

Yliaster Worldbuilding Document

Section 1 - Overview:

- Summary:

Lost adrift in the cosmos, the world of Yliaster is formed from the corpses of four primordial beings known as Elementals that once roamed the vast expanse of the cosmic void in times immemorial. At the end of their lives, each of the Elementals condensed its life force into four seeds from which the Trees of Diana would eventually arise. The sap produced by these trees - known as Azoth - acts as a universal solvent and agent of transmutation, capable of breaking down any substance into its atomic components and recombining them to form new substances.

As time went on and civilization came to understand the properties of Azoth, powerful nations began to develop around the Trees of Diana. Within these nations, alchemy is a staple of everyday life, to the point where most of the population can perform basic transmutation with ease. At the heart of each of these nations is a prestigious alchemical university. Known altogether as the Hermetica, this network of schools forms the closest thing to a ruling body, protecting the Trees of Diana by regulating the production and usage of Azoth throughout all of Yliaster.

- Major Features:

- Dawn of the Elementals:

- Before the world of Yliaster was formed, there existed a vast, cosmic void known as the Aether, populated by mysterious entities known as Elementals. These creatures were born from an act of transmutation, willing themselves into existence as avatars of the primordial elements: Pyros, Hydros, Aeros, and Geos.

- **Trees of Diana:**

- In time, the Elementals grew weak and eventually passed away, condensing their very essence into seeds stored deep within their lifeless bodies. Over the millenia, their corpses would coalesce into the world of Yliaster, while the seeds sprouted into what would come to be known as Trees of Diana.

- **Azoth:**

- The sap produced by the Trees of Diana - known as Azoth - possesses a unique microstructure composed of millions of microscopic particles. By moving in between the atoms of other substances, Azoth is able to break the material down into its atomic components and reform them as a different material.

- **The Hermetica:**

- As civilization advanced and the miraculous properties of Azoth became more widely known, four of Yliaster's most prestigious alchemical universities came together to form the Hermetica. Together, the members of the Hermetica act as the closest thing Yliaster has to a ruling body, protecting the Trees of Diana from those who seek to abuse their power.

- **Homunculi:**

- Using a complex distillation process, Azoth can be refined into a potent spirit capable of giving a crude semblance of life to even inorganic materials. These lifeforms, known as Homunculi, often possess powerful abilities drawn from their connection to the primordial elements, and are capable of serving a variety of functions, but

are most commonly used by students of the Hermetica in a form of organized combat sponsored by the universities.

Section 2 - Target Audience and Competition:

- **Rationale:**

Overall, my rationale for developing the world of Yliaster is largely twofold. For one thing, outside of a few successful pieces of media, such as *Fullmetal Alchemist* and the *Atelier* series, the concept of alchemy has been largely unexplored, as most works that incorporate alchemy into their worlds tend to focus on its more grandiose concepts, such as transmutation and homunculi, rather than the idea of alchemy as a pseudoscience with established principles that . While the world of Yliaster does incorporate these aforementioned concepts, it aims to do so in a manner that is faithful to the original ideas outlined by alchemists centuries ago.

Additionally, in recent years, J.K. Rowling, the author of the *Harry Potter* series, has come under scrutiny for her prejudiced beliefs regarding the transgender community. Seeing as the world of Yliaster draws heavily from the “magical school” genre, which was popularized by the *Harry Potter* series, I believe that it can serve an important purpose by providing a world that captures the same aesthetic that people enjoyed about the world of *Harry Potter*, while celebrating and being more inclusive of marginalized communities than other works in the genre.

- **Competitive Analysis:**

- **Competitors and Inspirations:**

- **Harry Potter:**

- **Medium** - Novel Series
 - **Audience** - Tweens and Teenagers

- **Description:**

- A young boy, orphaned at an early age, discovers that he is a wizard and is taken to study at a prestigious wizarding academy. While at school, he makes friends and is eventually forced to face the return of the dark wizard who had previously killed his parents.

- **Scope:**

- The first book in the series is one of only five books to sell over 100 million copies, while the subsequent books, film adaptations, and video games place the franchise's value at an estimated \$25 billion.

- **Pros:**

- Massive cultural impact.
- One of the few franchises considered to be a "four-quadrant" franchise that appeals to both male and female, and both over- and under-25s.

- **Cons:**

- Little representation from other cultures, with most characters being Caucasian and of European descent.

- **Features:**

- Magical world exists parallel to our one, rather than in an alternate universe.
- Large variety of spells, magic items, and mythical creatures.

- **Inspiration:**

- Popularized the "magical school" genre and established many of the common elements seen in most other works that include a magical school.

- **The Owl House:**

- **Medium** - Animated Television Series

- **Audience** - Kids ages 10 and up
- **Description:**
 - A teenage Dominican-American girl accidentally stumbles upon a portal to another world and begins to study magic under the supervision of a rebellious witch.
- **Scope:**
 - Unclear - First season boasts an average rating of 94% on Rotten Tomatoes and 8.2/10 on IMDB.
- **Pros:**
 - Praised for its representation of the LGBTQ+ community.
 - Features Disney's first animated LGBTQ+ characters to be portrayed unambiguously, as well as Disney's first transgender and/or non-binary character.
 - Won an award for Children's and Youth Programming at the 2021 Peabody Awards.
- **Cons:**
 - The 3rd season was reduced to three specials and confirmed as the final season, with the creator stating that Disney "just wanted to be done with The Owl House."
- **Features:**
 - Vast magical world with multiple unique locations and a wide variety of magical creatures.
 - Multiple different magic systems, ranging from traditional magic to the use of mystical runes and glyphs.
- **Inspiration:**
 - Similar world origin - formed from the remains of an ancient being.
 - Magical school with different "tracks" that focus on different kinds of magic,

ranging from potion making to illusion crafting.

- Milestone in terms of inclusivity in media.

■ *Strixhaven: School of Mages:*

- **Medium** - Trading Card Game
- **Audience** - Teens and Young Adults; Appeals to a wide variety of people.
- **Description**:
 - Set on the plane of Arcavios, home of the most prestigious university in the *Magic: The Gathering* multiverse. Here, five colleges battle it out with their own takes on magic while a secret society of mages aim to destroy the college from within.
- **Scope**:
 - Unclear
- **Pros**:
 - The set was generally well-received, with many fans praising the set's more light-hearted tone when compared to Magic's usual stories of war and surviving in monster-infested worlds.
 - The setting inspired the creation of a complimentary Dungeons and Dragons sourcebook set in the world of Arcavios.
- **Cons**:
 - Many fans have criticized the characterization of the student character Killian Lu for its reliance on tired Asian stereotypes, such as the "hyperfocus on honor and the model minority myth.".
- **Features**:

- Five colleges, each centered on two of Magic's five colors of mana that defines their philosophy on magic.
- Each of the colleges was founded by an Elder Dragon
- Wide variety of species, ranging from humans and orcs to owlin and dryads.

