

NUMENERA™



LOVE AND SEX *in the* NINTH WORLD

BY SHANNA GERMAIN



INTRODUCTION

Because the Ninth World is so large and disparate, it would be foolish to make sweeping generalizations about sex, love, lust, and courtship among its inhabitants. Every region, kingdom, island, or aldea might have its own customs, rituals, and numenera devices. In a world this diverse, there are always a million exceptions to the “typical” outlook. Don’t be afraid to go against the grain and create an aldea or organization where sexual norms are turned on their head. This supplement is designed to provide a general understanding of love and lust while jump-starting the imagination.

When bringing love and sex into a game, it’s important to remember that most of our modern-day sensibilities about those topics don’t carry over into Numenera. Because people of the Ninth World don’t have the same cultural norms, pressures, and expectations that we do today, they have very different views of relationships and sex.

GENDER

As a general rule, gender inequality doesn’t occur in the Ninth World. Although people find many reasons to discriminate against others, gender typically isn’t on that list. The common understanding seems to be that gender is less important than other elements of a person and is fairly fluid, able to slide, shift, and even be altered with the aid of the numenera.

Of course, gender *does* play a role in the culture. It’s just that the part it plays varies from aldea to aldea and from kingdom to kingdom:

- After a devastating plague wiped out most of their female population, the Aeon Priests in a small aldea in Seshar created a numenera device that allows men to become pregnant and carry children to term. The aldea now has women of child-bearing age, so the device is no longer needed, but many men choose to continue the tradition of bearing children.
- In order to join the Arciandos, a small band of numenera hunters who live in the shadow of the Southern Wall, pledges must participate in a complicated initiation ceremony, a large part of which involves letting go of their gender identity.
- On the isle of Issak (a tiny island near Aras Island), the cultural understanding is that three genders exist. None of them align to what we would traditionally think of as male or female.

CLASS

Although many regions in the Ninth World have their own class system, slaves play perhaps the clearest class-based sexual role. Slaves are typically

considered property and may be sold, traded, or forced into marriage or sexual relationships. Although small groups here and there advocate for slave rights, the majority of those who live in the Steadfast don’t think twice about the role of the slave class. This can create conflict in situations where two slaves are involved in a forbidden liaison or when a noble and a slave fall in love.

- Two women who live on the border of Ancuan have cobbled together a numenera device that slightly alters someone’s face, just enough to be unrecognizable. They allow slaves to use it if someone is willing to cover the cost (15 shins).
- A town of escaped slaves sets up elaborate traps to seize nobles and sell them off as slaves (sometimes even back to their own people). It is believed that this was the final fate of Duke Ingast, a notorious slave owner in Ledon.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Couples of all genders, sizes, and sexual orientations are common. The cultural history of the Ninth World is so different from our own—from religious influences to the aftereffects of global conflicts—that nothing we know today about discrimination applies. (This isn’t to say that discrimination doesn’t exist. It does—but against different things and for different reasons.) Although couples are sometimes lambasted for their choice of partners, such criticism is more likely to result from a personal dislike, a bit of jealousy, class issues, or some reason other than gender.

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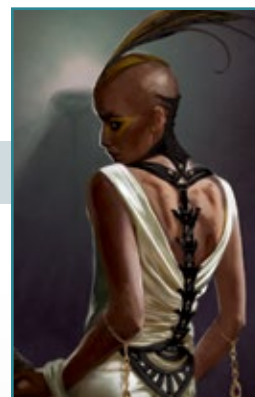
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ATTRACTION

As with today, what attracts one person to another is both personal and potentially influenced by local culture and society. The [Jaekals of Aras Island](#), for example, are interested only in those who have enhanced their bodies with claws, teeth, horns, wings, and the intricate pattern of blood tattoos that signifies status in their society. Many who live near the barren wastes of the [Cloudcrystal Skyfields](#), where food is scarce and starvation is on everyone's mind, believe body fat to be a sign of wealth and prosperity, and thus they find curvaceous physiques particularly appealing. In a more populated and ever-growing city like [Qi](#), cultural attraction is a fickle and slippery entity; people are never sure whether they're behind the sexual fashion or ahead of it.

