdated beliefs but towards a path of utopian, scientific independence. Many sacrificed themselves to aid the escape of the queen into exile, this event marked the end of the monarchy and of the Age of Enlightenment.

In the years that followed, the greatest of Cinerian scholars expanded their cognition of reality by altering their own bodies, sometimes to such drastic levels they would no longer resemble their own people, and so became the Apogeans. They were marked with horrific marine traits protruding from their bodies, causing many to refer to them as Abominations and believing the malicious sea-like Entity known as the Idea of Evil, was directly affecting their minds from within the Animarium, but all those who raised such concerns mysteriously vanished. With their new-found qualities, the Apogeans became capable of imprisoning the Artisans on colossal megalithic structures known as the Evercrosses - used to syphon the power produced by their star-like Amber Cores, generating tremendous amounts of energy and satisfying the needs of their whole civilization, while gradually draining the minds of their once revered Artisans and erasing the link to their roots.

Cinerian society however became anything but utopian as the Apogeans gradually ensnared those they were in charge of guiding, luring the population into using hive-mind devices in the shape of beautifully ornate sarcophagi to connect their entire society into a willing state of pure consciousness bliss. Without death or disease, they lived in a false dream-reality which fuelled their deepest desires for eternal youth and happiness, creating and sharing together pleasures beyond the unimaginable. Once their

whole population was part of this shared bliss, each Apogean donned a crown-like device which connected the thousands of clustered minds to their own, turning them into slaves. This forever trapped those unfortunate individuals in a cognitive nightmare, reducing their consciousness into psychic tools used to expand the mind of those in charge and artificially elevating themselves to Pseudo-Divinities.

All Apogeans however were unknowingly deceived by a single being, falling victims themselves to the trap they laid upon their own people. This being was known as the Thalnuir and his mind was extended by the psyche of every living Cinerian through the Apogeans, his goal was to transcend all realities by weaving his consciousness into the fabrics of the universe's itself, and gaining full control over existence. Pyramids and other megalithic constructions began sprouting everywhere within Cineria, each ruled by an Apogean thrall, where their mind would connect to the thousands of clustered sarcophagi devices containing the bodies of the ensnared citizens.

The Age of Myst (A.M.) had begun.



## THE AGE OF MYST

Out of fear for what the Cinerians did to all Artisans, the other less advanced civilizations formed an alliance to prevent their malicious spread and vanquish the Apogeans but to no avail, for the seemingly unlimited Mystic powers of the Thalnuir along his armies of constructs and abominations, was far too great of a threat to counter. Carcassia had previously never seen a force so terrifying - unaccounted testimonies go as far to mention helpless warriors vanishing out of existence simply because the Thalnuir willed it so.

One ruthless tribe of barbarians amongst all other civilizations was cruel but cunning and savage enough to repel the advancements of the Thalnuir. Their large bodies were sculpted for war by the collective fear of all those who had previously faced them, their unmatched willpower was strong enough to resist most of the esoteric powers affecting their place in reality. They were the youngest of all races with seemingly endless numbers due to how quickly they reproduced - defeats would only make them stronger and more determined, it seemed as if nothing could break their warrior spirits. The other races called them Hau'mhaan - The Blood Beasts - this was only one of the many pejorative meanings associated to that name but they were later forgotten and became known simply as Humans.

The tribal nature of humans isolated them into splintered clans making them at first inefficient in defeating a unified threat, but under the secret guidance of the once exiled Queen Arthea, a young man named Yman - meaning 'The Wilful', rose through the ranks and became a living legend by uniting all clans under a single banner with the help of his battle brother whose name went lost and is referred to only as the "Swordsman".

Yman became an icon of strength and



determination, treated as a divine prophet powerful enough to defeat the Thalnuir but at the cost of his life.

Rumours spread that after his defeat, four of the Thalnuir's surviving Apostles found their master's desiccated heart and sealed it within a cursed tomb, now lost and buried by the passage of time, in the hope that some day it would beat once again and restore the Cinerian society to its former glory.