- **Inspiration:**

- The five-college system, each with a different philosophy on the practice of magic.
- Each of Strixhaven's five colleges are based on actual subjects, such as history, biology, or literature, with a magical twist, rather than the wholly magical classes found in other "magical school" settings.

- **Pokemon:**

- **Medium** - Video Game Series
- **Audience** - Children, Teens, and Young Adults
- **Description:**
 - A school-aged child sets out to explore the world, capturing and training creatures known as Pokemon and using them to battle other trainers.
- **Scope:**
 - Considered to be the #1 highest-grossing media franchise of all-time, with an estimated total revenue of around \$105 billion.
- **Pros:**
 - Massive cultural impact, as demonstrated by the "Pokemania" that emerged during the late 1990s.
- **Cons:**
 - As it is one of, if not the, most popular franchises in the world, it can

be difficult for other worlds based around monster collecting to avoid comparisons to it, as seen with the likes of Yokai Watch, Digimon, and Temtem.

- **Features:**

- Expansive world spanning several different regions, each with their own unique cultures and Pokemon species.
- Hundreds of unique Pokemon species to collect, train, and battle with.

- **Inspiration:**

- Popularized the “collectible monster” genre of video games and codified many of the common tropes found within the genre, such as evolution and type advantages.

- **Yokai Watch:**

- **Medium** - Video Game Series

- **Audience** - Children aged 10 and up.

- **Description:**

- A young child discovers a magical watch that allows them to find, capture, and befriend creatures known as Yo-kai in order to stop evil Yo-kai that seek to take over the world.

- **Scope:**

- The first three games in the franchise have collectively sold over 3 million copies to date.

- **Pros:**

- Experienced a massive amount of popularity in Japan, to the point of being dubbed the “Pokemon Killer” by several news outlets.

- **Cons:**

- Sold poorly outside of Japan, with the second and third games in the franchise

only selling around 200,000 and 4,000 copies in the U.S. respectively.

- **Features:**

- Hundreds of befriendable monsters with unique personalities.
- Combines the “fantasy world” and “real world” together, with Yo-kai living undetected amongst the general populace.

- **Inspiration:**

- The status of Homunculi in Yliaster as independent lifeforms with unique personalities.

- **Atelier:**

- **Medium** - Video Game Series

- **Audience** - Teens and Young Adults

- **Description:**

- The core of the franchise is the idea of an atelier, or private workshop, specializing in alchemy, with players taking on the role of various characters who, for one reason or another, come to work in these studios.

- **Scope:**

- As of December 2020, the series, which is composed of 22 main games and several side games, has sold more than 5 million copies

- **Pros:**

- Detailed alchemical crafting system, encouraging players to either find new recipe books or discover new recipes on their own through experimentation.

- **Cons:**

- The series has been released primarily in Japan, with only more recent titles being localized for other regions.

- **Features:**

- Alchemy exists as a common feature of everyday life, with many people finding apprenticeships and future jobs working in alchemy studios.
- Vast, expansive world with several unique focal points capable of supporting seven different sub-series over the course of the franchise's history.

- **Inspiration:**

- The look and feel of most of the games' main locations draws heavily from medieval architecture, and can serve as an inspiration for one of Yliaster's four major continents.
- Alchemy as a staple of everyday life, and the existence of schools and apprenticeships that are dedicated to teaching people alchemy.

- **Fullmetal Alchemist:**

- **Medium** - Manga

- **Audience** - Teenagers and Young Adults

- **Description:**

- Two brothers set out on a journey to find the Philosopher's Stone in order to restore their bodies after a failed attempt to bring their mother back to life using alchemy.

- **Scope:**

- Sold over 80 million copies worldwide.

- **Pros:**

- Well-received by critics and considered to be one of the best-selling manga of all time.

- **Cons:**

- Nations outside of the main country of Amestris receive little to no

development and are largely unimportant.

- **Features:**

- Alchemy is a strong magic system with clearly defined capabilities and limits in the form of the Law of Equivalent Exchange.
- Expansive world with several well-developed focal points in the form of different cities and towns, each with their own unique views on alchemy.

- **Inspiration:**

- Popularized the concept of alchemy for modern audiences.
- Alchemy is one of the most practiced sciences in Amestris, just as it is in Yliaster.
- The existence of Homunculi as sentient beings that can be created using specialized alchemical procedures.

- **Earthsea Cycle:**

- **Medium** - Novel Series
- **Audience** - Tweens and Up
- **Description:**

- Set on the fictional archipelago of Earthsea, the first novel follows a young mage named Ged who, during a magical duel, unleashes a shadowy entity and goes on a quest to free himself of the creature.

- **Scope:**

- Unclear - over 1 million copies sold.

- **Pros:**

- Well-received by critics, with each book in the series receiving a literary award and the original Earthsea trilogy being listed on the BBC News' list of the 100 most influential novels.

- **Cons:**

- Most adaptations of the Earthsea Cycle have either been poorly received or remain in development hell, indicating that the series' aesthetics and themes are enhanced by the original works' medium.

- **Features:**

- The world of Earthsea is a vast archipelago composed of hundreds of islands surrounded by mostly uncharted ocean.
- Strong magic system with well-defined mechanisms, capabilities, and limits.

- **Inspiration:**

- The School of Magic on the island of Roke teaches several different varieties of magic, just as each school in Yliaster teaches a unique form of alchemy.

- **The Left Hand of Darkness:**

- **Medium** - Novel

- **Audience** - Adults

- **Description:**

- A human native of Earth named Genly Ai is sent to the planet Gethen as an envoy of the Ekumen, a loose confederation of planets, in order to convince Gethen to join the confederation.

- **Scope:**

- Unclear - over 1 million copies sold

- **Pros:**

- Among one of the first books in the genre now known as feminist science fiction.

- **Cons:**

- Many feminist theorists criticized the portrayal of heterosexuality as the norm on Gethen, a fact that the novel's author Ursula Le Guin acknowledged and apologized for in a 1986 essay.

- **Features:**

- Expansive universe containing several planetary systems, each with their own unique culture, traditions, and history.
- The planet of Gethen features a species of ambisexual humanoids with no fixed sex, representing one of the most famous examples of androgeny in science fiction.

- **Inspiration:**

- Explores many themes that are largely uncommon in the realm of science fiction, including sex and gender and their effects on culture and society.

