



Parietaine

Desperation can drive the noncommittal to damaging commitments.



Amalthea No. 29



The granddaughter of Dawn and Daniel Schema, founders and administrators of ND-S, Amalthea enjoyed the privileges her mother's lineage granted her—but the Schemas' children need to earn their family names with death. Much like Amalthea's mother, Amalthea too was expected to die for ND-S.

Her mother's came about from a laboratory error.

As a young Amalthea watched the indicators for the quarantine chamber, the *decontaminated* reading was clear as her mother stepped inside. Surprised, yet resigned, she said, *There's still a mess in here.*

and Amalthea had no choice but seal the door. It's what her mother would have done, and it's what ND-S approved when a team arrived to investigate.

But working in that laboratory, watching her mother mutate out of the corner of her eye, made her hide deeper inside her work. Some mutations are confined only to the origin point while others spread or harm others. That was her mother's duty —

to ensure those with such mutations did not walk the tunnels. It then became Amalthea's.

Her mother's years of pain faded to a final dying pounding on the glass, then a slump against it. Amalthea did not take her eyes off her until she vanished —until Death took her to ND-S in the center Zone, she knew.

Amalthea crept through tight side tunnels and crevasses to sneak inside but found no real entry, and she wasn't the only one wanted access.

Frightened of the people she met, those who live in darkness to evade death, she returned to her laboratory but found it occupied. Her mother had returned.

Like all the dead, she was a silver-plated automaton wired to a hive mind with little recognition of Amalthea. At least she was finally a Schema.

Amalthea didn't work in that laboratory any longer.

She found a team to join and managed mutation testings; most who saw her were beginning to deform, and it was her job to ensure they either continued on as usual or were taken to quarantine.

Of course, her team were all made of young men and women.

They had to be—no one with mutations could work in such a field.

When hers began, she hid it.

It was easy when it was a patch of black steel across her neck and collarbone that moved as she moved.

Hiding it only worked so long until a coworker ruined it when his mutated spine tore through his uniform.

The entire team was tested by investigators and immediately replaced.

Amalthea found a small team allowing mutations whose sole duty was research.

It wasn't helping the Zones or even ND-S.

It was just busy work for has-been twenty-somethings who outlived their purpose and were killing time until they joined the dead collective.

Amalthea grew close to one of her coworkers, a man named Midas whose skin was turning to glass the way hers was turning to steel. It made her wonder what her body beneath must have looked like because under Midas' skin, his bones were turning gold. He was always sarcastic about it attacking his face first.

She thought there was something attractive about his skull.

They bonded—it was companionship for her, but it was love for him.

Their other coworker had a child named Nemesis, and before the coworker died of her mutations, she asked Amalthea and Midas to care for Nemesis, who turned out to be a prodigy.

After 12 years of working together, her and her team were visited by Daniel Schema alongside a woman infested with snakes.

Using her, they were to investigate a way to slow mutations—the hope Amalthea was looking for.

The only trouble was, as they researched the woman's mutations, they discovered all are different for everyone, and they are sourced from some aspect of their lives—and are triggered by the bone implants that make them citizens. ND-S caused the mutations themselves.

Midas and Nemesis wanted to stop the research, terminate their implants, and flee—thereby cutting themselves free of the dead collective but marking them as traitors and rebels.

Amalthea needed the research before she joined them the way her mother had.

She did not want to join the dead collective, but she didn't want to live like the filthy, frightened people in the side tunnels and crevasses, but she didn't want to abandon Midas and Nemesis.