COUPLEDOM

In most relationships, people are encouraged to choose their partners freely. Couples co-own resources, businesses, or whatever is in their possession. If they choose to split, they work out the division of property by themselves or with the assistance of a mediator.

Two-partner heterosexual relationships are in the majority, but they aren't the norm, per se. Commitment ceremonies are common among couples of all genders and orientations. Occasionally, a larger group of adults make commitments to one another, living together and raising children as a communal family.

Although many people couple up in one form or another, it's not considered unusual for someone to remain single or asexual for much or all of his life. It's also common for people to engage in various relationships at the same time.

There is no general societal expectation that couples will stay together until death do them part

or that they will be sexually exclusive with each other. A relationship is considered to be a private entity, and while people might talk or gossip about such things, the overall cultural understanding is that each relationship is different, and most people have a laissez-faire attitude when it comes to the hearts and libidos of others.

The hands-off attitude doesn't extend to their own relationships or the relationships of their loved ones, however. If someone breaks the explicit commitment that he made to his partner, his actions are likely to have serious implications—both from his partner and from the partner's friends or relatives. In fact, most towns have at least one enforcer, a for-hire Revencharon whose job is to deal with people who break relationship agreements.

LUST AND SEX

Love and lust don't necessarily go hand in hand. Although some people find a partner who catches both their heart and their libido, others may join in a partnership solely for love and spend their lust elsewhere.

If two (or more) humans can do it and find it arousing or pleasurable, you can bet that it's being done, and some type of numenera device probably exists that will add to their experience, or possibly detract from it—using numenera items is always a risk, after all.

In most places, selling one's sexual self or skills is neither illegal nor immoral. In fact, in some cases, it's considered to be a smart business move or a job with a great deal of respect and intrinsic value (see "Sex for Sale" on page 9).

On the other hand, forcing someone to have sex or perpetrating a sexual act on a person without his consent is considered a form of assault and thus typically illegal. Depending on the local custom, various punishments may be meted out, including jail time, public humiliation, fines, and, in some places, death. Slaves are the exception, as they are considered property and without rights in most areas of the world.

Things that we today consider to be taboos, such as pedophilia, necrophilia, bestiality, and the like, are not necessarily so in every corner of the Ninth World. However, such topics should be handled with care and with a solid understanding of what your group can and wants to handle at the table (see "Putting Sex in Your Game: A Guide for GMs" on page 4).

Jaekals, page 169

Cloudcrystal Skyfields, page 174

Qi, page 148

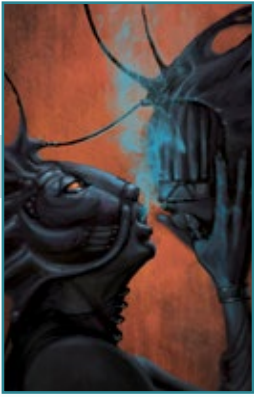
For additional information on sexual practices, see "Sex" on page 9

For additional information on coupledness, see "Courtship and Ceremonies" on page 8



Throughout this supplement, you'll see page references to various items accompanied by this symbol. These are page references to the Numenera corebook, where you can find additional details about that item, place, creature, or concept.





PUTTING SEX IN YOUR GAME: A GUIDE FOR GMs

Why do you need to have sex in your Numenera game?

The most obvious answer is: you don't. Just like you don't need to have eating, traveling, fighting, or drinking in your game. Everyone knows that all of those things happen, but if they don't pertain to your story or adventure, it's not necessary to mention them at all.

The same is true of sex. You can run any Numenera adventure without an element of sexuality or love, and everyone will know that those things are going on all around them but aren't pertinent to what's happening to their characters. Focus your GM camera only on what's important to the story you want to tell, and let the rest fall away into the background.

Of course, all of those elements—eating, traveling, fighting, drinking, and having sex—can add something interesting and unique to your game. They can deepen secondary characters and the world itself, add motivation to player characters and NPCs, and provide an emotional resonance and connection between characters (and sometimes between players).