- **Unique Selling Points:**

Overall, Yliaster differs from similar storyworlds within the fantasy genre by leaning more heavily into the realm of science fantasy, relying on scientific and pseudoscientific principles in order to make sense of its otherwise fantastical setting. Similar to other rational magic systems found in the worlds of *Fullmetal Alchemist* and the *Atelier* franchise, alchemy in Yliaster is based around the concept of breaking down substances on the molecular level and converting them into a different substance. As in these worlds, higher level alchemy can achieve more complex applications, such as the creation of artificial lifeforms, but, at its core, these applications are still based on the same principles that make basic transmutation possible. Compared to other fantasy worlds, where magic can oftentimes devolve into a sort of "panacea" capable of doing

whatever the story demands, Yliaster's magic system possesses clearly-defined limits and is grounded in the scientific concepts of atoms and molecular bonds.

Similarly, the world of Yliaster is defined by the fact that the Hermetica, a network of prestigious alchemical universities, holds the greatest amount of influence over the various regions. In other settings where magic exists, schools dedicated to the study of magic are largely limited by the external government that created them, as is seen with the Coven System in *The Owl House's* Boiling Isles or the Ministry of Magic in the Wizarding World of *Harry Potter*. In Yliaster, however, each nation's primary university is large enough to be considered a city-state and takes on the role of governing the region. Thus, the overall culture of Yliaster, where the pursuit of knowledge comes before all else, diverges heavily from other fantasy worlds.

- **Audience Research:**

- **Primary Audience** - Fantasy fans aged 18-35.
- **Secondary Audience** - Fantasy fans aged 35-54.
- **Genre** - Science Fantasy, Magical School, Adventure.

As the world of Yliaster is deeply rooted in the realms of fantasy, I believe that the world should primarily be aimed towards women in the 18 to 35 age range, as, based on my research, this appears to be the most common demographic for those who enjoy the fantasy genre. Additionally, a study conducted by Quantic Foundry looking at the percentage of female gamers in selected genres found that fantasy MMOs had more than double the amount of female players as sci-fi MMOs (Yee, 2018). Similarly, a survey performed by YouGov showed that men aged 18-35 and women aged 18-54 made up the largest percentage of *Harry Potter* fans, a franchise that, as previously stated, has served as a major inspiration for the world of Yliaster (Palmer, 2013).

However, the female participants that participated in a study of fantasy consumers conducted by Menadue and Jacups in 2018 only made up around 54% of the total sample, only marginally more than the expected 50:50 split (Menadue and Jacups, 2018). Additionally, according to a study of consumer demographics and their impact on media consumption, it was found that to "predict fantasy frequency consumption...a notable predictor was personality-inventive and personality-reliable" (Palomba, 2020). However, unlike other genres, such as science fiction or romance, Palomba's study, however, did not find gender to be a notable factor when predicting fantasy consumption. This, in turn, indicates that it is in my best interest to target fans of the fantasy genre as a whole, rather than a select gender-based subset of that group.

Tables

Table 3
Factor analysis of personality.

Factors	1	2	3
Factor 1: Unfocused ($\alpha=.80$)			
Tense	0.72		
Depressed	0.71		
Careless	0.71		
Lazy	0.71		
Easily Distracted	0.68		
Factor 2: Reliable ($\alpha=.77$)			
Forgiving		0.69	
Trusting		0.68	
Considerate		0.66	
Cooperate		0.64	
Helpful and Unselfish		0.57	
Factor 3: Inventive ($\alpha=.76$)			
Inventive			0.71
Original Ideas			0.70
Active Imagination			0.65
Deep Thinker			0.64
Reflect			0.53
Eigenvalues	8.45	6.06	2.96
% of total variance accounted for	19.2	13.77	6.72

Table 1 - Factor Analysis of Personality (Palomba, 2020)

Table 5

Impact of demos, lifestyle and personality on drama, mystery, crime, animation, adventure, fantasy, and superhero.

	Drama		Mystery		Crime		Animation		Adventure		Fantasy		Superhero	
	β	S.E.	β	S.E.	β	S.E.	β	S.E.	β	S.E.	β	S.E.	β	S.E.
Caucasian	.16	(0.24)	.07	(0.24)	.18	(0.25)	-.04	(0.28)	.07	(0.23)	-.13	(0.26)	.07	(0.27)
African-American	.09	(0.29)	.13	(0.30)	.12	(0.31)	-.04	(0.35)	.02	(0.28)	-.06	(0.32)	.04	(0.34)
Asian or Asian-American	.02	(0.34)	.04	(0.35)	.06	(0.37)	-.09	(0.40)	.01	(0.33)	-.02	(0.38)	.05	(0.39)
Hispanic or Hispanic-American	.00	(0.25)	.01	(0.25)	.13	(0.26)	-.01	(0.29)	-.02	(0.24)	-.14	(0.27)	.08	(0.28)
Income	.05	(0.02)	-.05	(0.02)	-.09	(0.02)	-.05	(0.03)	-.01	(0.02)	-.02	(0.02)	-.06	(0.03)
Political Affiliation	-.03	(0.05)	.02	(0.05)	.15*	(0.05)	-.06	(0.05)	.09	(0.04)	.00	(0.05)	.04	(0.05)
Education	.03	(0.05)	.02	(0.05)	.05	(0.06)	.02	(0.06)	.02	(0.05)	-.02	(0.06)	.11	(0.06)
Age	.07	(0.01)	.05	(0.01)	.03	(0.01)	-.32***	(0.01)	-.10	(0.01)	-.07	(0.01)	-.30***	(0.01)
Sex	.04	(0.14)	-.02	(0.14)	-.02	(0.15)	-.01	(0.17)	-.20**	(0.14)	-.06	(0.16)	-.17**	(0.16)
Lifestyle- Travel Business	-.12	(0.09)	-.03	(0.09)	-.12	(0.09)	.01	(0.10)	-.06	(0.08)	.02	(0.10)	-.10	(0.10)
Lifestyle - Indulgence	.23**	(0.1)	.13	(0.10)	.14	(0.11)	-.01	(0.12)	.17*	(0.10)	.11	(0.11)	.13	(0.12)
Lifestyle - Informed	.08	(0.08)	.11	(0.08)	.09	(0.08)	.05	(0.09)	-.04	(0.08)	-.05	(0.09)	-.06	(0.09)
Lifestyle - Innovation	.02	(0.10)	.06	(0.10)	.17*	(0.11)	.10	(0.12)	.13*	(0.10)	.09	(0.11)	.19**	(0.12)
Personality - Reliable	.11	(0.08)	.05	(0.08)	.11	(0.09)	.13	(0.10)	.05	(0.08)	.0.16*	(0.09)	.14*	(0.10)
Personality - Unfocused	.07	(0.11)	.14	(0.11)	.12	(0.11)	.17*	(0.13)	.23***	(0.10)	.04	(0.12)	.23***	(0.12)
Personality - Inventive	.02	(0.01)	.07	(0.10)	.05	(0.10)	.05	(0.11)	.07	(0.09)	.0.14*	(0.11)	-.01	(0.11)
F	2.26		2.00		2.67		4.00		3.56		2.29		4.39	
R	0.35		0.33		0.38		0.45		0.43		0.35		0.46	
R ²	0.07		0.06		0.09		0.15		0.13		0.07		0.17	
Sig. of Model	p<.004		p<.02		p<.001		p<.001		p<.001		p<.004		p<.001	

Table 2 - Impact of Demographics, Lifestyle, and Personality on Genre Consumption (Palomba, 2020)

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Survey Participants.