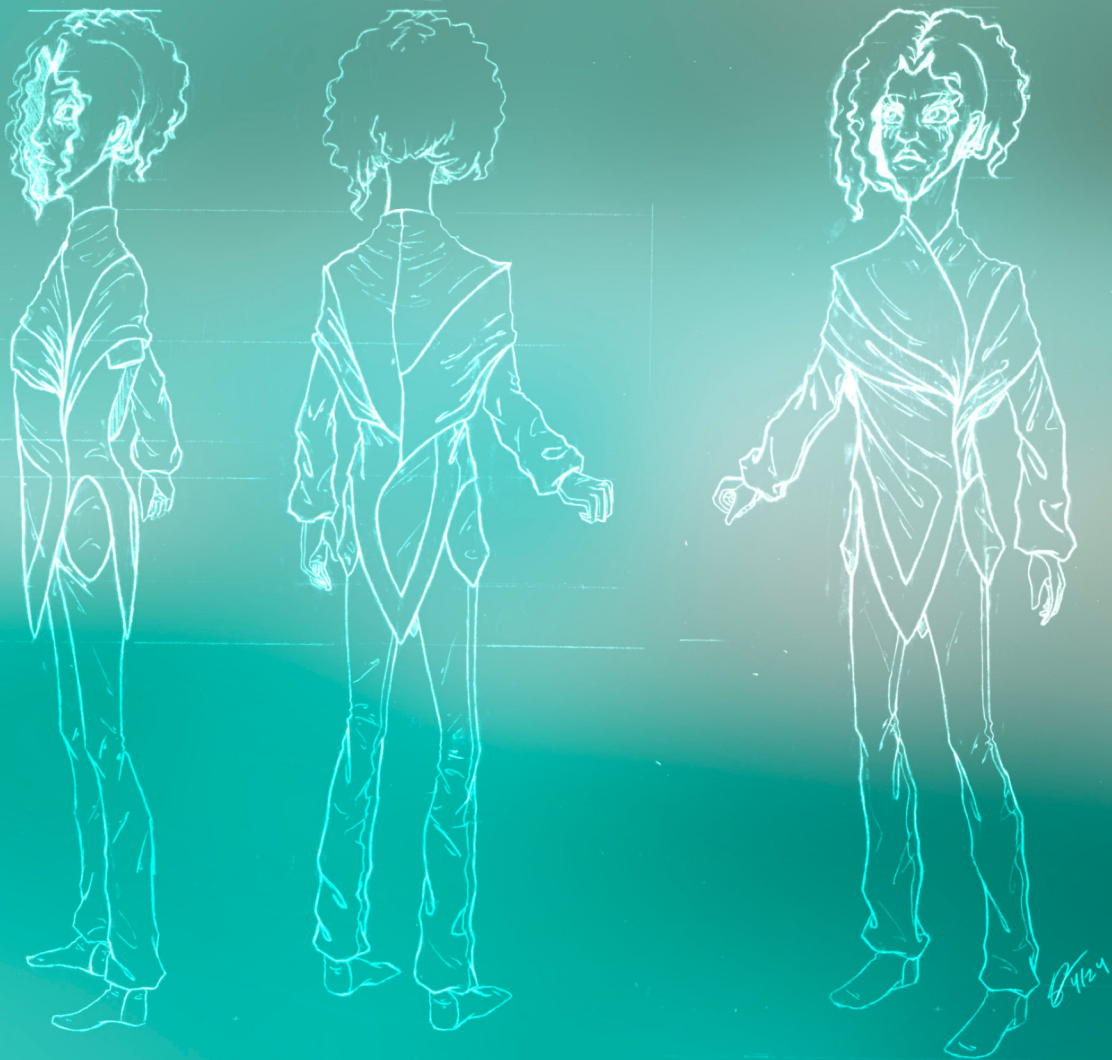
If she could finish the research and slow her mutations, she could find the reason for them.