The Cinerian people failed to regain freedom and redemption by the end of the war, for they remained imprisoned within their sarcophagi

and were forever lost to the endless nightmares, deep within the great pyramids, buried by the deserts sands. Many died by the shock caused when the thread connecting their mind to the Thalnuir was severed, while others died due to the lack of power needed by the sarcophagi. A great number of Artisans escaped their shattering Evercrosses due to disrepair or because the violence of war had accidentally reached their megalithic chains, but only madness and hatred now filled their once reasoning minds; now they wander the lands and destroy anything which remotely resembled those who enslaved

them - they are now known as the Chaos Angels. In countries where a great number of these Angels wander, the culture has adapted and shaped around them, like that of the nomadic jungle tribes of Kazaar, which travels in close proximity to their Angel, dragging one of its hands along to ward off Myst, or the heretics of the City State of Nesuferitia, who lives protected behind giant walls to keep them at bay.

*"Life is but the flame of a short candle struggling to burn against the winds of fate"*

-the apocryphal letters of Yman

## THE LEGACY OF YMAN

In the first years of the Age of Myst, the sisterhood known by then as the Speakers, seeded the story of the Thalnuir and of Yman across the lands, which later sprouted with several religious beliefs defined as Ymanism.

The largest number of followers are of the Othodox Church of Yman, represented by the Sword - Yman's justice, which can sometimes feature unique, visual alterations based on the region it belongs to. Ymanism promotes strength and valour in battle with the promise of an afterlife spent within the bountiful Stronghold of Gyrm, located over the Southern Star of Yman. The soul of the warrior will ultimately gain the honour of joining his great army and be part of his glorious return to Carcassia, when he rides atop the Southern Star, ready for the last battle which will deliver humanity from the greatest of all evil. The leader of the orthodox church is known as the "Gladius" and they stand for the living embodiment of the sword of Yman, therefore his will and justice.



*"I am justice, I am the will which guides the sword of Yman"*

-Battle Prayer

The other major religious power is the Church of Arthea, a branch of Ymanism which rewards those of kind principles such as self sacrifice for the good of others and living in harmonious union, rather than fragmented nations competing for dominance. The leaders of this church are 12 Reverend Mothers Superior presiding over a round table, together they form the Council of Unisca, a name which refers to the "Link" between man and divinity, and their symbol is a circular Link sometimes depicted as 12 interconnected rings.

These two dominating branches can sometimes be found within the same region, however in many other places their doctrine is so strictly enforced that coexistence is impossible and blood is spilled over these fundamental ideologies.

It is said "A man may find himself between the Sword and the Link, but only within Yman they will find their humanity".

## ANIMARIUM

Within the reality of the Animarium, thoughts, and dreams may become nightmares, it is a realm where only the individual's Consciousness exists, haunted by the presence of the Shadow Self; a black sea which they must walk upon. The strong willed may navigate through this sea and learn how to avoid being drowned by it, for the Shadow Self can cause them to become forever lost and deprived of humanity. Greater dangers lurk here such as the desperate echoes of their ancestral consciousness, which may resurface out of the depths of the black sea whenever the interloper shows any signs that their mind is faltering. The echoes intentions are to return to life by tricking, drowning or assaulting their descendants' psyche in order to inhabit their bodies.

The visual and auditory sensations experienced by those who return from the Animarium are

known to be illusions created by their own mind to shield it from madness, and to interpret their otherworldly experience. Conflicting descriptions and stories have been exchanged by those with the ability to travel to the Animarium, suggesting that the experience is deeply personal and unique to one's beliefs, for instance a renowned jungle shaman once spoke of the Animarium as a dark, icy forest with talking man-sized spiders burrowing their way out of the murky ground.