	<i>n</i>	%
Geographical area residing (<i>n</i> = 902)		
North America (USA and Canada)	386	42.8
Australia or New Zealand	256	28.4
Western Europe	164	18.2
Eastern Europe	33	3.7
Southeast Asia	9	1.0
Other (15 Locations)	54	6.0
Native language (<i>n</i> = 891)		
English	728	81.7
Other (15 languages)	163	18.3
In a relationship with someone(s) (<i>n</i> = 898)		
Yes	633	70.5
No	222	24.7
Rather not say	30	3.3
Maybe	13	1.5
Gender identification (<i>n</i> = 901)		
Female	491	54.5
Male	400	44.4
Other	10	1.1
Age (<i>n</i> = 900)		
<15	2	0.2
15-19	28	3.1
20-29	153	17.0
30-39	229	25.4
40-49	215	23.9
50-59	180	20.0
60-69	82	9.1
70-79	9	1.0
80+	2	0.2
Mean age (all)	42.3	
Median age (all)	45	
Mode age (all)	35	
	Female	Male
Education (<i>n</i> = 902)		
University	391	43.3
Postgraduate university	353	39.1
School	90	10.0
Technical/professional	68	7.5
Employment status (<i>n</i> = 894)		
Employed	513	57.4
Self-employed	132	14.8
Student	121	13.5
Retired	77	8.6
Unemployed	32	3.6
Parent/carer	10	1.1
Disabled	9	1.0

Table 3 – Demographics of Science Fiction and Fantasy Readers (Menadue and Jacups, 2018)

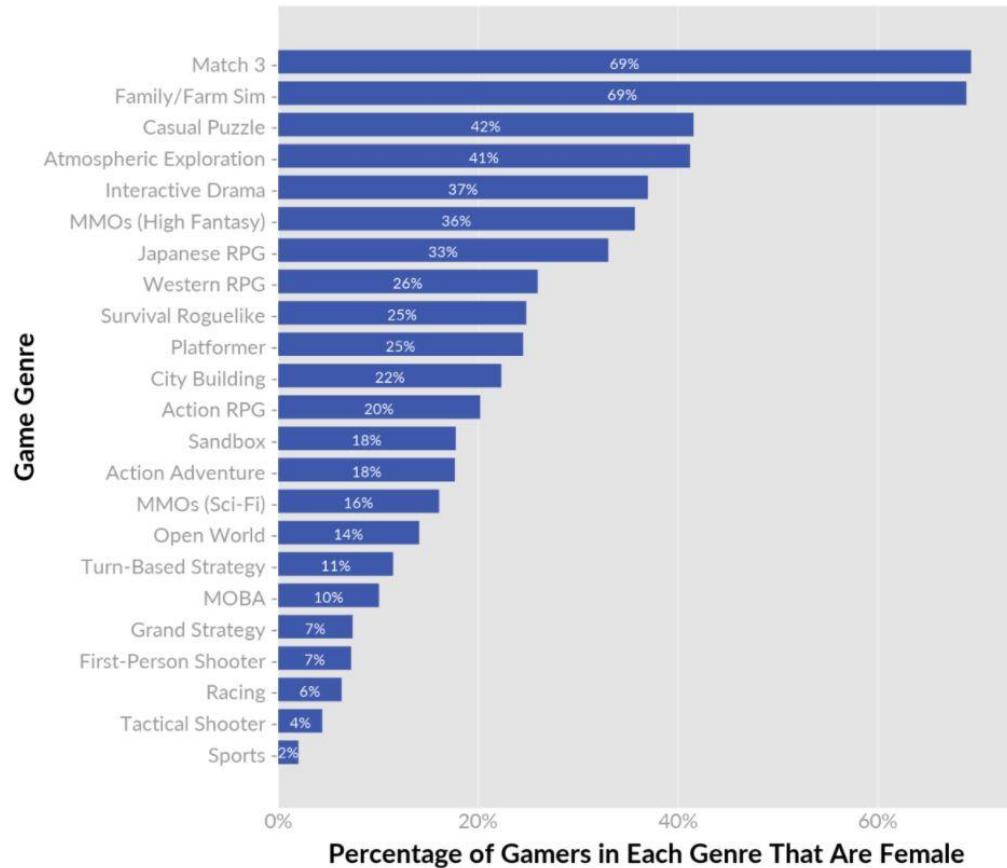


Table 4 – Percentage of Females Gamers in Selected Genres (Yee, 2018)

- **Engagement:**

As previously stated, Palomba's study found that one of the most notable predictors of fantasy consumption was the individual's personality, with inventive and reliable personalities more likely to engage with works of fantasy. As shown in Table 1, these personalities were defined by their active imaginations and ability to reflect, as well as their trusting, considerate nature.

Because of this, I feel that people are likely to engage with the world of Yliaster due to its strong foundation in the ideas of creativity and personal expression. As with many works in the "magical school" genre, the world of Yliaster thrives on its ability to serve as a form of wish-fulfillment. This concept is

further expanded upon by Yliaster's focus on alchemy in particular, as, through the principles of alchemy that define the world of Yliaster, those who engage with the story-world have the capability of expressing their creativity in unique and innovative ways. Additionally, as previously stated, Yliaster aims to provide a world that while being more inclusive and welcoming of fans of all different races, genders, and sexualities.

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Section 3 - World Bible:

- **Religion and Festivals:**

- The primary belief system in Yliaster is **empyreanism**. According to empyreanism, every sentient being

possesses a spiritual substance within them that provides them with an innate, dormant connection to the **Prima Materia** - a primordial essence from which all life is derived.

- This substance is known as **Aether**, and when a person dies, their aether returns to the Prima Materia, where it is eventually reborn in a new form.
- It is this cycle of death and rebirth, and the desire to escape it, that drives many alchemists in Yliaster, who believe that escape is possible through the acquisition of ultimate knowledge in the form of the **Magnum Opus**.
- Additionally, many people in Yliaster hold a pious reverence for the Trees of Diana, viewing them as guardians of Yliaster's prosperity.
- In terms of festivals, each nation celebrates **Graduation Day** at a different time of the year, during which the entire nation welcomes back those who graduated from university.