Games that focus on roleplaying over rollplaying are perhaps the best games in which to introduce sex and love. Because characters can make decisions and take actions based on emotions rather than on the random toss of dice, it allows a more natural, intuitive storyline to develop and lets players guide their characters into relationships.

Typically, love and sex play specific roles in games. Love's job is usually to portray deep emotional loss (a husband has been kidnapped, a girlfriend has disappeared) or high emotional joy (two people fall in love, a wedding is held) and thus kicks off a plot line or introduces a villain. Sex's job is typically about

power exchange (a thief seduces a guard and steals his keys, a character aggressively pursues someone against her will). But you can also introduce these elements to your game in other, more interesting and unique ways.

Imagine trying to seduce a guard who's just had the best oral sex of her life with someone else. Or a guard whose lover has just left her. Or a guard who's head over heels in love with her prisoner. Or a guard who is six months pregnant. Or a guard who is celibate or asexual.

Suddenly, that NPC is no longer just a simple guard who can be seduced with a die roll. She is someone with motivations, deep emotions, and vulnerabilities. In a game like Numenera, players who are skilled in things like perception will have an advantage; they can gauge a character's emotional state and use that to achieve their goals.

Here are other ideas for introducing love and sex into your game in unique and interesting ways.

Helping lovers come together: Lovers may be separated by time and space, by their own unwillingness to admit that they're in love, or by opposing forces that are keeping them apart. Players who bring lovers together will feel like they've accomplished something incredible.

Fading love or lust: What happens when relationships fall apart or when love begins to fade? Helping characters pick up the pieces of their hearts and lives after the loss of a loved one (whether through death, getting dumped, or just a long, slow unraveling) brings an emotional resonance to any adventure.

If you put sex in your game, be sure it fits into the world and the story. Sex that's thrown in out of context and without purpose can seem puerile and is likely to make players uncomfortable.

If you're uncomfortable having an open, upfront conversation about sex away from the table, then you're likely to feel just as uncomfortable at the table—and your players will too. Consider carefully before adding sexual elements to your game.



If you're having trouble with a sexual element of the game, don't be afraid to ask your players for help or information. It might break the immersion for a moment, but sometimes those moments can help dissipate any tension or nervousness and allow everyone to settle into the story.

"Health and STDs," page 10.

Sex and sensuality as ritual and worship: Rituals that involve sex are common. They may be part of an aldeia's worship process for fertility, crop growth, or keeping away scary creatures. It's even possible that the energy from sexual activity could be the trigger or power for an ancient numenera device; that would probably manifest in the culture as some type of worship as well. Since it's uncertain whether participants would understand the mechanics of the process, they would simply think that the machine was a godlike entity who was appeased when its worshipers had sex.

The power of strong love and good sex: Consider that characters who are in love (or who have particularly pleasing sex lives) might be more focused, stronger, or happier. That would make NPCs fiercer opponents, but it could also give PCs a boon to some actions.

Just as a character is healthier when she eats, sleeps, and heals, a character is healthier when she has strong positive emotions and physical pleasure in her life. Maybe a character even becomes skilled in the ways of sex or love (both would be viable skills to choose in Numenera), thus reducing the difficulty of those kinds of tasks. Additionally, a character who is trained or specialized in both resisting mental attacks and in sexuality would have a serious advantage over a creature like a Nibovian wife.

The small effects of sex and love: As shown previously in the example of the guard, sometimes an NPC's personal life has significant effects on the characters' attempts to achieve their goals. This is especially true if the NPC's experience mirrors that of one or more PCs. If a player character is in the middle of falling in love with someone, that PC will

have a strong response to a guard whose husband just left her. If a PC is trying to get pregnant, and the guard is clearly expecting (or vice versa—maybe the guard has been infertile for years), the dynamic will have a unique emotional charge.

Sex as stress relief or money maker: Some characters blow off steam by getting drunk in the local tavern. Others seek a good night's rest or a massage. But for some, the best way to recoup is a

sexual experience. In most places, sex can be bought (or sold, if one is in need of money) without hassle or worry. Of course, in other places, that might not be the case.

An antagonist motivated by lust or love: When the king is kidnapped, his advisors look for political reasons behind the crime. But what if it's more personal? What if someone has been in love with him from afar and has taken those passions into their own hands?