Only the Death Speakers to this day are said to know the secrets for safely navigating the Animarium, but regardless it is a dangerous journey which can kill the mind of those insufficiently prepared, leaving behind an empty body. The journey requires humans to consume Amber Dust - the rare and refined essence of the blood of an Angel, which expands the mind, but other means of journeying to the Animarium have been stumbled upon over the millennia, for instance coming into touch with certain objects, people or powerful emotional states, such as hate, desperation or deep sadness. Dreams have also been known to be another gateway into the Animarium which resulted in some never being able to reawaken, or perhaps worse; to become possessed by their ancestor's psyche.

## THE HOLLOW REALM

The realm of chaotic madness is where one cannot simply follow the laws of logic to journey through it, actions taken may cause all but the reactions which common sense dictates. This realm is known as the Hollow Realm, where a single moment can be as long as a lifetime in its Physical counterpart, or an individual can feel their knees crack under the

weight of their own body. Beings more beautiful than anything one could conjure from their wildest dreams can be seen, as well as visions so dreadful that a single glance can cause madness.

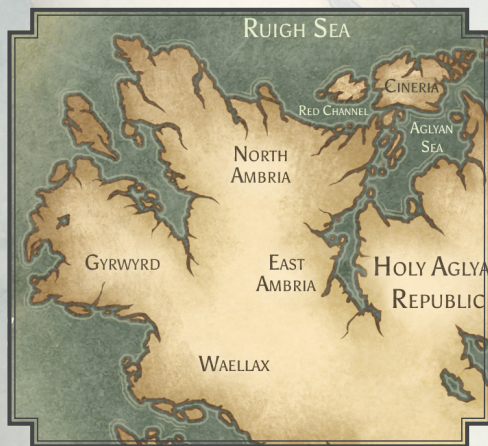
Whenever the thick presence of Myst continues to grow denser in isolated pockets, it slashes through the very fabric of the Realms creating gateways of swirling dark fog known as Myst Rifts. These Rifts link the Physical to the Hollow Realm for short periods of time, letting all kinds of aberrations spill from the chaotic dimension, such as the ever so Anima-hungry Phasmyr, sensing and hunting until they can feast upon those unfortunate enough to encounter them.



## THE KINGDOMS OF AMBRIA

The Ambrian Kingdoms are located on the western side of the Yrba continent, at the heart of the ancient Cinerian civilization with its ruins standing testimony to their former glory. The Empire of Ambria was once a united country which encompassed the whole of Yrba, founded by the victories of Yman over its former rulers. Due to the lack of strong leadership, over the centuries the Empire was fractured into several kingdoms, city states and republics.

If not for the constant feuds amongst ruling houses battling to retain dominance and land ownership, the Empire could be restored and potentially become the wealthiest and strongest military force of this world, but old grudges, politics and religious beliefs are not so easily swayed even when the dream of a United Ambria is shared amongst all.



The four great ruling houses are: The Winter Wolves of North Ambria, the Blood Lions of Waellax, the Amber Hawks of East Ambria, and the Emerald Vipers of Gyrwood. With exception of rare skirmishes caused by petty disputes, they currently live under a banner of truce, however they share a bloody history of war that can be quickly reignited by the simplest

of provocations, sometimes rumoured to be the goal of their plotting neighbouring rivals - the Holy Aglyan Republic, whose Orthodox religious beliefs strongly contrasts Ambrian traditions. To promote peace, improve relations and trading, every year the Gilded Dragon Games are hosted by one of the four houses, designed to test strength, courage and cunning.

These games are composed of four main events: The Archery Shoot-out - a favourite amongst the legendary Amber Hawk archers. Brute Ball - a merciless ball game of strength and violence, ideal for the hulking bodies of the Winter Wolves. The Jousting Tournament, founded by the renowned Blood Lions Heavy Cavalry, and lastly the Pallium Race - a deadly, fast and strategic horse race, featuring several riders per house, the favoured sport amongst the Emerald Vipers.