- **Magic System:**

- All alchemy is based upon the use of **Azoth**, a mystical substance that can be harvested from the sap of the **Trees of Diana**.
- Azoth acts as a universal solvent, allowing it to break down any substance on an atomic level and convert it into a new form.
- Alchemy in Yliaster can be divided into two major categories:
 - **Alchemy**, which focuses on the manipulation of the physical world.
 - **Alkahestry**, which focuses on the manipulation of the human body.
- Within the field of **alchemy**, there are two major schools of thought - **Elementalism** and **Homunculism**.
 - **Elementalism** is one of the oldest branches of alchemy, focusing on the study of **transmutation**, or the conversion of one substance into another.

- Over time, elementalists have advanced the study far beyond its traditional roots, learning how to utilize their techniques to perform feats such as shaping stone and metal, generating electricity, or even inducing the complete eradication of a given sample through the use of small crystals of concentrated Azoth known as **Philosopher's Stones**.
- While time has allowed elementalists to achieve a level of mastery unheard of in other fields, they still suffer in terms of efficiency, as the technology needed to perform such feats ranges from cumbersome to completely immobile.
- **Homunculism**, conversely, is one of the most recent fields of study, focusing on the study of **abiogenesis**, or the creation of artificial life.
- When properly distilled, pure Azoth can be infused into a collection of reagents in order to create a semblance of life, giving rise to artificial lifeforms known as **homunculi**.
- Homunculists are taught how to create and train homunculi for use in a variety of fields. However, while these homunculi are impressive, they lack aether, and, as such, do not possess the true life that homunculists have sought to create.
- Similarly, the field of **alkahestry** is divided into two major schools of thought - **Allopathy** and **Osteopathy**:
 - Developed in Gehon, **allopathy** focuses on the study of **medicine**, utilizing alchemical principles to purify metals and infuse them with various herbs in order to produce potions and elixirs capable of healing most diseases.
 - Conversely, **osteopathy** was developed by a Gehonian exile and focuses on the study of **augmentation**, or the direct modification of the human form.
 - Derived from elementalist and allopathic traditions, osteopaths typically inject themselves with pure Azoth, allowing them to utilize transmutation in order to manipulate the

various elements that make up the human body in any way they see fit.

- **Species:**

- Humans represent the dominant species on Yliaster, having mastered the practice of alchemy to such a degree that it is a part of everyday life.
- Additionally, there exists a species of inorganic beings known as **Sagani** that periodically emerge from beneath the roots of a Tree of Diana.
- Unlike humans, the Sagani constantly generate Azoth within their bodies, granting them the innate ability to perform alchemy at a level far beyond even highly-trained alchemists and without the need for equipment.
- Sagani vary wildly in terms of appearances, but the Hermetica categorize them into four major varieties based on their elemental alignment:
 - **Gnomes** - Beetle-like humanoids aligned with the element of Geos - See Figure 3.
 - **Salamandra** - Reptilian humanoids aligned with the element of Pyros - See Figure 4.
 - **Sylphs** - Chimerical humanoids aligned with the element of Aeros - See Figure 5.
 - **Undynes** - Piscine humanoids aligned with the element of Hydros - See Figure 6.
- Sagani display cognitive abilities far beyond that of a typical Homunculus and, as such, have been recognized by the Hermetica as people, guaranteeing them protection under Yliaster's laws.
- Over time, the Sagani have slowly integrated into society, with many finding jobs within the Hermetica due to their innate alchemical talent.

- **Animals:**

- Inexperienced homunculists often face difficulty when working with Homunculi for the first time, resulting

in many newly-created homunculi escaping into the wild.

- Due to their Azoth-infused physiology, it is possible for a homunculus to replicate if given access to the necessary materials, which, in conjunction with the large amount of escaped homunculi, results in the feral homunculi populations that can be found roaming Yliaster's wilderness.

- **Major Regions:**



Figure 1 - Map of Yliaster

- The four major city-states that make up Yliaster are **Ortolan** to the west, **Alphidia** to the south, **Kanada** to the north, and **Gehon** to the east.
- While other towns and villages can be found throughout Yliaster, each with its own alchemical schools, the four cities of Ortolan, Alphidia, Kanada, and Gehon

are the only ones with access to a Tree of Diana, which has allowed them to accumulate the power they now wield today.

- **Ortolan:**

- Founded by **Nicolas Salerno**.
- Central position on the mainland of Yliaster.
- Temperate climate - experiences all four seasons.

- **Alphidia:**

- Founded by **Calid Jidaki**.
- Lies to the south of Ortolan in the middle of Yliaster's desert region.
- Experiences extremely warm temperatures during the day and extremely cold temperatures at night.

- **Kanada:**

- Founded by **Nagarjuna**, a exile from Gehon.
- Nestled away in the mountain ranges to the north of Ortolan.
- Experiences cold temperatures most of the year, except during the summer.

- **Gehon:**

- Founded by **Boyang Shen**.
- Spans a vast archipelago off the coast of Ortolan centered around the largest island of Gehon.
- Tropical climate - only experiences a wet season and a dry season.

- **Government:**

- **The Hermetica** - a network formed by four of Yliaster's top alchemical universities - serves as the closest thing to a ruling body in Yliaster.
- Each university possesses a number of schools, each headed by a dean who governs a portion of the territory held by the school.
- Together, these deans form a council that answers to the university's headmaster, who serves as the nation's representative on the world stage.
- Together, the Hermetica hold jurisdiction over all of Yliaster, with their primary roles being to:

- Protect the Trees of Diana by regulating the production, trade, and usage of Azoth.
- Authorize alchemical research and provide grants to those undertaking research of particular interest.
- The Hermetica have a vested interest in the protection of the Sagani, as they represent everything that research into the field of abiogenesis has tried and failed to reproduce. As such, the punishment for crimes that result in the injury or death of a Sagani are notably harsher than those for most other crimes.

- **Education:**

- In order to promote scientific advancement, the Hermetica provides a free, standard education to the population of Yliaster, consisting of history, life skills, and basic alchemical principles that are needed for day-to-day living.
- Those who wish to pursue the study of alchemy further must apply to one of the universities that make up the Hermetica.
- Each of the Hermetic Universities, while offering courses on all manner of alchemical subjects, specializes in a specific branch of alchemy:
 - Ortolan's own **Salerno University**, the forefront of abiogenetic research, specializes in the field of **homunculism**.
 - Alphidia's **Al-Jidaki**, considered by many to be the true birthplace of modern alchemy, specializes in the field of **elementalism**.
 - Kanada's **Nagarjuna Sagara**, founded by a Gehonian exile, specializes in an offshoot of allopathy known as **osteopathy**.
 - Gehon's **Paozhi-Ryū**, the birthplace of the study of alkahestry, specializes in the field of **allopathy**.