A spurned lover: An NPC out for revenge after being betrayed can make an awesome and terrible villain.

A debilitating disease: Sex can bring great pleasure, but it can also be a risky proposition. Perhaps a town suffers from an outbreak of a [sexually transmitted disease \(STD\)](#) or a clave accidentally created a device that induces severe headaches every time someone has a lustful thought. Or perhaps someone with a vendetta against a former lover created an STD to kill off all of that lover's future partners, but then they got back together. Now they're both sick and need help. When explorers are asked to provide aid for sexual diseases and issues, it can add a new level of complexity.

Numenera rules for interacting with NPCs are the same whether characters are dealing with interrogation, persuasion, or seduction. Seducing a level 5 NPC is a level 5 task. Being skilled in a task that involves sex or love, creating a descriptor or focus with an emphasis on a loving heart or a seductive mind, or cobbling together a numenera device that provides an asset in these areas are all viable options for decreasing the difficulty.

THE HARD STUFF: SEX TIPS FOR GMS

For some reason, we don't seem to need caveats when it comes to violence in tabletop games. We can maim, injure, hurt, and murder creatures and even other humans to our heart's content, and no one bats an eye. However, when it comes to sex, suddenly you're walking a dangerous tightrope. But it doesn't have to be that way. Stepping with care and having a good understanding of your group increases the chances of having a rewarding experience. Consider the following guidelines.

- Sex is a hot button for many people (more so even than murder), so it's smart to really get to know your players and their sexual boundaries before you consider bringing sex to the table.
- As with all things, when it comes to love and sex, choose the level of explicitness that seems right for your players, your game, and your adventure. Just as a fight scene will have different levels of gore depending on the group, scenes with sexuality can have varying levels of detail. Don't be afraid to fade to black (skipping the details), especially in the beginning, if you feel that's best for your group.
- Treat sex with the same respect and attention that you give all other elements of your adventures. That doesn't mean that sex must always be serious, of course. A good laugh helps decrease the early tension that sometimes occurs and can unite the group. Humorous sexual encounters, serious romantic intentions, and arousing moments all have the potential to add to your game.
- When a game involves sex, it can bring out the worst in players who have misogynistic, homophobic, or sexual issues. Players who are derogatory or negative about sexuality in general, specific sexual practices, gender, or sexual orientation can make the game a bad experience for everyone at the table. Consider how to handle them, whether that means having a conversation about their behavior and its repercussions, asking them to leave the group, or keeping the subject out of the game.
- Remember that the player is not the character, and vice versa. This is true of all roleplaying but is especially important when it comes to sex. Sometimes players forget this as well; more than one accidental romance has happened in real life between two people who are roleplaying characters. Depending on the circumstance, this can be wonderful or difficult. Whenever possible, help players define boundaries.
- Many players might feel triggered and have a strong visceral response to anything that hints at forced sexual conduct or exploitation. However, these things do happen in the Ninth World, and sometimes they are a vital part of a character arc or story. If you as the GM believe that the story or adventure warrants this type of conduct, talk it out with players ahead of time, ensure that everyone has a safe space and escape route, and plan a post-session dialogue to touch base with the group. At no time should players or their characters feel obligated to participate in forced sexual conduct, especially not of the PCs themselves. This includes forced seduction ("I have a numenera device that puts you under my control, and there's nothing you can do about it") and impossible circumstances ("Sleep with me or I kill your loved ones").
- Conception, childbirth, abortion, and miscarriage can also invoke strong emotional responses. Run these concepts by your group ahead of time to be sure that you're prepared to handle the topics with care.
- Mostly, it's important to be sure that, whatever the physical ages of your players, the subject matter is appropriate for their mental ages. Some adult players might be emotionally unable to deal with sex at the table. On the other hand, many mature teens can treat sexuality as just another part of a roleplaying game. Be aware of your players' wants and needs. If even one person feels uncomfortable with something, reconsider whether you should add it.