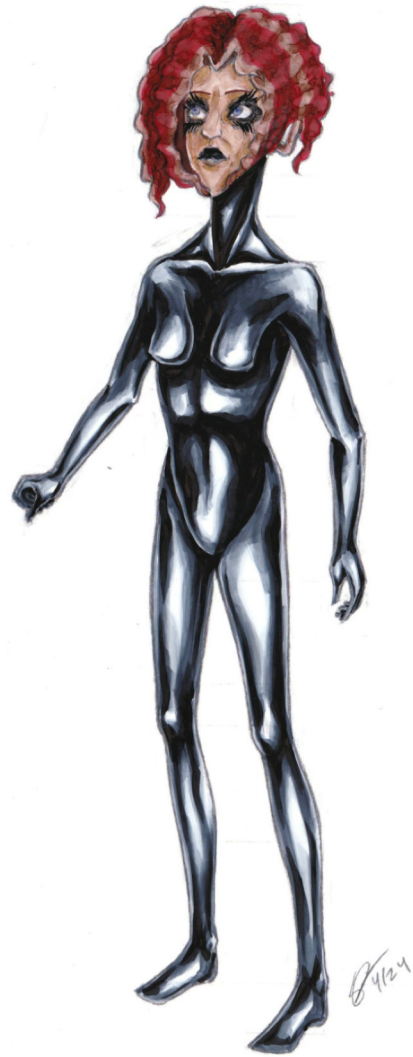
And if she could discover how to be just as immortal as Dawn and Daniel —surely they have some implant not yet released to the public—, she could help Midas and Nemesis too, and neither have to leave.

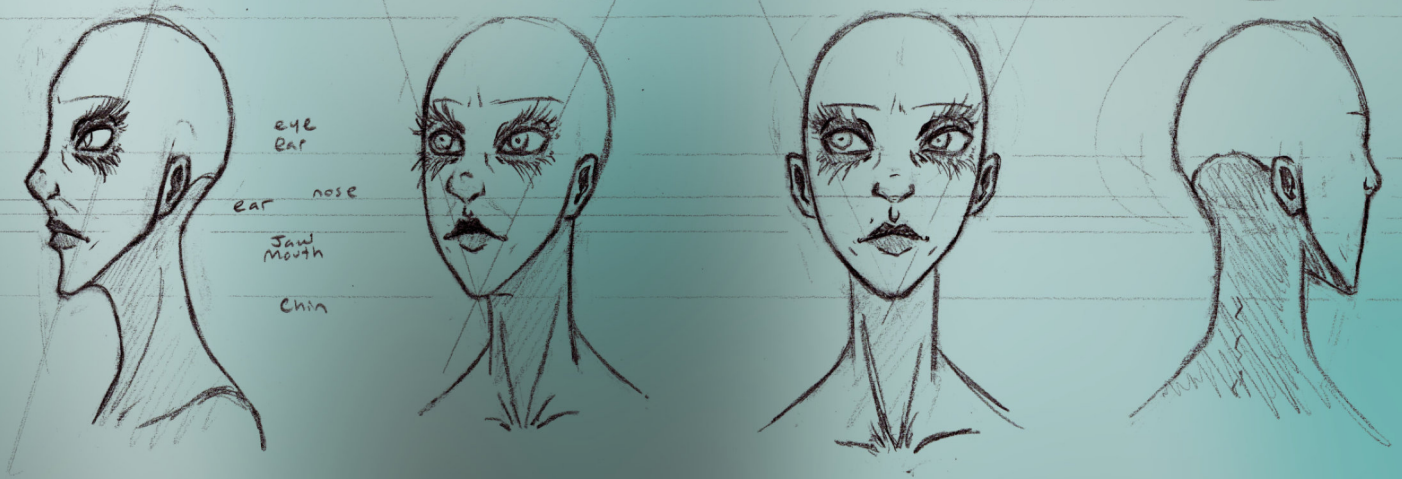
Caught between her rationalizations and fears,

Amalthea learns too late that one cannot be loyal to the Schemas yet be against the dead collective—and ND-S might not have a reason for the mutations so much as a reason to cover them up.



