The Myriad of The Mirror (The Myriad)

"Come on; no one really wants to KNOW the story," one corner of his mouth slides upward, adding to the enticement, ensuring that now EVERYONE wants to know the story. Nods and admonishments flood him. The other corner slides up ever so slightly before he schools his features. Then he shrugs as though in resignation, shooting everyone a look as though he is not at fault for the danger that is about to befall them. Everyone leans in close, "Okay, so, the story goes like this…

"We were holed up in one of our favorite forests, enjoying the fruits of a hard day's work," snickers bounce through the crowd from behind grubby hands. The rogue ignores them, "Young Ephim had downed a 4-point buck on his first foray, and the Scolby twins had happened upon a good grove of mushrooms. What with the haul we made that day, Old Captain Ardo let us break open a cask of fine Waybury Stout. It wasn't long before a second cask was opened, and we were all laying about the fire joking and slurring.

"But just then the old captain pipes up, fingering the brim of his hat as he always does when he's thinking from way deep down. I saw that he had something in his hand, but I couldn't make it out in the dark. Anyway, he says to us, 'have you ever looked at yourself in a mirror, or in a still pool of water?' Now, the captain was known for looking inside himself real deep like when the cups were in him, and I figured that he had had more than his share of the Waybury. But the men stop their joking and look at him, wondering whether we'd have a good show tonight or he'd end up weeping and hugging again. So he looks back and holds up a mirror in his hand. It's a broken mirror he's got, shining in the firelight. 'Look at yourself, each of you, in this mirror,' he says, 'and tell me what you see.' Well, in our company after that much ale, the answers are bound to be saucy, so I won't repeat them here, amidst these young ears, begging your pardon. Needless to say, we all have a good laugh by the time the mirror makes its way back to the captain. But he stays all serious, like he's looking through the mirror into something else and says, 'I see Ardo, Captain of this free company,' he points to a part of the mirror, 'but I also see Ardo the husband of Gretchen, may she rest in peace,' he points to another part of the mirror, 'I see Ardo, ranger of the Greatland Forest,' another part, 'and Ardo, scullery of the good ship Sprayrunner'. He looks at us all then, and we can tell that we'll get neither entertainment or hugs. This here is a captain we ain't never seen before. I couldn't help but think maybe one of those other Ardo's from the mirror had jumped out and replaced our'n.

"He says to us then, 'we're a fine company, we are; truer friends I don't think I'll find in this lifetime,' well, I think to myself, maybe he is going to hug people, but then he says, 'Look at all we do: we help folks along the road ease their burden; we equalize wealth between the rich and the poor; we alleviate the need for others to hire security to guard their possessions. On sea, on land, in cities and in the wilderness, we adapt to whatever is needed. If you look at us in the mirror, you see many different companies. Here,' and he holds up the mirror, pointing to different shards, 'here's a stalwart seafaring group, and here is a company walking the night streets of Dana. And here, the good men of the highway. Do you see now, what I mean? There may be just one of you, but you are many things.'

"Now, he who has never been sentimental can cast the first stone, but he passed the

mirror around again and each of us, in turn, with some embarrassment and lots of bashful smiles, saw our many selves in that mirror. I had never known some things about my brethren, but it was okay knowing them after that, because we were all closer together for sharing. When the captain gets his mirror back, he tells us, 'it's time our company began recruiting further abroad. I want each of you to take a piece of this,' and he started breaking the mirror apart, giving a piece to each of us. 'Go out into the far corners of Tharstelding,' he said, 'and find the brightest and best you can to run with you. Don't stop until you hit the Castran Bay, and hey, if the mood takes you, go past the sea, too. On your belt, or on a flag, or tied to a boot or an arm, wear the broken mirror in some way, so that those you pass will know you. You don't need to work together, nor do you need to work against each other, but you'll all know what the broken mirror means when you see it, and you'll remember tonight. Come back here in a year, and we'll see what we've become. And if you can't make it, we'll understand, because we'll know you're out there, part of the broken mirror.'

"Went out we did, into the world, finding those to run with. Soon each of us found ourselves leading a good company of free men. That first year passed and I don't know if any of the others returned to the forest; I was too busy living the good life. Since then the broken mirror has passed to others. For nigh on thirty years now I've seen the broken mirror on boots, on tabards, on standards—hell, I once saw a man with it on his tooth! People I didn't even know, holding to the broken mirror. But they knew the story and named Captain Ardo, and we were closer for sharing it.

"So there's my story, folks. If'n you want to sign up for adventure and excitement in far-off lands, just take a piece of this," the rogue spins around as a knife seems to materialize in his hand, and throws it straight into a tall mirror leaning against a cart. It shatters into dozens of pieces. "Take a piece and come with me, and I'll show you the world that Captain Ardo saw."

A boy walks up to the rogue and pulls on his trouser leg, "Mister? What happened to Captain Ardo?"