LOVE

COURTSHIP AND CEREMONIES

Love can blossom anywhere, between anyone. As is always the case, there is the matter of courtship to consider. Courtship takes place in a number of ways, from casually spending time together to more formal dates to elaborate proof-of-love conquests (such as that which takes place in the [Fields of Frozen Flowers](#)).

People use pet names for each other and purchase or make gifts of jewelry, edibles, numenera items, and other sundries to show their affection. Especially popular (and expensive) are colored stronglass necklaces, hand-carved by artisans, with the person's name hidden in the design.

Other gifts include tokens of strength and conquest. These might be hair pins carved from [ravage bear](#) tusks, scarves woven from the fur of myriad kills, and clothing adornments made from the fronds of a flying elchin.

[Seskii](#), [rubars](#), and other companion pets are also considered to be good gifts for wooing a loved one.

To show that one is in a relationship of any kind, one might wear a visible symbol. The most common of these is a personal patch. Designed to adhere to any type of clothing, the shape is almost always a soft-edged diamond with a design inside it. Colors and designs vary, but the diamond shape is the consistent element. That symbol may also be incorporated into a piece of jewelry, integrated as part of a tattoo, or scarred on the right side of someone's face.

Gifts and Sundries

Diamond-shaped patch, simple	1 shin
Diamond-shaped patch, elaborate	20 shins
Goldgleam-coated ring	30 shins
Necklace of malleable metal	40 shins
Colored stronglass necklace, hand-carved	50 shins
Living plant hairpin (an oddity, very rare)	100 shins

Not everyone in a relationship makes a formal commitment to each other, but those who do have a number of choices. Commitment ceremonies can be private or public and take the form of handfasting,

feasting, exchanging goods and services, or holding a large, elegant gathering in the presence of an officiant. In most cases, living together for longer than a year is considered the same as having a commitment ceremony.

Typically, after a ceremony, all goods and valuables that one person owns are considered to be owned equally by both parties. Exceptions to this rule include those in high office and those who have extremely valuable lineages (such as kingdoms, unique numenera devices, large businesses, estates, or other large and expensive amounts of property). They typically hold a [mhorinon](#)—a large, public, and carefully legal ceremony headed by an official at which all parties sign a treatise that explicitly spells out which items belong to each party and what will happen to those items upon someone's death or the dissolution of their partnership. These treatises are legally binding and hold up in court. Although unauthorized people sometimes attempt to conduct these ceremonies, they are typically shams, as real [mhorinons](#) must be witnessed by at least one hundred people, cost a minimum of 5,000 shins, and require the gift of a [fashioned artifact](#) to the overseeing official.

Other ceremonies are far more elaborate or unusual:

- Those who live in [Lhauric](#) are likely to have commitment ceremonies that embody the bloody practices and rites of their religion. There, mutilations, flagellation, and sacrifices are important elements of celebrations of their love for each other and their gods.
- In scattered places in the [Beyond](#), those who wish to commit to each other must complete an elaborate ritual: the Rite of the Minotaur. Although each locale puts its own spin on the ceremony, some things remain the same: The couple's eyes and ears are covered in white cloth, their mouths in red cloth, and their hands in black cloth. They're separated from each other within an elaborate constructed maze or set of natural tunnels and must find each other by touch alone.



[Fields of Frozen Flowers](#), page 212

[Ravage bear](#), page 254

[Seskii](#), page 258

[Rubar](#), page 255

[Fashioned artifact](#), page 277

[Lhauric](#), page 197



SEX

SEX FOR SALE

Prostitution is not illegal or, in most places, frowned upon—and in truth, few people would think to use a negative word to describe the tender or trade of sex for shins or objects. It's considered by most to be a difficult business to succeed in, because although there is great demand for sex sellers who are exceptionally skilled, there is little to no demand for the untrained or unwilling. Those who do well in the industry typically reach a certain level of fame in their local area.

The Ninth World does not have the female-dominated sex trade that exists in our world today. Sex sellers can be of any gender and can be humans, visitants, or other humanoids. There is a burgeoning trade for those with interesting mutations as well.