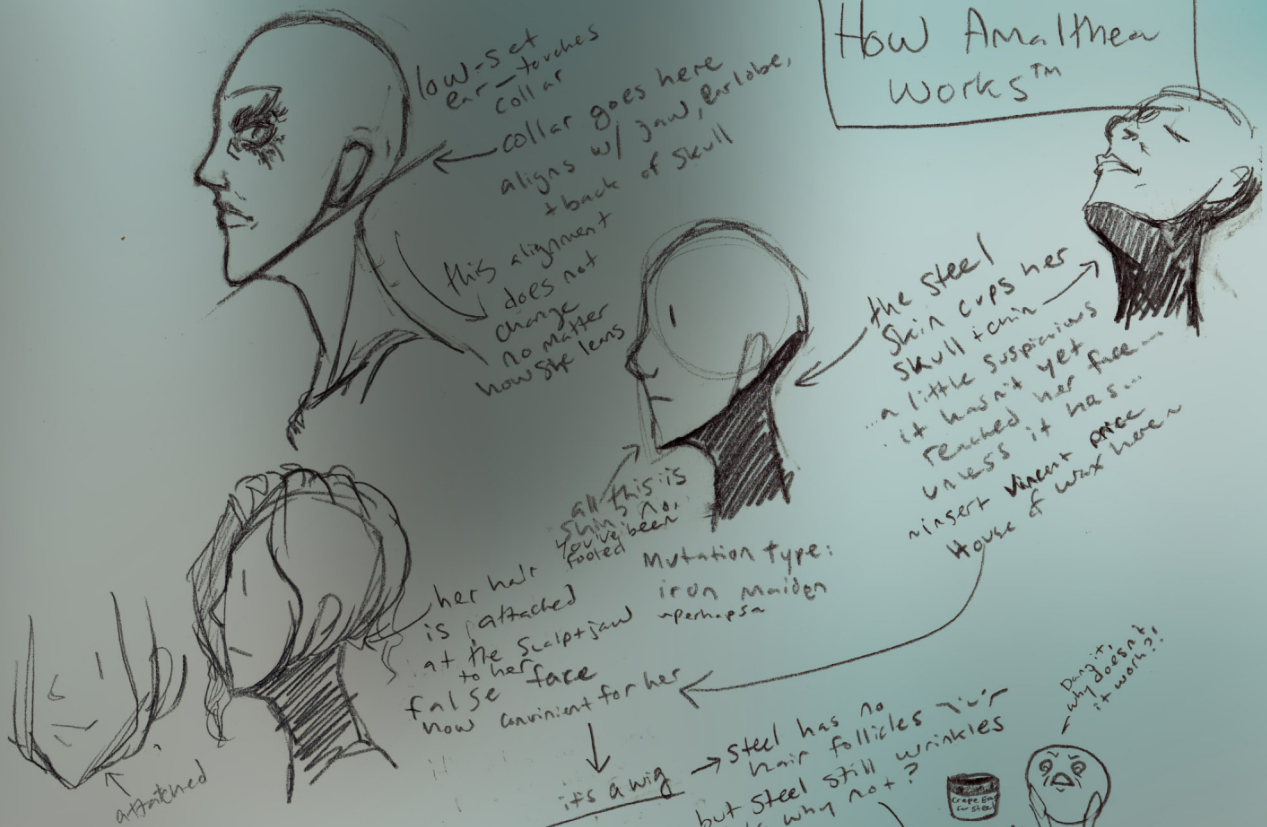






The true horrors of

How Amalthea works™



Shiny

What is her false face made of?
... secrets
- perhaps a very thin piece of adhesive vinyl
- perhaps a skin graft - thin treated adhesive - who knows!
one of ND-S' victims will be the same complexion, that wasn't told who, the Schemm's just gave it to her, so now can she go against them? They might like her face
She could pull a Midas and not wear the false face, but she wants to impress ND-S/ the Schemm's + also not be pushed to a back lab like Midas was
a face seen only if her false face is removed surgically or by force for it is on top of her real face - her expressions + wrinkles move the false face
This is fine

