### Iconic Aetherist - Ry, Aetherist Monk

*“Every second of existence becomes a challenge when empowerment is viewed as rebellion. Therefore, the aetherist must change the nature of not just themselves, but society around them, to become a part of The All-including”* – foreword to the aetherist training manual *On Dismantling and Revolution*

[insert; commentary] Gender neutral pronouns

In succinct terms, Ry is an agenderflux NPC, which is why we are using neutral addressing for them. The choice to not use “ze, zir, Mx.” pronouns is because these relatively new pronouns do not exist in Synoma or the historical events we are pulling story elements from. The class of aetherist, plus the dogma of Monad, allowed for us to create a NPC of a woefully underrepresented class in traditional RPGs. As this project is headed by two cishet men, interviews with various non-binary people helped form the backstory of Ry and their personality. We hope we are respectful in our presentation and does not feel shoehorned, nor falls victim to too many tropes. If you feel otherwise, Ry can be presented as a woman who rejected tribal gender roles with little change to their story. We just wish to be clear that our authorial intention is not that.

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Within the patriarchal tribes of Duitsine, a woman’s path is determined by chieftains based on the needs of the people. Had their mother not died in childbirth, the aetherist known as Ry would have followed an assigned path. Ry instead was raised alone by their father, a tribal champion who exemplified the Duistine male ethos of marauding and husbandry.

As such, Ry began training early in the unarmored mounted and close quarters combat style of the Duitsine. Emphasizing speed and outflanking, Ry’s tribal economy relied almost exclusively on plundering and ransom. Despite their skill, Ry’s shaved head and *kajal* (a type of eye makeup) presented a duality that fueled speculation that Ry had absorbed their dying mother’s soul upon birth. Ry’s father refused invasive rituals to “align” his only child, believing the process would destroy his wife’s soul. Tribe members criticized his protection of Ry, but they did so in privacy out of fearful respect.

As Ry grew, the Duitsine marauders were hired as mercenary cavalry by a nearby kingdom in a series of bloody conflicts known as The Runic Campaign. After the conflict, severe losses to the tribe caused the chieftains to declare all Duitsine women of age to abandon their trades and become breeders. Ry rejected the decree, causing public contention between tribal citizens who respected Ry’s father and those who accused Ry of being selfish by refusing the chieftain’s orders.

Ry’s father, recently returned from war, was disappointed in his child’s decision to not support the tribe in a role determined for them.

“You are not a man, even though you are a marauder. Your tribe needs your womanhood, and it needs your strength. The children you bear will be the future of this tribe.”

Ry refused still. Entrails were read in a sentencing ritual, with the augurs declaring that Ry’s father would have to undergo ritual suicide to become a *nachzehrer*, colloquially known as a soulpire (see *Salt in Wounds Bestiary)*. To avoid his family relegated to the outskirts of society, Ry’s father would have to drain his child’s soul to make them subservient.

Ry attempted to bargain with the chieftains, finally ready to accept the role as a breeder as restitution to avoid a ghastly end to their father. Ry’s father interrupted the session by dragging his child away from them.

“You made your decision, and you’ve also made mine. You would have me choose not only between you and my tribe, but whatever remains of your mother inside you. You refuse to give your mother’s soul a new vessel and disregarded your status in the tribe I swore to protect as champion. No two, not even mine, are worth the tribe.”

Stripped of their tribal name and status, Ry was imprisoned. The guards, both of whom were male, decided to try and force Ry into the role declared by the chieftains.

“They might not drain you if you’re with child. After you’re drained, no one will want you. They don’t really want you now. We’re doing you a favor.”

The guard’s bodies were discovered the next morning. One was internally decapitated, their neck stretched from holding a lazily hanging head snapped off the spine. The other was dragged to death by the very horse stolen from him, found scattered over a distance of a day’s ride before ending in a tied off torso near the mountain paths south.

While running from the tribe, Ry’s desire for food and shelter led them into sacred groves south of Duitsine. In a fit if starvation, Ry ignored the warnings told to her since birth and entered the protected orchards, attempting to leech a mushroom known as a sickener to eat. She failed to prepare it properly, her cries of illness attracting the *blóta* pagan cult the protected the woods.

The grove wardens worshipped a primitive god of fertility and sacrifice named Alxf (*see Salt in Wounds Campaign Setting*). The priests, men that cross-dressed as women, found Ry’s gender fluid appearance to be a sign of divine weal. Ry fought against their rescuers, remembering the tales of human sacrifice and obscene carnal rites. Eventually, exhaustion took hold and Ry was subdued.

Upon awakening, Ry learned that the cultists had cared for them. Despite the injuries sustained in trying to help Ry, the cultists found this as only more evidence of Alxf’s bounty, as the god is represented as a wild, dual headed stag.

“Why is it that you’re helping me?” Ry was skeptical, believing they were only treating them so well so they would make for a better sacrifice or vessel.

“Because we honor our first priest Neriuz by doing so.”