The lands are rich with resources, vital for the survival and prosperity of each house which works as an incentive to promote peace and cooperation. For instance without the large variety of metals from the Bastion Mountains mined by the Winter Wolves, the Blood Lions Heavy Cavalry would suffer great setbacks and likewise without the exported grain and legendary Blood Wine from the vast fields of Waellax, North Ambria would be forced to find alternatives to avoid famine and loss of morale.

## MORTERRA

The largest archives of Cinerian knowledge was found over the Lands of the Dead also known as Morterra, named so after the devastation left by the final battle between Yman and the Thalnuir. After the end of the war, nature reclaimed the lands covering its scars and restoring its beauty, nowadays it is known to be the land of Sirens, culture and buried secrets, where its citizens claim to be the direct descendants of Yman's bloodline, a fact which if disputed would push

any of its proud people to violence. Like in most countries inhabited predominantly by humans, the people of Morterra can be quite adverse to foreigners, even more so to the 'Inhuman' as they call them - individuals belonging to other civilised races such as the Selvarin, Ashkin and so on.

The city of Ypoli - originally known as Ymapolis is the kingdom's capital, said through legends to be founded by the undying love of the mermaid Corellea for the warrior Valeris, becoming the first king of Morterra - Valeris Yman DaYmapolis I. The marine motifs of this legend can be found anywhere throughout Morterra from its architecture to its literature, blending harmoniously with religious Ymanism beliefs and birthing beautiful frescos all over the cathedrals and royal palace walls. Because of such vast inspiration, Morterra is renowned for its art academies and proud to host some of the world's greatest artists, which often find employment for the nobles or the ecclesiastical

orders all over Yrba. Rumours speak of a terrible secret concealed within the heart of the kingdom, which has long been forgotten to preserve the peace and safety of all, a rumour said to have originated by the envy of rival countries to promote animosity and discord. It is easy however to imagine why such rumour exists, Morterra has perhaps the most grim tradition known amongst all kingdom of men, a custom considered so abhorrent by all of its neighbours that it has often been a philosophical and ethical discussion amongst scholars, questioning the morality of the whole population for supporting it. It is unclear how this ritual started but as it stands, when the eldest son or daughter of the current monarch reaches maturity, their ruling parent's mental health begins to decline until they are completely taken by madness and when that happens their child has to be the one to slay them, saving the kingdom and take their place as the new ruler. An ancient prophecy states that Myst will engulf the world the day this rite of passage is ended, starting a new Age of Myst.





## PILLARS OF FOUNDATION

The Cinerians concluded that all of which constitutes “Reality” is made by six Foundation Pillars, the collapse of even a single one of them would destroy the balance of reality and cause it to end. Each pillar mirrors its counterpart but all borrow from one another to support the weight of existence like an interlinked chain, with three primary forces; Blood, Light, Myst, and three secondary ones; Life, Void and Ash. Those with the ability of manipulating Myst can briefly affect the natural laws of each pillar to their advantage with seemingly supernatural

results often referred to as Spells or Weaves, more specifically however Myst in its chaotic nature is the strongest catalyst capable of shaking all six pillars and those who study them categories each one into a distinctive “Lore”.

## LORE OF BLOOD

Contrary to what its name might imply, the Lore of Blood is not only part of all Bloodlings descendants but it is intrinsically intertwined to the Amber Angels, some of which were composed entirely by ice and contributed to the creation of seas and oceans. The effects of Blood

manipulation can regulate the flow of water or create ice, help healing or cause horrendous injuries and even affect the movements of living beings.

## LORE OF VOID

The Lore of Void is a force which balances the absence of all others and prevents complete chaos, granting the flow of time. Its counterpart is the Lore of Light and without Void, shadows could not be cast as light could not travel, rendering light and darkness meaningless concepts. Manipulating these forces can push or lift great physical mass, affect time, or even allow the passage of solid matter through one another.