Types of Sex Sellers

Goldglams or Glams: Named after the goldgleam wings on a *caffa*, glams are street performers who don flowing materials that are designed to emulate winged creatures. In the larger kingdoms, they might use goldgleam scored from a favored patron, but in the Beyond, glams are more likely to use whatever shiny materials they can find. During a glam's performance, anyone who finds him interesting and desirable must write their offering on a piece of paper, along with something about themselves, and tuck it into the glam's box. Once the show is over, the glam reads the papers and chooses who will receive his attentions.

Sex and love don't just pertain to humans in the Ninth World. Creatures encountered during mating time might be one level higher due to hormone levels and lust. On the other hand, creatures attacked while in the act of copulating might be so distracted and disoriented that they're temporarily one level lower.

Additionally, creatures that form strong emotional bonds with other creatures are likely to fight harder to protect their loved ones (and may come back to hunt the PCs down after the fact). The difficulty of defending against any creature protecting or avenging its loved ones is increased by one step.

Daupsams: Daupsams are humans of any gender who trade sex only for numenera artifacts. They typically engage in long-term deals (as many as two or three years, depending on the desirability of the artifact) with a single individual in which they provide sex in exchange for the use of—or the

eventual acquisition of—specific artifacts. Many daupsams are Aeon Priests, scientists, or others with an interest in the numenera and are respected for their dedication and resourcefulness in achieving their goals through innovative means.

Flute Boys: These attractive men (or women dressed as men) provide flirtations and company for their patrons. Typically, one hires a flute boy for a special event, dinner date, or other public function. Some establishments have designated booths

for customers with flute boys, seating them in an area where all eyes may be upon them. Flute boys are rarely hired for sex, but rather for their ability to provide their undivided attention and unbridled flattery.

Slaves: Slaves are often forced into selling themselves in one form or another. Sometimes this means performing sexual acts with their masters, and other times it means providing sex in exchange for money they never see. However, not all slaves are forced into such acts; some willingly take it on as their job in homes where they have the right to choose their duties.

The cost of sexual services ranges from a few shins for a few minutes of enjoyment up to 100 shins or even a pricey numenera artifact for a long-term retainer. Flute boys (and other nonsexual escorts) are typically paid with a combination of shins and clothing, jewelry, or oddities.

Glams receive perhaps the most interesting payments, as prospective patrons attempt to outbid each other with rare, expensive, and unusual offerings. It is rumored that at least one glam was given a home in Stirthal, and another a ride on a xi-drake with an Angulan Knight.

Caffa, page 233



THE AEON PRIESTS AND SEX

It's easy to look at the Aeon Priests and the Amber Papacy and assume that they, much like Catholicism and the Pope in today's world, regulate the cultural understanding of sexuality and love. However, this assumption is not correct. While smaller organizations throughout the world have agendas about sex, the Amber Papacy isn't one of them. As an organization, the Amber Papacy doesn't involve itself with sexual norms and isn't particularly interested in human sexuality except through the lens of the numenera. In addition, sexuality and gender are not relevant to whether someone can become an Aeon Priest. Some Aeon Priests are sex sellers (see "Daupsams" on page 9), others are asexual or celibate, and still others are in committed relationships.

HEALTH AND STDs

As mentioned earlier, sex can have numerous benefits for characters. A good sex life can improve their mental and physical health in ways that allow them to better handle the difficulties of being explorers.

There's another side to that coin: Ninth Worlders are vulnerable to all manner of diseases, including those spread by sexual transmission. When characters encounter disease, they must make a Might defense roll to resist it. If they contract the disease, they must make a Might defense roll each day or suffer the effects. Disease effects are varied and could include points of damage, moving down the damage track, disability, or the inability to recover points to a stat Pool.

Those who have nefarious goals may create a new illness or attempt to increase a disease's infection rate for the purpose of hurting those who enjoy sex. On the other hand, numenera devices, as well as pills and potions, can offer protection from and inoculation against disease, a decreased risk of spreading infection, healing after transmission, and pain relief.

Common STDs include:

The cloiss (level 5): Sometimes sardonically called "the kiss of kindness," this self-healing illness is transmitted through saliva, so it can be caught by giving a simple kiss or sharing a glass. Similar to mononucleosis, the disease causes lethargy and general aches for about a week. Once someone contracts the cloiss, a failed Might defense roll inflicts 5 points of Might damage.