Ry was told the story of Neriuz, the supposed founder of the cult of Alxf who bore the genitals of both men and women. Neriuz was martyred upon discovery of his gift and the belief that slaves he rescued were sacrificed to Alxf for continued success.

Ry remained with the cult, the Duitsine never approaching the cursed woods to find the escaped child of their champion. Learning skills rejected by the Duitsine such as agriculture and alchemy, Ry studied the religion of Alxf but it never found purchase with them. Years later, Ry accompanied members of the cult who traveled to the city of Salt in Wounds who were hired to assist with teaching *nidus* cultivation (see “Uroliths,” pg. XX).

Upon arriving to Salt in Wounds, the city’s brutality and self-sufficiency spoke to baser parts of Ry’s heritage as a marauder. Meeting with the Monad alchemists, Ry’s curiosity peaked with the idea of a genderless universal force, borrowing books from colleagues between conclaves. As an effective alchemist assistant and more than capable bodyguard, one of the Monad alchemists offered to sponsor Ry to join the All-including temple’s aetherist compound to continue the path of self-discovery, while honing the natural talents Ry possessed.

Over a decade later, Ry’s role in the Church of the Monad is to teach the class *Effects of Alchemy and Meditation on Fighting Response*, a course that focuses on using meditative therapy to suppress, extend, and heighten alchemical creations. The course is only taught when enough students (or coin) demand it. During the down times, Ry leads a simple life, focusing on helping the poorer residents of Salt in Wounds (especially in the Tail Stones district) by teaching them self-defense and basic alchemy in return for simple barter. Despite an early rebellious streak, Ry now follows the laws set by the aetherist training they’ve received. They respect laws more after a lifetime of seeing the consequences of breaking even unjust ones.

**Roleplaying and Presenting Ry**: Ry is neither male nor female, yet presents both masculine and feminine features. While their physical appearance is androgynous, Ry’s attire doesn’t always conform to this depending on how they feel day-to-day. Ry is confident in who they are, but is still exploring what all that entails in regards to their place in the universe. Despite this confidence, Ry is not immune to the words and actions of others; quite the opposite. Ry possesses a massive amount of empathy for other living beings because of their belief in the unifying force of aether. Their empathy extends to the point of not consuming any living creatures. Instead, they sustain themselves on nutritional, alchemical creations and flora-based supplements. Unlike some members of the church of Monad, Ry does not partake in alchemical drugs, as they believe it dulls their connection to Monad.

Violence is rarely the first choice for Ry despite their training as a marauder and aetherist, believing that killing removes a connection to Monad. Ry doesn’t care where an individual was born or born into- all occurred and was decided before Monad formed them into who they truly are. Any attempts to use bloodline or familial station as leverage will provoke indifference at best. They will defend others with word first, physicality second.

The quickest way to provoke Ry to combat is to either speak their dead name, i.e. the name given to Ry by their tribe (currently unknown to any citizens of Salt in Wounds) or attacking the defenseless. Ry will react swiftly and accordingly, depending on what they feel is the level of danger the PC represents and the degree of lesson required to make them understand.

Should somehow the PCs learn of their former name, Ry will be quick to denounce it and tell them to never speak of it again, assuming no ownership of it. Choosing to speak it again displays willful ignorance and an attempt to violate their body on a spiritual level.

In Strata form, internal spikes of masculine and feminine energy can alter the appearance of Ry’s projection. Play with this per their current mood.

Ry
Human (Duitsine) monk 5
LN Medium humanoid
**Ini**t +2; **Senses** Perception +10

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 19, touch 18, flat-footed 16 (+1 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 monk, +4 monk)
**hp** 36 (5d8+10)
**Fort** +6, **Ref** +7, **Will** +9; +2 vs. enchantment
**Defensive Abilities** evasion; Immune disease

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 40 ft.
**Melee** unarmed strike +5 (1d8+1) or shortspear +5 (1d6+1)
**Ranged** shortspear +5 (1d6+1/x2)
**Special Attacks** stunning fist (5/day, DC 16, fatigued)

Aetherist Extracts Prepared (CL 5th)

2nd— *cat’s grace*, *owl’s wisdom*, *resist energy*
1st—*comprehend languages*, *expeditious retreat*, *shield* (2), *true strike*

**STATISTICS**

Str 12, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 8
**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 23
**Feats**: Brew Potion, Dodge, Endurance, Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Mobility, Stunning Fist, Weapon Finesse

[insert; commentary] Substituting Feats

While we have only used feats from the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook,* GMs with access to other Pathfinder RPG splat books will find several feats that fit Ry’s thematic elements, such as Chokehold and Stunning Pin from *Ultimate Combat*, the Cudgeler or Kraken Style feat chain from *Melee Tactics Toolbox*, etc. Feel free to substitute as you wish!