## LORE OF MYST

The Lore of Myst is the most chaotic force of all, it is a residue which precludes the Shattering of Ygo and its presence is what governs the natural laws of the Hollow Realm. It directly opposes the Lore of Life, and yet chaos is found within all living beings as well as the natural forces of the Physical Realm, guiding the fate of all those within it. Its chaotic nature when manipulated has a destructive quality like no other on both body and on the mind of those it affects, acting as a catalyst to greatly expand the natural capabilities of a conscious mind.

## LORE OF ASH

The Lore of Ash constitutes everything tangible within the Physical Realm. It supports the soil needed to grow life, the metals and minerals deep within the ground, the growing trees and plants, the flesh of animals and of all living beings, capable of creating Life together with its counterpart the Lore of Blood. It can be used to manipulate rocks, earth, help the growth of nature or crush the bones and flesh of all beings within the Physical Realm.

## LORE OF LIGHT

The Lore of Light directly opposes the Lore of Void, it is not just the force which illuminates but it also gives clarity, grants purity, heat and fire. It is believed that together with the Lore of Ash it becomes capable of shaping continents and together they contribute to the existence of the Lore of Life. This Lore is favoured amongst those who wish to unleash fiery destruction, keep warm and bring light where there is none.

## LORE OF LIFE

The Lore of Life is perhaps the most richly diverse force of all, not only it makes possible for life to thrive but it is also a harbinger of many great diseases and of death. It has strong connections to the Anima of all conscious beings and it governs the natural laws of Causality in direct opposition to the chaotic forces of Myst. Manipulating these forces can grant prescience, bring pestilence and restore or conjure life.





## THE WINTER WOLVES

All North Ambrians are proud to call themselves “Winter Wolves”, their commitments to strict discipline and honourable values are only matched by their large, vigorous bodies and ferocious strength, which further fuels their claim to be direct descendants of the Warrior Prophet Yman. While such claims are not uncommon amongst all other noble Houses, they are harder to dismiss in their case, the average size of a Winter Wolf is well above the 6 foot mark with mostly snow-pale skin, ice blue eyes and hair so brightly blonde it can be easily mistaken for white in certain lights.

North Ambria begins from the roots of the Bastion Mountains, and reaches down to the southern Arteria River. The brutal weather can be fatal to

those unprepared, and this contributed in shaping their bodies, but also repelled invasions which often fail to even get past the perilous borders of their defensive mountain range.

They have the reputation for being cold hearted and ruthless, but that’s not how they see it, for they believe softness breeds weakness of the pack, which in turn delivers death for all.

They dedicate their lives to physical and mental training, living by their creed “Live with purpose or die forgotten” and while tradition is important, religion does not dominate their

lives. They have a unique branch of Ymanism known as the Blue Church, founded by Father Bluefingers Ceolwulf, which birthed the religion by merging the ancient pagan traditions of wolf



worshipping to Ymanism. The most iconic of these traditions is the Nine Steps Pilgrimage; a young man enters adulthood after reaching all of the nine wolf shrines scattered around North Ambria and offering a blood tribute to each.

The Iron Wolves are the main military force of this House, composed of skilled and well trained knights, not born out of nobility, but selected through a ruthless and unforgiving process which starts when they are taken at a young age and put through a vigorous, vetting trial known as the Trials of the Wolf. During the trials a selected group of children of about fourteen years of age are put together to form the “Pack”, they are given no weapons or clothes and must rely on their cunning and cooperation to survive the harsh mountains and its natural predators. Most dangerous and common of all are the great Bastion Wolves, twice as big as forest wolves. The goal of the pack is for each to slay a Bastion Wolf and carry their pelt back down the mountain, but such an arduous task is made even harder when an Alpha Bastion Wolf spots and starts hunting them down. Alpha Bastions can be larger than bears and are often mistaken for one, even armoured men meet their end at those dagger-like fangs. To the public’s knowledge nobody has ever managed to bring down an Alpha Bastion Wolf during the trials except for the renowned Knight Arlo Haark. Stories say he came down the mountains as the sole survivor of his pack, dragging the body of an Alpha Bastion Wolf on his shoulders, but considering that an Alpha Bastion can be several times larger and heavier than a grown man, this story is well regarded as a legend to promote courage and strength of the heart rather than facts.