- **Economics and Trade:**

- Due to the fact that most of Yliaster's population is able to perform rudimentary transmutation with ease, gold, silver, and other precious metals hold little value in and of themselves.
- As such, the majority of trade and commerce in Yliaster takes the form of a more advanced bartering system, with people offering one another reagents such as plants, minerals, or metals in exchange for goods and services.
- Of these reagents, the most valuable is pure Azoth, which forms the basis for all alchemical practices. The Azoth trade, however, is highly regulated by the Hermetica, making it difficult for non-Hermetica aligned sellers to acquire it.
- It is easier, however, to acquire a cutting from a Tree of Diana. These cuttings can be used to grow saplings capable of generating a less-pure form of Azoth which, with the right equipment, can be refined into functional Azoth.
- There is, however, a third, albeit highly illegal method by which Azoth can be acquired, and that is via direct extraction from a Sagani. Since the Sagani are born of the Trees of Diana and, as such, continuously generate Azoth, it is not uncommon for more unscrupulous merchants to kidnap Sagani and utilize them as living Azoth generators.
- While the possession and sale of Azoth extracted from a Sagani is illegal, it is not unheard of for local officials to turn a blind eye to such crimes, especially in Ortolan, where study of the Sagani's physiology offers the potential for massive breakthroughs in the field of Abiogenesis.

- **Travel:**

- While travel between regions is not especially common for the average citizen of Yliaster, there are steam-powered trains that span the continent, as well

- as steamships allowing travel between the mainland and Gehon.
- Additionally, the Hermetica often sponsor student exchange programs amongst themselves for students wishing to study in other nations.

- **Gender Roles:**

- As artificial life forms, the Sagani do not have a biological sex and typically decide on a "gender" after they have existed for several years and acquired a deeper understanding of themselves.
- While most of Yliaster's regions are accepting of the transgender community, Kanada in particular openly embraces them, as the region's focus on Osteopathy, or the alchemical augmentation of one's own body, means that there is very little stigma around changing one's body to match one's perception of one's self.

- **Entertainment:**

- By far, the most common form of entertainment in Yliaster is the **Theater of Chemicals**, an organization sponsored by the Hermetica that hosts homunculi duels at a variety of scales.
- In the Theater, two alchemists each command a group of homunculi in a large arena, and must attempt to defeat the opponent's team in a game of tactics. The scale of these battles can range anywhere from one-on-one fights to small armies.
- In addition to being used as a form of entertainment, it is not uncommon for individual alchemists or even entire organizations, such as the Hermetica, to settle arguments via a battle within the Theater.

- **Employment:**

- Educators are among the most respected positions in Yliaster, due largely to the Hermetica's status

throughout the region and the belief that teachers serve to enable the scientific breakthroughs of tomorrow.

- Often, students who study at one of the Hermetica will stay on after graduating in order to help teach the next generation.
- Alchemists can also find work in a wide variety of fields, depending on their specialization:
 - **Homunculists** are often the most likely to find work within the Hermetica, filling a variety of roles ranging from law enforcement to the management of feral Homunculi populations. Many also go on to become professionals in the Theater of Chemicals, if they show promise while in school.
 - **Elementalists** typically find work in the blue-collar jobs, utilizing their ability to manipulate things such as stone, metal, fire, and electricity to maintain Yliaster's infrastructure.
 - Students studying **allopathy** or **osteopathy** often find great success in the medical field, as the study of alkahestry forms the basis for most of Yliaster's medical system.

- **Technology:**

- The existence of the **atom** was discovered much earlier in Yliaster's timeline, with the discovery of Azoth about a decade later being the key to unlocking alchemy's full potential.
- Azoth-powered technology is, more often than not, incredibly cumbersome, requiring a fully-fledged laboratory in order to function. However, there have been several experimental advancements in recent years aimed towards making the technology more compact and accessible to those without Hermetica-scale laboratories.

- Due to the existence of alkahestry, medical technology in Yliaster is incredibly advanced, allowing most people to live for well over a century.

- **Culture and Society:**

- The primary conflict in Yliaster exists between each school in the Hermetica. While all four universities are generally civil towards one another, there exists a deep-seated rivalry regarding the nature of the Magnum Opus, with each university convinced of the superiority of their view.
- Additionally, there exists an undercurrent of conflict between humans and the Sagani as, while the Hermetica extended legal protections to the Sagani shortly after they began to emerge from the Trees of Diana, there are many in Yliaster who view them with a distinct sense of unease, as well as those who see them as the key to unlocking further scientific advancements and are willing to do whatever it takes to achieve them.
- Many historians in recent years have also found preliminary evidence of the Elementals' prior to Yliaster's formation, contradicting the current belief that all life is tied to the Prima Materia and laying the groundwork for a religious conflict in the near future.

- **Narrative History:**

- Long ago, in times immemorial, there existed a race of ancient beings known as Elementals, that roamed throughout the vast expanse of the cosmic void. Legend has it that, when the Prima Materia formed, it acted as a poison to the Elementals, killing them off one by one and forming their corpses into the world of Yliaster. However, when their lives were coming to an end, the Elementals came together and condensed their life force into four mystical seeds, which would eventually give rise to the Trees of Diana.

- As time went on, civilizations began to form all across Yliaster, and, while it was known that the lands surrounding the Trees of Diana had mystical properties capable of transforming items buried beneath the trees, no one knew . At least, not until a man by the name of Archimedes Windsor came onto the scene. An Ortolanian botanist, Archimedes pioneered the study of alchemy with his discovery of Azoth, a substance synthesized from the sap of the Trees of Diana and capable of breaking down substances on the atomic level.
- With the advent of alchemy came a new golden age of scientific advancement, as alchemists all throughout Yliaster strove to make the next big discovery. It was during this time that two men by the names of Nicolas Salerno and Calid Jidaki would meet during their university days. The pair quickly became friends, bonding over their belief that Yliaster had so much to gain from cooperation between the nations of Ortolan, Gehon, and Alphidia, and began to explore the world together. It was during these travels that Salerno would meet his future wife, a Gehonian by the name of Boyang Shen.
- Together, the trio would go on to achieve their dream in the form of the Hermetica, a network of the three most influential alchemical universities in Yliaster - Salerno University, the Al-Jidaki, and the Paozhi-Ryū. However, over time, tensions in the Boyang Family would give rise to the nation of Kanada, with the nation's premier alchemical university, the Nagarjuna Sagara, eventually joining the Hermetica as well.