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**Skills** Acrobatics +6, Climb +5, Craft (Alchemy) +17, Knowledge (Arcana) +5, Knowledge (Religion) +5, Perception +10, Ride +8, Sense Motive +10, Stealth +10
**Languages** Common

**SQ** fast movement, ki catalyst, ki pool (6 points, magic), maneuver training, mystical extracts
**Combat Gear** potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of invisibility, wand of cure light wounds (17 charges), devil sand (as per alchemist’s fire; 2), thunderstone (3); **Other Gear** bracers of armor +1, cloak of resistance +1, shortspear, formula book (contains all prepared extracts as well as the following: 1st—*cure light wounds, disguise self, enlarge person*; 2nd—*cure moderate wounds*, *barkskin, invisibility*), sunrods (2)

Ry
Human (Duitsine) monk 10
LN Medium humanoid
**Ini**t +2; **Senses** Perception +15

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 21, touch 19, flat-footed 18 (+2 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +6 monk)
**hp** 78 (10d8+30)
**Fort** +10, **Ref** +10, **Will** +12; +2 vs. enchantment
**Defensive Abilities** improved evasion; Immune disease

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 60 ft.
**Melee** unarmed strike +9/+4 (1d10+1) or *+1 returning shortspear* +10 (1d6+2)
**Ranged** *+1 returning shortspear* +10 (1d6+2/x2)
**Special Attacks** stunning fist (10/day, DC 19, sickened)

**Aetherists Extracts Prepared (CL 10th)**

4th—*greater invisibility*, *stoneskin*
3rd—*displacement, haste, remove disease*

2nd— *barkskin*, *cat’s grace*, *owl’s wisdom*, *resist energy*
1st—*comprehend languages*, *expeditious retreat*, *shield* (2), *true strike*

**STATISTICS**

Str 12, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 8
**Base Atk** +7/+2; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 28
**Feats**: Brew Potion, Dodge, Endurance, Improved Disarm, Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Medusa’s Wrath, Mobility, Spring Attack, Stunning Fist, Weapon Finesse, Wind Stance

**Skills** Acrobatics +15, Climb +5, Craft (Alchemy) +25, Knowledge (Arcana) +8, Knowledge (Religion) +8, Perception +15, Ride +8, Sense Motive +10, Stealth +10

**Languages** Common

**SQ** fast movement, ki catalyst, ki pool (9 points, lawful), maneuver training, mystical extracts, subtle materials
**Combat Gear** potion of cure serious wounds, potion of heroism, potion of invisibility, wand of cure light wounds (17 charges), devil sand (as per alchemist’s fire; 2), thunderstone (3), tanglestench bag (2); **Other Gear** bracers of armor +2, cloak of resistance +1, *+1 returning shortspear*, formula book (contains all prepared extracts as well as the following: 1st—*cure light wounds, disguise self, enlarge person*; 2nd—*cure moderate wounds, invisibility, false life*), sunrods (2)

Ry
Human (Duitsine) monk 15
LN Medium humanoid
**Ini**t +2; **Senses** Perception +22

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 24, touch 20, flat-footed 21 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +7 monk)
**hp** 116 (15d8+45)
**Fort** +13, **Ref** +13, **Will** +15; +2 vs. enchantment
**Defensive Abilities** improved evasion, SR 25; Immune disease, poison

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 80 ft.
**Melee** unarmed +15/+10/+5 (2d6+3/19-20) or *+1 returning shortspear* +14/+9/+4 (1d6+2)
**Ranged** *+1 returning shortspear* +14 (1d6+2/x2)
**Special Attacks** stunning fist (15/day, DC 21, staggered 1d6+1 rounds)

**Aetherists Extracts Prepared (CL 10th)**

5th— *beast shape III, contact other plane, elemental body II*

4th—*freedom of movement*, *greater invisibility (2)*, *restoration*, *stoneskin*
3rd—*displacement, haste (2), protection from energy, remove disease*

2nd— *barkskin*, *cat’s grace*, *owl’s wisdom*, *resist energy, see invisibility*
1st—*comprehend languages*, *expeditious retreat*, *shield* (2), *true strike*

**STATISTICS**

Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 8
**Base Atk** +11/+6/+1; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 28
**Feats**: Brew Potion, Diehard, Dodge, Endurance, Improved Critical (unarmed strike), Improved Disarm, Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Greater Grapple, Lunge, Medusa’s Wrath, Mobility, Spring Attack, Stunning Fist, Weapon Finesse, Wind Stance

**Skills** Acrobatics +15, Climb +5, Craft (Alchemy) +30, Knowledge (Arcana) +10, Knowledge (Religion) +10, Perception +22, Ride +8, Sense Motive +15, Stealth +19

**Languages** Common

**SQ** diamond body, diamond soul, fast movement, ki catalyst, ki pool (11 points, lawful), maneuver training, mystical extracts, traverse the gulf, strata form, subtle materials
**Combat Gear** potion of heroism, wand of darkvision (50 charges), wand of cure moderate wounds (50 charges), bloodfire tonic (3), tanglestench bag (2); **Other Gear** *amulet of might fists +2*, bracers of armor +4, cloak of resistance +2, *+1 returning shortspear*, formula book (contains all prepared extracts as well as the following: 1st—*cure light wounds, disguise self, enlarge person*; 2nd—*cure moderate wounds, invisibility, false life*), 1000gp worth of pure silver infused ink, 800gp in powder cobalt