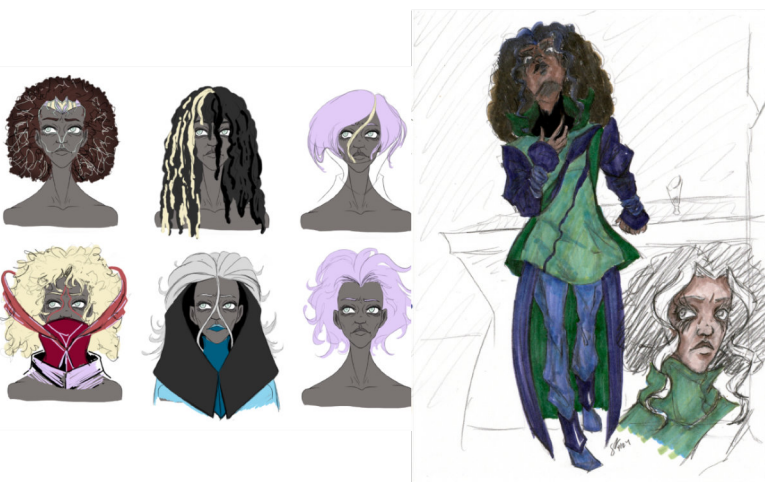
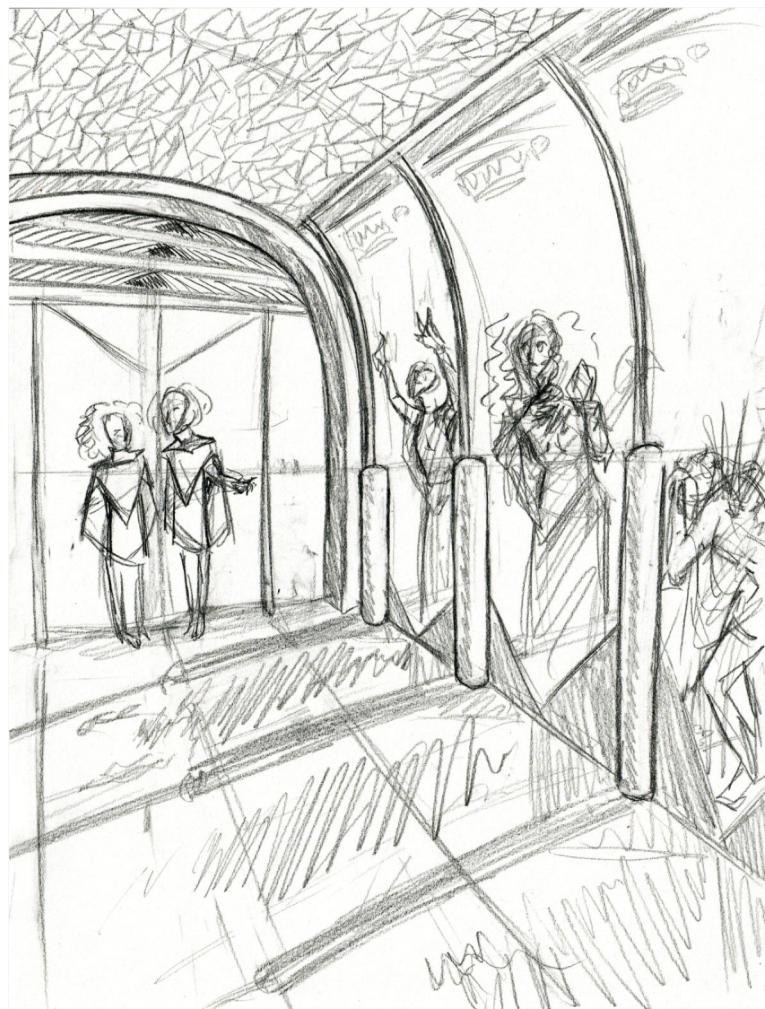
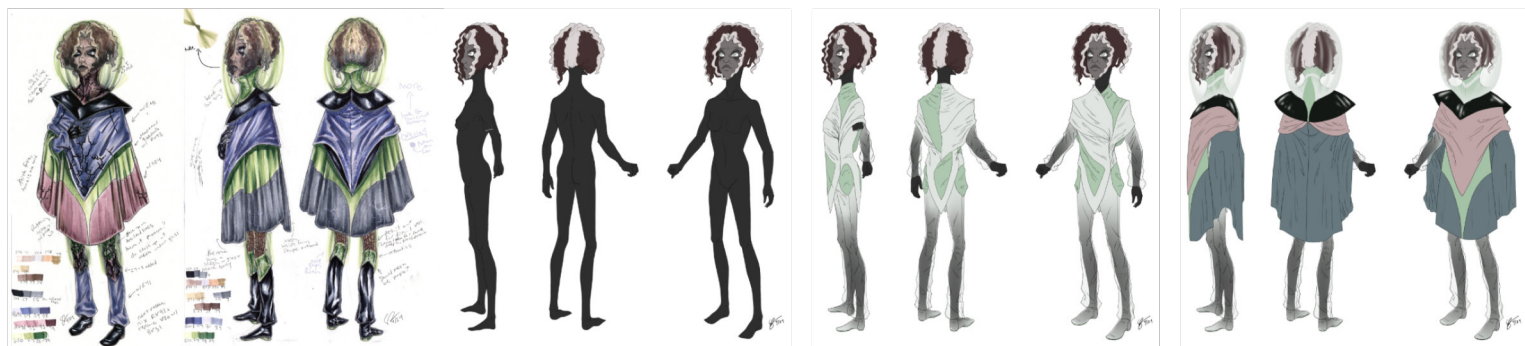