Paucher's poison (level 3): This disease is transmitted by body fluids of all types and causes mental confusion and disorientation. Someone with Paucher's poison may forget names and places or have vivid hallucinations. Once someone contracts the disease, a failed Might defense roll causes the difficulty of all Intellect actions to increase by one step for that day. This disease is not self-healing, so PCs must find, purchase, or craft a cure.

CONCEPTION, PREGNANCY, AND CHILDBIRTH

Conception in the Ninth World is much the same as we know it today. Women are fertile in a similar cycle (about once a month). In most cases, pregnancy lasts about seven and a half to eight months—the shortened gestation period is likely due to the longer days—and the experience is similar to that of today.

Women who are expecting should be careful during combat and when riding ground mounts, especially in the latter third of their pregnancy. Most babies are born at home, accompanied by family members or an accoucheuse (a person similar to a doula who usually has a combination of medical and numenera knowledge). A chiurgeon is brought in only during times of duress or if the child is of particular interest or high standing.

Women typically give birth to one child, but twins are not uncommon. In some families, women regularly carry identical triplets to full term.

Myriad numenera devices are designed to alter elements of the conception, pregnancy, and birth processes. Some are temporary, others permanent. A small town in the Beyond called Enthad is semifamous for its vacillator, an artifact that can make a character infertile for exactly a year (*can* being the operative word, since the device sometimes malfunctions, making a character especially *fertile* for a year).

Babies and children add another aspect to adventuring. GMs may choose to give mothers an advantage or ability (based on their strong emotional responses) that is countered by a disadvantage or inability (based on their constant need to care for and protect another human being).

Getting pregnant is a level 5 task between two fertile people of the opposite sex who are not using devices to alter fertility.

Thiash is an herb that grows widely everywhere except extremely cold places. When this blue-leaved plant is picked and ingested while fresh, it decreases the chance of conception. If the same plant is dried, crushed into a powder, and rubbed on one's gums for three days in a row, it can induce abortion.



WHY NONTRADITIONAL SEX AND GENDER ROLES?



When you talk about sex and gender, I believe that you have to be candid, you have to create trust, and you have let people in, as much as you feel comfortable doing so. We've tried to do that with this supplement—to talk openly and honestly about a subject that's difficult for many. So with that in mind, let's pull the curtain back even further for a moment and look at the reasons behind the game's sex and gender choices.

As you may have noticed, Numenera is a game that works hard to showcase a wide variety of genders, gender roles, sexual orientations, relationships, and more. Why do we do that? Partly because it's our world, and we can make it any way we want to.

Partly because we believe that for too long, games have presented just one option.

However, the gameplay reasons are even more compelling. Showcasing human diversity makes for a better, more interesting world. If the landmass of the Ninth World is about the size of the one we know today, but there's no mass media and no easy way of getting from one place to another, it makes sense that cultures and social norms would be much more disparate and unique than they are today (and if you look around our current world, you know that our cultural expectations vary greatly, not just from one country to the next but sometimes from one city to the next).

In the end, we do it mostly because it's more fun to have a game with lots of choices and endless variety. Sure, having a location or culture in which one gender is dominant is absolutely a possibility. Maybe there's a place in the Beyond where all the women are strong and brilliant and all the men are weak and subservient. And that can be interesting—for a while. But when it comes right down to it, anything that has only one option eventually gets boring. Variety and autonomy are part of what makes world-building and roleplaying so much fun. Humans are incredibly diverse creatures, and as game designers, we want to celebrate the things that make us unique.

We often use words like “wife” or “married” or “gender” when writing about relationships and roles in the Ninth World, but those words aren't meant to be exact replicas of how we use them today. Instead, they are chosen to capture the flavor and parameters of a person's role within a relationship or their body.

The words you choose to use at the table to describe these concepts are completely up to you and your players.



THE NUMENERA

Not surprisingly, enterprising tinkerers, Aeon Priests, and others have set out to create or scavenge numenera that focuses specifically on sex. Some enhance fertility or virility, others help prevent pregnancy, and some are designed for nothing more than pleasurable additions to a sexual liaison. Most aldea have a clue of Aeon Priests who have created a unique numenera item or made an unusual discovery, and that's what sets the community apart from others. It wouldn't be unheard of for a clue's discovery to focus on love or sex.