- **Tone:**



Figure 2 - Inspiration Board

- Overall, Yliaster's style aims to marry morbidity and optimism, creating a world capable of telling serious stories while still maintaining a sense of whimsy and passionate spontaneity. In Yliaster,, not from the vices of human nature or internal prejudice, but from the human desire to better oneself, with most conflicts typically boiling down to academic rivalries over how exactly one goes about bettering oneself. At its core, Yliaster is not and should never be seen as a bleak, grim-dark dystopia.

- **Constraints:**

- The use of alchemy is rooted in a substance known as Azoth, which can be harvested from a rare plant known as a Tree of Diana.

- Azoth functions by breaking down substances on an atomic level and converting them into something new. As such, alchemy cannot create matter and energy from nothing, only being capable of converting it from one form to another.
- Non-alchemical technology in Yliaster is roughly comparable to that of the late Industrial Revolution (c. 1820).
 - The practice of alchemy is largely limited to laboratory settings, as the technology required to perform alchemy is incredibly cumbersome.
 - While there do exist methods of performing alchemy without the usual technology, these typically involve the use of concentrated Azoth crystals known as Philosopher's Stones, which are incredibly difficult to produce.
- Every living thing in Yliaster possesses Aether, or a spiritual substance that grants an innate connection to the Prima Materia said to make up the universe.
 - Alchemy is unable to infuse objects with Aether. While the creation of artificial lifeforms is possible, these beings lack Aether and, as such, are not truly alive.
 - Consequently, alchemy is unable to raise the dead, as while a talented practitioner of alkahestry may be capable of returning a corpse to near-perfect function, they lack the ability to return it to life by infusing it with Aether.

Section 4 - Character Catalog:

- **Name** - Nicolas Salerno
 - **Age** - 130
 - **Gender** - Male
 - **Race** - Human (Ortolanian)
 - **Orientation** - Heterosexual
 - **Profession** - Headmaster
 - **Description:**

- **Physicality** - Nicolas is a short, squat man with noticeable bags under his eyes resulting from lack of sleep. He is currently balding due to his old age, but the rest of his hair, including his beard and mustache, remain black. Additionally, he possesses a small scar across the bridge of his nose, typically hidden by his glasses, that he got from his first homunculus.
- **Disposition** - While Nicolas remains a very caring and compassionate individual, the loss of his wife and the stress associated with his position have caused him to become a nervous wreck, prone to bouts of melancholy and self-doubt and content to seclude himself within his office for days at a time.

- **Backstory:**

- Born to a poor family in the country of Ortolan, Nicolas Salerno had always displayed a talent for alchemy. Completing his studies by the age of 18, Salerno would go on to pioneer the emerging study of abiogenesis, traveling around the world in search of unique reagents that would serve him in his research. It was during these travels that Nicolas would meet his future wife, a Gehonian woman by the name Boyang Shen.
- Shen, a botanist and allopath by trade, hit it off with the foreign researcher and, soon enough, the two would be wed after returning to Ortolan. Together, the two would go on to found Salerno University, but the immense amount of time and effort Nicolas' devoted to ensuring the school's success took a toll on their relationship. Over time, the pair drifted apart and, shortly after the birth of their daughter Perenelle, Shen would divorce Salerno and return to Gehon, leaving him with the responsibility of both raising Perenelle and running the university.

- This event would trigger a dramatic shift in Nicolas moving forward, as with Shen gone, he began to spiral due to his lack of self-worth and his rising anxiety surrounding his important position in the Hermetica. Secluding himself in his office, Salerno's leadership remained enough to lead the university to greatness, at the cost of his relationship with Perenelle, who he often left in the care of his homunculi when he was overcome by melancholy.
- **Motivation** - Being the empathic person that he is, Nicolas is the type of person to sacrifice his well-being for that of others. This mentality serves as a major factor in his continued attempts to be a part of Perenelle's life, as he recognizes that he failed her and wants to do right by her.
- **Values** - As a prodigy in the field of homunculism, Nicolas has learned that the key to any relationship, be it human or homunculus, is compassion and empathy, and has strived to live his life with this understanding in mind.
- **Flaws** - Despite Salerno's talent as both a homunculist and a school administrator, he lacks self-confidence to the point of anxiety, believing that he cannot do anything right without someone helping him and relying on the presence of a homunculus companion named Shen in order to have the confidence to get things done.
- **Likes** - Despite their strained relationship, Nicolas considers Perenelle to be one of his only sources of stability and dotes on her constantly as part of his efforts to be a part of her life.
- **Dislikes** - Due to his social anxiety, Nicolas tends to get overwhelmed by large crowds and dislikes leaving his office, only doing so when accompanied by either his daughter Perenelle or his trusted homunculus companion Shen.

- **Name** - Calid Jidaki
 - **Age** - 126
 - **Gender** - Male
 - **Race** - Human (Alphidian)
 - **Orientation** - Homosexual
 - **Profession** - Headmaster
 - **Description:**
 - **Physicality** - Despite his age, Calid has managed to retain a lot of his physicality from his youth, possessing a tall, muscular build with dark, slightly-wrinkled skin and well-kept, albeit fading, hair.
 - **Disposition** - Ever since he was a child, Calid had always possessed a natural charm and wit that allowed him to become friends with just about anyone, even in spite of his rather excitable personality.
 - **Backstory:**
 - Coming from a large family, Calid's father, a hard-working elementalist with a specialization in construction, would still find time to spend with both his wife and each of his 8 children. Every night, after returning from work, he would sit down with Calid and regale him with Alphidian legends passed down through generations. It was these stories that would inspire Calid to pursue the study of alchemy, enrolling in what was, at the time, the largest alchemical university in Alphidia, the Al-Tugrai.
 - It was here that he would meet his life-long friend, a young Ortolian man by the name of Nicolas Salerno. The two men would quickly bond over their shared interest in making the world a better place, with Calid regaling Salerno with his father's legends while Salerno continued to impress him with each new homunculus he crafted. After graduating, the two men would begin to

travel the world, investigating ancient ruins and collecting rare and exotic reagents.

■ It was during these travels that Salerno would meet his future wife, a Gehonian woman by the name of Boyang Shen. While Calid was happy for the two of them, and even served as Salerno's best man at their wedding, he couldn't help but feel a twinge of regret for having never made his own feelings known to Salerno. However, after Salerno divorced Shen and shut himself off from the rest of the world, Calid delved even deeper into his work in hopes of reigniting Salerno's passion for the thrill of discovery.