Parietaine's underground Zones, segmented by tunnels that wind and intersect, are safer than the filthy spaces between tunnels where the stubborn suffocate. Amalthea, her bonded Midas, and their coworker Nemesis are lucky. It isn't often a team such as themselves receive such a large tunnel for their work. Narrow at the front and back with a vaulted, wide center chamber, it connects only to other ND-S facilities.

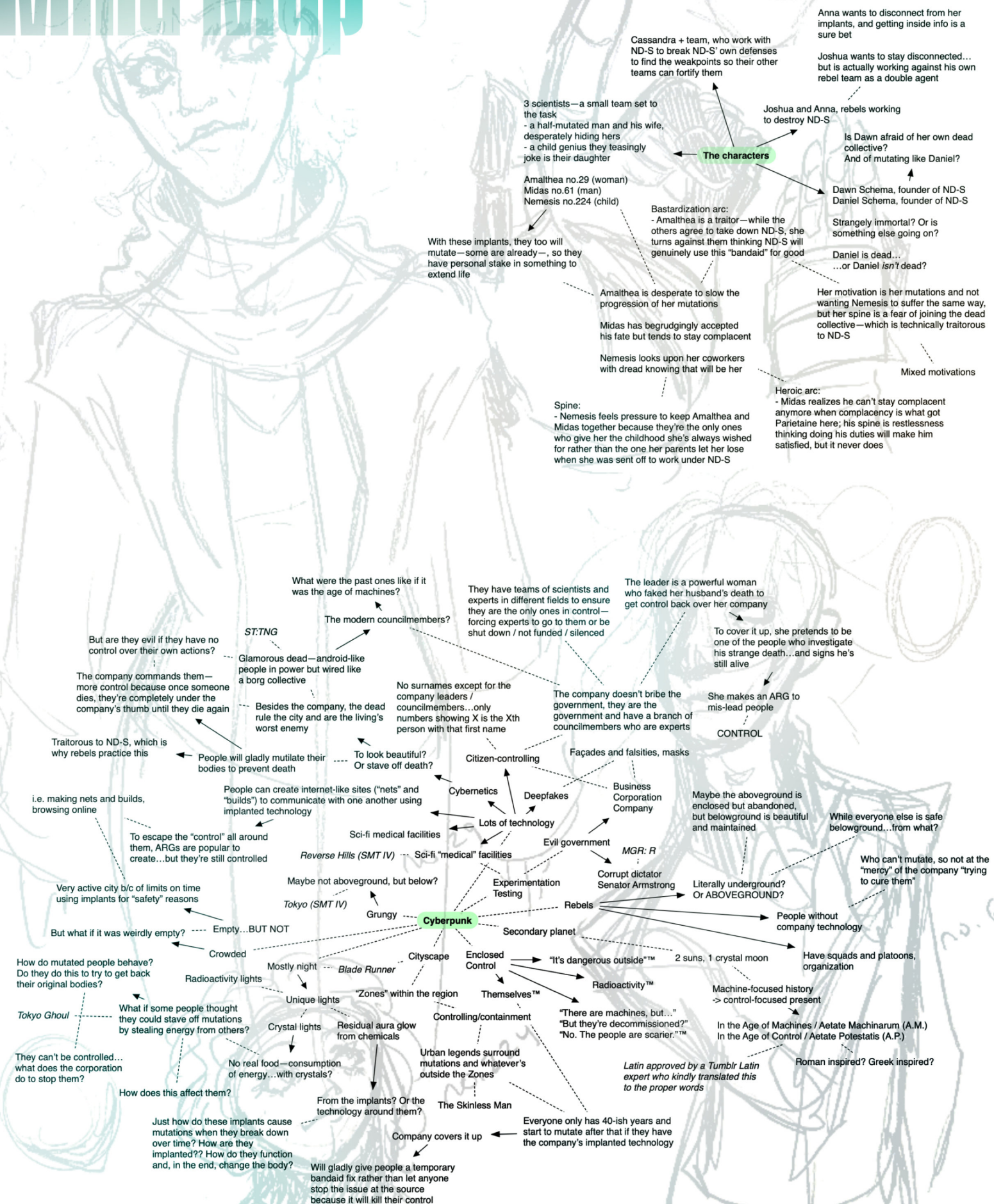
As she scans inside with her bone implants, the door slides into the wall, betraying Nemesis, hiding around the corner with a snake in her tensed arms, poised for just the right moment to throw it. Her grin falls, and she instantly scuttles to Midas to put the snake back.