The trials are designed to “awaken” the potential of the strongest child or “Alpha” as it is also known, which would instinctively take charge of his comrades and help them all survive. When this happens the group chances of completing the

trials are greatly increased, but when it doesn’t, it is likely none of them will survive due to the spreading fear which makes them easy prey. Regardless of how it happens if only a single child survives the trials, it will gain the derogative title of “Lone”, these Knights are not regarded well by their peers for they cannot fight like beasts.

The ranking structure of the Iron Wolves is categorised between leaders and supporters, respectively ranked as Alphas and Betas, split between 3 tiers; Vanguard, Knights and Praetorians, guided by King Aethelwulf. As to be expected by their harsh selective process, Iron Wolves armies tend to be smaller in numbers than others, but no soldier in their right mind would ever face an Iron Wolf alone. “Fool, you might as well leap naked into the mouth of a wolf” Once remarked the commander of the Blood Lion Heavy Cavalry on the eve of battle “Fighting alone one of those hulking savages is madness”

The Vanguard are the front line of battle, often accompanied by trained Bastion Wolves, and while they are at the bottom of the military chain, they are still more deadly than most warriors from any other army. Vanguard are posted in times of peace as City Guards or Law Enforcers, the sight of a Vanguard prowling the streets escorted by his trusted Bastion Wolf chills the bones of any outlander who claims to have seen one.

While their horses are much slower than the average cavalry, they are never startled or easily killed due to being accustomed to the company of wolves since birth. The Praetorians are the last line of defence for the royal house, they guard the king and queen and as to be expected, their mastery of combat knows no rivals with exception perhaps of very few Death Speakers.

## THE SELVARIN

To most humans the features of a Selvarin can come across as unsettling, starting with their avian shaped legs, the likes of a predatory bird which they use to effortlessly support a slender and tall body with barely noticeable feminine features. Their thin, long hands have only four fingers each and are used to traverse through trees with inhuman agility and speed. As if carved from wood, their angular faces have sharp edged features which neatly frame their large slanted eyes of blue within blue, like a pair of gleaming sapphires. Hair with the tint of autumn leaves cascades over their backs, blending with the moss-like adornments they fashion to mask their olive and birch skin, creating the illusion of a forest feature coming to life.

As well as their quick bodies and sharp reflexes, the Selvarin are known to be gifted with "Imminent Prescience" a quality which allows them to see a few seconds into the future, especially so after consuming the sweet sap of mother Yrbaerya, a poison lethal to anyone except to a Selvarin when consumed in small quantities. Such Prescience can often save their life from incoming death-threatening situations like attacks or to evaluate the most effective blows against their preys and foes.

It is believed the first attempt by the Cinerians to connect their whole civilization through a shared dream started with the Alberia tree, known today by the Selvarin as Mother Yrbaerya; A colossal tree disguised as several forests with cavernous roots reaching entire continents, where the Cinerians slept within a unique shared dream. Over the centuries part of the tree became infected by Myst, which gave birth to the parasitic Grollik creatures, born out of the corrupted fungus Rinshaak - Voice Feeder. The tree survived through self mutation to repel the insidious Myst, however it caused it to lose its

balanced nature and to gain consciousness from all those dreaming within it. This prompted the Cinerians to abandon this project since they had lost control over it and all attempts to destroy the tree failed.