Of course, many artifacts, cyphers, and oddities that are typically used for combat or other purposes can be tweaked and used in sexual situations. Some possibilities include [friction-reducing gel](#), [gravity nullifiers](#), or [magnetic masters](#). It's all up to the imagination of the GM and the characters.

ARTIFACTS

Impulse Collar

Level: 1d6

Form: A thick leather strap that wraps around one's throat with a pulsing light set into a metal casing on the front of it.

Effect: While within short range of another human, the wearer can activate the device by pressing the light with his thumb and aiming it in the general direction of another person. The device picks up and broadcasts the general emotional state of that person. A blue light signifies indifference, red signifies anger, purple signifies arousal, and yellow indicates good will, friendship, or love. Activation is an action.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Seated Lift

Level: 1d6

Form: A series of fabric straps that open to form a seat like a swing.

Effect: When a person sits in the device, she can use a small dial on the right side to be lifted up to 3 feet (1 m) in the air. The device holds only one person at a time. While active, it gives a few inches in any direction when pushed, but it never moves more than that.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Smoke Helm

Level: 1d6

Form: A hood or helmet designed to be worn on the head.

Effect: When worn, the helmet synthesizes a telepathic smoke from the wearer's breath. If someone else inhales the smoke, they feel everything the wearer feels for one hour. (If two people wear the helmets, they can "trade" sensations with each other for one hour.)

Depletion: 1 in 1d20



Friction-reducing gel, page 286

Gravity nullifier, page 287

Magnetic master, page 290



CYPHERS



Blood Boiler

Level: 1d6 + 1

Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid

Effect: Causes an increase in blood flow to any stimulated body parts. Adds 1 to Might Edge for one hour.



Body Enhancer

Level: 1d6

Usable: Tube of malleable material

Effect: Adjusts to match the user's skin color and temperature, can be shaped into any form, and affixes itself to the user's body for up to two hours.



Fertility Barrier

Level: 1d6

Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid

Effect: Once ingested, it prevents conception for one week. If a fertility barrier is used by both parties, it *increases* the chance of conception (decreases the difficulty by one step) for the same amount of time.



Pleasure Center

Level: 1d6 + 1

Usable: Small metallic disk

Effect: When applied to a creature's head, the disk immediately unleashes microfilaments that enter the brain. Within five minutes, the microfilaments release a chemical compound that provides an increased sensation of pleasure and a decreased sensation of pain or displeasure. Adds 1 to Might Pool for one hour.



Sexual Alteration Device

Level: 1d6

Wearable: Belt or bracelet

Useable: Handheld device

Effect: Alters some element of the user's sexuality for one day. Roll for effect:

- 01–10 Allows user to tweak his gender in any way he sees fit
- 11–30 Allows user to change his sexual orientation or interests
- 31–40 Removes all sexual drive
- 41–50 Doubles all sexual drive
- 51–75 Causes the user to produce a pheromone that sexually attracts anyone within close range
- 76–00 Causes the user to produce a pheromone that sexually repels anyone within close range

The Castle of Corriere, a playhouse in the Ancuan town of Oasho, holds elaborate, high-end sex parties on a regular basis. Sexual alteration devices are so popular there that an entire economy has sprung up around making and selling them to party-goers.

ODDITIES

Not surprisingly, almost any oddity can be used in lust and love by creative characters. However, some lend themselves especially well to a sensual scenario. Here are a few additional oddities to consider.

- Long, soft rope that unties itself with a verbal command
- Blanket that warms to skin temperature when unfolded completely
- Clip-on earring that emits a soft croon when exposed to moonlight
- Long glass rod that stays cold no matter the surrounding temperature
- Small cloth square that absorbs large amounts of liquid without getting damp
- Stronglass sphere that vibrates at random intervals and frequencies
- Firm bit of rubber that adheres perfectly to someone's finger, making it twice as long
- Adjustable ring that voices a different endearment each time it's slipped on