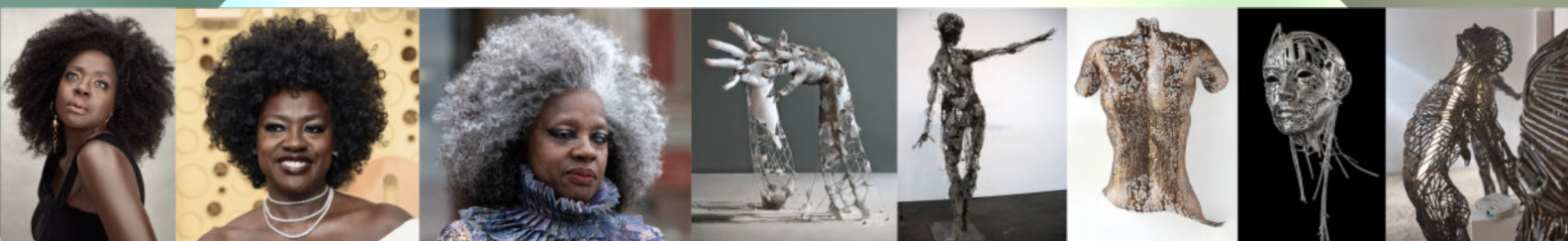
Midas is where he usually works—a curved table cluttered with all kinds of instruments—, and as always, he's in his chair, set at the lowest height. But unlike what Amalthea expected, his attention isn't on his work: the woman seated in front of him with snakes around her head. They curl down her back and shoulders and weave around her arms. Keeping his eyes to the ceiling, Midas greets Amalthea listlessly, distractedly, and why not? The ceiling is encrusted with stained glass imagery backlit with Ice crystals that sheet the stone behind it. Colorful shards refract across his face. Despite the tunnels being S  ninee-mined, the crystals' thin veneer seems too natural to come from the same hands that carved the Zones.

Amalthea is lucky indeed. It isn't every day a project such as this comes to their tunnel. If they can slow this woman's mutations, they can help everyone living in the Zones—even her and her team.



Parietaine Mind Map





Mutations - Body Breakdown



Mucha - Art Nouveau



Stained Glass Motif



Visual Shape Language



metal - powder coated

veil - organza

veil - chiffon

veil-tulle

tunic - polyester

metal - electroplated

metal - cold-rolled steel

