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Date: Tue, Oct 18, 2011 at 11:17 PM

Subject: Namers

To: jim.s.smith@gmail.com

Some noes I sent to Alex and Fred:

Some notes on Namers.

I am sending this to you guys since you have both expressed an interest in

being a Namer. Though Alex is not particularly interested in being a

Hairochan.

First, a historical note. I have been in love with the concept of naming

since I first encountered Earthsea but I had no idea how to work it in

concept or game mechanics. My last attempt was a failure. This time I

believe that I have hit a clean set of \*concepts\* that will give balanced

game play. Forgive me if my attempt to distinguish what Namers are/are not

is not yet polished. I am clear on the concepts I am creating but not yet

practiced in how to describe it.

My intention is to have Namers be powerful, balanced and "sensible". i.e.

Knowing their basic design you can figure out what they can and cannot do.

Namers work with names. They do not use "magic" via large outpourings of

mana to manipulate the world. They use a loophole of the gods...The gods

choose language for creation of reality. By giving humans language they

gave humans access to that reality and, in some cases, access to creation.

Namers are not as big and dramatic spell casters. They rarely use power

above the amount they have instant access to. You don't see Namers

channeling huge amounts of power to shift a rock into a stone knife or

convince a large predator to leave it alone. That can be done with a small

amount of power. Namers should be able to do some extraordinary things in

game play that others cannot do without phenomenal power. They can do

things with more power but it is not the default way for Namers to do

things. Using large amounts of power to do things requires a decent level

of primary skill in what is being attempted as well as additional support

skills.

What can Namers do?

Namers connect to/identify with something via its name. That

connection/identification allows them to do things with the object

according to its nature.

Inanimate objects are easiest. The identification created with the object

allows the Namer to enroll the object into shifting itself in some way.

Some shifts are simpler than others. An objects identity resists some

shifts more than others. A stone resists being turned into less permanent

forms. In effect, \*an object's identity argues for its own permanence\*. A

rock will resist being named into sand. Other changes are easier. A stone

may more easily be changed into a stone block because it does not affect

its permanence, just its form. In addition, \*an object's identity will

argue for purpose\*. Any attempt to \*change\* an object's purpose will be

resisted. But that same principle encourages the object to \*take on\* more

purpose. As a result, a stone knife will resist being shifted to just a

stone. A stone statue will resist being shifted into a support column much

more than being shifted into a different type of statue. Objects resist

changing the material they are made from more than the form because the

material is more important to its identity than its form UNTIL the form is

associated with a purpose. Purpose can be associated with an object by hand

crafting or other human actions. In fact, some Namers argue that some

craftsman are Namers with a limited vocabulary.

Live creatures have some identity that they constantly generate. For

example, a tree sloth knows itself as a sloth. It is in effect, clear that

it is "The Sloth" that defines "slothiness". Convincing a sloth to change

form to a cat is an order of magnitude more difficult than changing the

form of a rock. On the other hand the Namer can easily enroll the sloth in

doing sloth like things, like climbing a tree. As long as the Namer does

not attempt to argue with the identity of the sloth, it is easily enrolled

in doing things.

Sentient beings are even tougher. Sentients are on-goingly generating

their identity (and that identity is even more detailed than the sloth's)

but they also have access to their identity so they generate that identity

conciously and loudly. A Duke of Merova speaks who and what he is and lives

into that. To truly name a sentient a Namer has to connect/identity with

that sentient's true self. Not the picture the sentient has of themself,

but the heart of it. So a Duke White Horse of Merova speaks of themselves

as a Duke of Merova, the Husband of Liilliane, Father of Richard, etc...

For a Namer to really name the Duke they have to get to the "Self" of the

Duke and name that which defines how he takes on those roles. Whats this

boils down to is that sentients have true names that are very hard to

identify and often unknown to the sentients themselves. The exception is

the Hairochan who all know their true names.

In general the higher you go from inanimate object to sentient the more

specific the true name is needed to get the same results. Naming a stone as

a stone will give you good solid results. Naming a Tree Sloth a Sloth is

less effective then discerning the True Name of Tree Sloth and using that.

Identifying a Duke as a Duke is much less effective than naming a Tree

Sloth a Sloth..

Yet some of these namings are very useful. Naming a Duke as a Duke will

almost always get the Duke's attention. A Namer will almost always be able

to get someone to listen to them. A Namer can use another's true name to

cause them to heal faster and throw off possessions, enchantments and other

manipulations. In effect, that can help "true up" someone. They themselves

know their own true name and from that can protect themself from malign

influences. Namers are rarely possessed or enchanted.

The true name is most easily knowable at birth. An exceptionally gifted

midwife or a skilled wizard may actually occasionally hear a newborn's true

name. A Namer can protect a newborn from outside influences by naming it

with its true name, in effect "sealing" the child in its own name.

The Namer's ability to add purpose to an object can be used to make objects

more effective. Their are some Hairochan families that have named hoes that

are far better at weeding than a unnamed hoe. Yes, they have the gardeners

equivalent of "Foe-Hammer" or Glamdring.

There are dangers to naming. That connection/identification can be

dangerous especially when attempted against certain supernatural beings.

Some, such as Dragons, could use the connection to rename you. Some demons

can use the connection to call your name into question. This is a

profoundly reality shaking event for Namers who may, at best, be stunned.

At worst they could cease to exist. The greatest of demons can do so

without the connection. In addition, if a Namer fails in an attempted

manipulation of a sentient that sentient may very well respond as if they

have been betrayed. As if someone they trusted got to know them and then

betrayed them.

Some game mechanics notes:

Namers will start with the general names of the objects common to their

environment. That is a huge basic vocabulary. If Tree Sloth is common to

their area, they will know it. There will be a simple table of typical

difficulties for naming objects, creatures and sentients. There will be a

simple set of skills for figuring out and using names as applied to

inanimate objects, creatures. and sentients.

Namers will all have their own true name.

Namers attempting to use power to enhance their "reach" will need skills in

holding and channeling energy as well as a filter skill in using naming in

the world of mana.

Hope that primes the pipe.

Questions, Comments, Flames ?