"Well, I'll tell you son. He was an old fellow when I knew him, near thirty year ago. I've not known a normal man to live as long as he must have, but they still say he's out there, making all kinds of adventurers rich and jolly, him in that broad-brimmed hat o' his." He smiles and ruffles the boy's hair, then moves off to catalogue his recruits.

When the street quiets and the to-do is long gone, a figure steps out from a dark alleyway. He fingers the broad brim of his hat, a reminiscent smile can just be seen underneath. Hearing the story always reminds him of his oath, and the long road to fulfilling it. No one even remembered the Legion of the Broken Mirror, or the Glass Empress whom they guarded, but the story touches everyone who hears it, and the scattered legion grows. Soon, he thinks to himself, it will be time to unite it. The Myriad of the Mirror, ha ha! A good name. He makes his way down the street. Time to meet with the other oathbound; the legion must form again before the Glass Empress returns.

Symbol: A Broken mirror on a field of black.

Background, Goals, and Dreams: What most members or non members know about the Myriad is that they are ambitious, professional and opportunistic mercenaries. That they can be bought is also well known. It is the dream of most captains to field entire armies of recruits, and then it becomes their goals to hire it out. There never seems to be a lack of work for a good Myriad company no matter where they roam. Cities hire them for protection, war, police, solving problems and even making problems.

Members: Not surprisingly most members of the Myriad are Rouges, Fighters and Strikers. But a fair number of ambitious casters also swell their ranks.

Membership is a rather fluid issue with no real roster or central gathering point. Each faction is overseen by a Captain who in turn keeps track of members and territory. Members of the Myriad are free to leave the ranks at any time simply by telling their Captain of their intent. It is not uncommon for members of one faction to leave only to join another faction. Mercenaries are mercenaries after all.

Secrets: Once a member is promoted to Captain they are folded into the most secret of the Myriad's purposes. The man known as Captain Ardo is in fact a fey lord from the ancient and ruined fey empire of Ingroth'ael. This once great empire was ruled by the Glass Empress, a fey of such beauty and power that she ensnared the heart of Glitanius, god of Earth. But when Glitanius' advances were turned away by the Glass Empress his heart was broken, and he turned his gaze from her lands. With the grace of Glitanius gone, the Glass Empress' empire decayed as earth and plant faltered. The Glass Empress, her soul bound to the land, was also dying. Ardo, the most loyal of the fey lords, was furious at Glitanius and vowed to destroy that which he holds most dear, Leafhome. Ardo tricked the Glass Empress, and 14 of her most trusted lords, into the depths of a *mirror of life trapping* knowing that they would survive until his plot could be unleashed.

Type: Mercenary Factions

Affiliation Score Criteria: A member of the Myriad must be a good earner, affiliation scores are available to any race or class but some will find it easier to advance than others. The Myriad is not alignment based, but some good aligned members may find the mercenary life tough at times. To become a member the character must approach a current member and ask for entry, this is usually well received as more members mean bigger contracts. A potential new member may be asked to perform some service or even to pay an "entry fee" before being allowed into the fold. Each Myriad Captain has their own special rites of initiation.

Criterion:	Affiliation Score Modifier:
One Time	
Character Level	+½ character levels
Has Leadership Feat	+2
Has levels in Fighter or Rouge	+1
Has an exotic weapon proficiency	+1
Base Attack +5 or Higher	+1
Base Attack +10 or Higher	+2
Charisma 8 or lower	-2
Strength 16 or higher	+2
Lacks any martial weapon proficiency	-1
Owns a stronghold	+5
5 or more ranks in diplomacy	+1
Multiple Times	
Fails in an assigned mission	-2, per mission
Attacks another faction of the Myriad	-10, per encounter
Succeeds on an assigned mission	+2, per mission
Aids another faction of the Myriad	+4, per mission
Recruits a new member into the Myriad	+1, per new member
Donates gold to the Myriad	+1, per 5,000 GP
Tries to uncover the secrets of the Myriad Without the rank of Captain.	-5, per inquiry

Titles, Benefits, and Duties: Although a loosely based organization, members generally respect (but may not trust) other members of other factions of the Myriad. Captains almost always show the utmost respect for each other, and lower ranked members would be wise to respect any Myriad Captain they encounter.

Affiliation Score	Title: Benefits and Duties
3 or lower	**Footman**: not affiliated " officially "
4-10	**Proven:** +2 circumstance bonus on skill checks when dealing with other Myriad members.
11-15	**Good Earner:** You can now fence items through the Myriad at a rate of 10 items a month, you can sell weapons, armor and shields for 60% of cost instead of the normal 50%.
16-22	**Hardened:** Able to access Myriad prestige classes. +4 circumstance bonus on skill checks dealing with other Myriad members.
23-29	**Veteran:** *Scars of War* (EX) Your natural armor bonus increases by 1.
30 or Higher	**Captain:** Awarded a *Shard of the Mirror,* Secrets revealed. (Functions as a *Stone of Goodluck* see Core Rulebook)