Through its alcoves, the tree began giving birth to the Selvarin - ancient Rindar for Shael'rin - Voice of the Wilderness. The word 'voice' shares the same meaning as the word 'people' as it bears great meaning within their culture. The Selvarin would be born conscious with the great accumulated knowledge of all those who shared the dream, but most of all they would carry the imprinting which compelled each one of them to go on meat hunts. On these hunts they would be eating great quantities of raw meat for their bodies could not digest plant life and once full, they would return deep into their own alcoves where they would symbiotically exchange the fruits of the hunt for the vital rejuvenating lymph of Yrbaerya, in a practice known as Naer'va - the Murky Dream. Failing to participate in Naer'va for too long can cause the individual to lose their mind to the countless dormant consciousnesses of past lives within themselves, and become what is known as a Feral Selvarin. Unless starving, feral Selvarin seldom attack others of their kind, but they are kept at a distance from Selvarin societies where possible due to their savage unpredictability.

Yrbaerya gives birth to a Selvarin, however they are all born female for the tree requires their bodies to become impregnated by her seeds and gestate for the first few months of life. Afterwards the foetus is taken and nestled within large grape-like pods where they are cared for and protected by all Selvarin as a singular family. Once the child is nearing the end of their development, the pod's translucent membrane becomes red like furled petals and when ready to bloom the child is born. Though Selvarin tends to have remnants of physical desires from their ancient Cinerian

ancestry, they seldom partake in physical mating of any kind, considerably so with any of the other races, however there are legends of human children born with the distinctive Selvarin trait of all-blue eyes without any white in them, which are suspected to carry Selvarin blood, but regardless of origins these individuals are considered cursed by either sides.

When not busy with the hunt, a Selvarin enjoys wordless singing more than anything, the sounds produced are said to resonate within Yrbaerya and to one another, creating a unified melody which cannot be matched by any bird or wild animal. Some can be particularly mischievous with their spellbinding singing, by taking pleasure in disorienting and causing forest wanderers to lose their way, which is why they are also referred to as "Land Sirens". They do not understand nor see the harm in such "games" but these peculiar customs are what prompts humans to fear the Selvarin and give chase whenever spotted, as well as the superstitious village rumours of them feasting on lonely or misbehaving children.



## THE DEATH SPEAKERS

Very few societies are as cunning and as secretive as the Death Speakers, a name given to them by outsiders due to their ability of communicating to the dead, however amongst themselves they refer to their society as the “Guild” and to one another as “Sisters”. They are the direct descendants of a nomadic guild once known as Speakers, who were tasked to record and spread history throughout the lands. Death Speakers are an all woman society of spies, warriors, mothers, advisors, seductresses, religious figures and more, with Ymanism roots of no specific affiliation. It is widely rumoured they are the true architects behind the religions and politics of human societies, which makes many suspicious or afraid of their presence, but the secret of their seemingly unlimited knowledge and wise counsel is what keeps them employed at the royal courts or by major religious institutions. It is considered very unwise and a great disadvantage to go to battle against an enemy benefiting from the counsel of a Death Speaker while their own leaders does not.

Most Death Speakers wear masks in public to lessen the chances of making themselves a target of threats and bribes, but also to further conceal the full scope of their organisation. Because of their trained ability to alter their voices and body mimicry, one Speaker could easily take the place of another without giving the shadow of doubt, giving further control to the organisation to carry out their machinations.

One cannot choose to become a Death Speaker but must be chosen by other Death Speakers, or by those who are secretly employed as such. The process is kept secret but one consistent rumour is that all Death Speakers are either born or related to one, this is to further develop and preserve certain physical or mental traits for future generations until the “Sui Generis” is conceived. The Sui Generis will be an individual capable of overcoming any physical or mental challenge in

order to become the perfect leader for humanity, capable of safeguarding and protecting humanity’s inevitable grim future and avoiding extinction.

Their long and arduous training begins at an early age without their knowledge, with secret conditioning implanted through mental manipulations deeply within their psyche, which gives them allegiance above all others to the Death Speakers society. Emotions such as love or hate are trained out of their behaviour as it is believed it can cause one to lose focus over a given situation and more easily succumb to weakness through manipulation. They are however trained to feign such emotions for strategic advantage and can even lead an unsuspecting lifelong spouse to never doubt or question their affections.