- **Motivation** - Inspired by the legends his father would tell him when he was a child, Calid has made it his life's goal to uncover the mystery of the Trees of Diana and the true origin of alchemy.
- **Values** - Despite his insistence on studying "worthless legends", Calid is considered by many to be an exemplar of the virtues any alchemist should have: passion, determination, and a talent for ingenuity.
- **Flaws** - Calid is stubborn to a fault, refusing to give up on anything once he has set his mind to it and often dragging his more reserved associates into even the most hopeless of endeavors, much to their chagrin.
- **Likes** - Calid respects anyone who displays the same level of passion for discovery as himself, and possesses a natural charm that makes it easy for him to become friends with just about anyone.
- **Dislikes** - While there are very few people that Calid outright dislikes, he does display a distaste for osteopaths, believing that their belief in attaining perfection denies the importance of discovery and spontaneity that forms the basis for all of alchemy.

- **Name** - Boyang Shen
 - **Age** - 133
 - **Gender** - Female
 - **Race** - Human (Gehonian)
 - **Orientation** - Heterosexual
 - **Profession** - Headmaster
 - **Description:**
 - **Physicality** - Standing at around 6 feet in height, Shen is still considered one of the most beautiful women in Gehon, despite her age.
 - **Disposition** - Despite being respected by her students for her quiet, refined elegance and beloved by her patients for her kind, caring nature, Shen displays a deep competitive streak and can become incredibly fierce when crossed.
 - **Backstory:**
 - From an early age, Boyang Shen had always been something of a firebrand, constantly getting into fights with other kids in her village. Over time, her parents and teachers began to encourage her to channel that fiery, competitive spirit towards the study of allopathy, leading her to graduate as the head of her class and become one of the leading allopaths in the nation of Gehon. It was at this time that she would become acquainted with a pair of researchers from the mainland: Calid Jidaki and Nicolas Salerno. While she found Calid's loud, boisterous nature to be mildly irritating at times, she was charmed by Salerno's clumsy, albeit genuine, nature and the two would quickly grow to be very close, having been wed by the end of the second year of Salerno's stay in Gehon.
 - Upon returning to Ortolan, the two would go on to found Salerno University. However, eventually, the stress of getting the school up and running would cause the pair to drift apart and, shortly after the birth of their daughter, Shen divorced

Salerno and returned to Gehon. Here, she would go on to establish the Paozhi-Ryū, a university that would quickly become Yliaster's premier medical university. Years later, after the Hermetica was formed, Shen would marry again, only to have the man abandon her and her infant son, Boyang Wei, leaving her to raise the child alone.

- While she loved Wei dearly, the stress of two failed marriages, combined with her competitive nature, caused her to place an immense amount of pressure on them to succeed from a young age. This, in turn, would cause friction between the two later in life, as Wei's desire for perfection would lead them to pioneer the field of osteopathy, which Shen found as a perversion of everything the study of allopathy stood for. When it came to light that Wei's research had been based on experiments he conducted on his patients, Shen was forced to exile Wei from the country, alongside several of their students.
- **Motivation** - Shen is fiercely competitive in everything she does and is motivated by a desire to perfect a craft that she has spent her entire life studying.
- **Values** - As a fervent practitioner of allopathy, Shen strongly believes that the role of an allopath is to save lives, and becomes irritated with those who do not treat life in any form with respect.
- **Flaws** - In contrast to the kind, caring personality she displays when working with her students and her patients, Shen retains much of the temper she displayed in her youth.
- **Likes** - In addition to her love of helping her patients, Shen has a soft spot for homunculi, finding their nature as artificial lifeforms intriguing, and has even kept one named Fulcanelli that she received

as a wedding gift from her ex-husband Nicolas to this day.

- **Dislikes** - Shen is known to possess a distinct distaste for osteopaths, including her own son, as she views their work in modifying the human body to be unnatural and a perversion of the sanctity of the human body, as understood by the field of allopathy.
- **Name** - Nagarjuna
 - **Age** - 93
 - **Gender** - Nonbinary
 - **Race** - Human (Gehonian)
 - **Orientation** - Asexual
 - **Profession** - Headmaster
 - **Description:**
 - **Physicality** - As a master of osteopathy, Nagarjuna looks far younger than what their biological age would suggest, appearing as a well-built androgynous figure in their late-30s, with tanned skin and a clean-shaven head.
 - **Disposition** - Nagarjuna conducts themselves with a level of poise and composure expected from Gehonian nobility, causing most people to view them as cold, abrasive, and arrogant.
 - **Backstory:**
 - Born Boyang Wei, Nagarjuna had spent most of their life living in the shadow of their prestigious family. The second child of the renowned allopath Boyang Shen, Nagarjuna had been taught extensively in the field of allopathy from an early age due to his status as heir to the Boyang Family. However, when the exploits of their half-sister, a skilled homunculist by the name of Perenelle Salerno, reached the shores of Gehon, everyone, including their own mother, began to compare them to her.

- These comparisons only caused Nagarjuna to thrust themselves even deeper into their studies, and by the time they reached the age of 20, they had become a renowned allopath in their own right. However, only five years later, it was discovered that Nagarjuna had been studying their patients in order to perfect a new form of allopathy known as osteopathy. Nagarjuna's use of osteopathy resulted in them and several of their students being exiled from Gehon by Boyang Shen herself, eventually settling in the mountains of what would become the nation of Kanada.
- Here, Nagarjuna abandoned his birth name and, alongside his followers, founded the Nagarjuna Sagara, a school dedicated to the study of osteopathy. Eventually, the school would amass enough power in the region that it became impossible to ignore, leading to the Hermetica admitting the school into their ranks in a very close 2-1 vote.

- **Motivation** - While appearing calm and collected on the surface, Nagarjuna is largely defined by a deep-seated inferiority complex, believing that everyone around them have been handed success while they had to work for it.
- **Values** - At its core, the study of osteopathy is deeply influenced by Nagarjuna's belief in humanity's potential, believing that it is only through hard work and perseverance that a person can become "perfect".
- **Flaws** - Due to having spent much of their early childhood being compared to their half-sister, Nagarjuna possesses a deep-seated desire for validation, feeling the constant need to prove themselves to those around them.
- **Likes** - Nagarjuna displays a high amount of respect for those who have managed to attain success solely

based on their own merit, viewing them as living proof that their view of the world is correct.

- **Dislikes** - Despite their medical prowess, Nagarjuna shows a distaste towards the practice of allopathy due to the complex feelings surrounding their mother, and only teaches it insofar as it pertains to the study of osteopathy.

Section 5 - Images:



Figure 3 - A Sagani Gnome



Figure 4 - A Sagani Salmandra



Figure 5 - A Sagani Sylph



Figure 6 - A Sagani Undyne