While the reason is not fully known, an important step to become a fully fledged Death Speaker is to undergo the trials of pregnancy and early motherhood. Their doctrine states that with proper training this journey can unlock previously obscured pathways through their psyche, granting them their full potential and understanding over the true value of life and the sacrifices required to protect it.

They are often seen carrying the symbol of their society around their neck, the “Animaris” as they refer to it. It represents their unique link to the Animarium, which allows them to tap through their blood heritage, to reach the consciousness of their ancestors, and converse with them when needed. This practice is known as the “Vox Aeterna” and it requires the Death Speaker to enter a state of trance by consuming the Amber Dust of an angel which renders their body almost lifeless in appearance and if done incorrectly it can actually be fatal for them, as well as cause the complete obliteration of their consciousness from reality. The journey into the Animarium can last a few moments or days, depending on the ability and task of the Death Speaker, some seek a simple advice or word of wisdom, others use the opportunity to learn a new skill which cannot be easily obtained by other means.



## THE MYSTRAAL ACADEMY

Within the ancient city of Nabek located deep in the Pharsyian desert lies the Mystraal Academy, the only known place across the human lands where Myst is studied and manipulated to the benefits of its Empire instead of being feared and scorned. Those who seek knowledge are free of persecution within the walls of the academy and their abilities are not only welcomed but nurtured. The academy founders believed that Myst without control is far more dangerous than individuals attempting to wield such power through pure instincts and fear, therefore the academy exists to guide and teach anyone willing to learn, even Ashkin. These shunned individuals with charred-like skin are said to be born cursed or soulless, but have in truth greater capabilities to manipulate Myst due to their bodies acting like receptive vessels and being more enduring to the corrupting effects of Myst. Because of this capability there is a belief amongst scholars to the possibility of a direct connection between Ashkin and primordial Bloodlings.

Due to the ancient traditions of the Empire of Pharsyia, women are not allowed into the academy unless they are from foreign lands and supported by the generous donations of noble families backing their studies. While many considers such restrictions unfair and against the basic principles of the academy founded during a more tolerant era, none dares to speak their minds for Pharsyan law can be harsh and swift amongst rebellious sentiments, and the risk of the academy being permanently shut as consequence of defiance is far too great to risk.

Because the true meaning of the word has gone lost in time, some believe that the title of Mystraal given to those who completed their studies at the academy, comes from the words Myst and Raalah - Myst Scholar, while others speculates that it derives from the word Raalm

which stands for blood, referring to the Myst which runs through the blood of those who can control it.

The less educated are commonly misguided by its name, mistaking Myst for the natural phenomenon of fog or mist, however what the eye sees when Myst is present is the physical reaction of Myst entering the realm not Myst itself, similarly as when water is turned to steam by heat. Actual Myst is formless and has no visible quality of its own, and even though it creates subtle distinguishable patterns over fog and mist, only those who can sense Myst can truly see the difference between the natural phenomena and that which is caused by the insidious presence of Myst.

Myst is not the only subject of study within the academy, maths, astronomy, geography and philosophy amongst other subjects are also to be learned, for the principles of the academy states that a balanced and learned mind can create a better anchor point to their reality which is of great help when losing control of the chaotic energies. Many from all over the world travel to Nabek to study, making it a true jewel of diversity and commerce, this knowledge is often cause for great displeasure amongst the more conservative countries practising Ymanism which have in the past waged war against the Pharsyan Empire to stop and eradicate such heretic practices.

Based on the abilities of the scholar, the time required to study at the academy changes depending on their level of control and ability to learn quickly. Most travels in the early years of their adulthood seeking the academy - a perilous and desperate journey which often ends before reaching Nabek, while the more fortunate are brought in by their parents as children, which tends to bare the greatest results thanks to their minds not yet being set in the strict confines of their reality. Many choose to stay by the end of their apprenticeship in order to teach others or to further improve and study the academic methods, while some are employed as servants and fighters of the Empire.



# CREDITS

## ALL CONTENTS CREATED BY

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# ANIMARIUM



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