BASE RAIDERS

SUPERPOWERED DUNGEON CRAWLING

ROSS PAYTON

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Slang Design

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FOREWORD

"The world is the will to power – and nothing besides!"
Friedrich Nietzsche

Superheroes are allergic to Nietzsche.

I'm not talking about the vaguely fascist overtones of vigilantism in general. Hell, if you're talking about late-80's, early-90's, they LOVE that part of it. I'm talking about the Will to Power: the idea that the basic drive for human existence is the desire for more and better. Your average superhero doesn't like that idea at all. They spend most of their time finding adherents to that philosophy they can punch and roast with optic blasts.

In the comics, bad guys want power and become super-villains when that pursuit inevitably goes wrong or, worse, is fulfilled. Meanwhile, good guys are good guys precisely because they don't want to be.

Think about it. Radioactive spiders. Misplaced alien weaponry. One-of-a-kind super soldier serums. Just being "born this way." The A-list of superheroes is absolutely crammed with, at best, bumblers that stumble into god-hood and, at worst, anthropomorphized freaks from another species, sucking on their Kryptonian silver spoons.

Even egocentric super-geniuses like Tony Stark need an invitation in the form of plot shrapnel before it's acceptable to be better than human. Batman at least has to study and exercise to utilize his "superheroic" trust fund, but the very willingness to put effort into being exceptional stains his morals many shades darker than his peers. The Hulk, perhaps the greatest mass murderer in history, still gets a free pass because he never asked for those gamma rays. Anyone can be a hero so long as they aren't a try-hard.

But if some guy wants to save his wife from a terminal illness? Madman. A scientist makes a prosthesis that allows workers to safely handle radioactive materials? Criminal. Someone dares to rise from humble beginnings and build a world empire that employs tens-of-thousands? He must be the devil himself.

Superheroes are only superheroes because they never wanted to be. Their goodness is measured primarily on how ungrateful they are for the privilege. Comics leave us rooting for whiny, woe-as-me gods that can barely stop bemoaning their luck long enough to stop a mugging.

Ross Payton recognized these hypocrites. And he killed them…or erased them, or whatever the hell Ragnarok did. Regardless, they're gone now. Even their perverted sparring partners, corrupted by the audacity to want to be more, are off the playing field. All that's left are puny humans… and all those nifty toys.

Base Raiders are superheroes for you and me. It's superheroes for a world of smart phones and laser eye surgery and invisible clouds of ever-accessible information and TV robots that know what shows you like through digital mind reading. It's a superheroes game for the generation that stopped being purely "human" twenty years ago and couldn't be happier about it. It's for the people that never met something they didn't want to hack, customize, remix, or make better, including their own bodies. It's a vision of superpowers tailor-made for a people that illegally download what they can't afford, leak what they can't abide, and won't tolerate being told "no."

The meta-human slate has finally been wiped clean. And maybe, just maybe, wanting in on the action doesn't make you a monster. Maybe that death ray is better off in your hands than government black ops team or criminal syndicate. And perhaps cancer patients could use some of that hoarded super-science more than some dead avenger's secret clubhouse. After all, isn't it about damn time your moral imperative took back the night? Is it so hard to believe that actually having to work for power might make you respect it more than the privileged elite?

There's only one way to find out.

Base Raiders isn't a game for the weak, waiting endlessly for their superpower lotto tickets. It's a game those strong enough to fight for the heroes they must become. The power is out there. Take it.

Or someone else will.

—Caleb Stokes

INTRODUCTION

Base Raiders began as just another superhero campaign for my friends. Most existing settings had a plethora of high powered heroes and villains, which I did not want for my game. After all, if the players can always be bailed out by other superhumans, how heroic can they be? Also, if they faced the wrong villain, they would be guaranteed to lose, no matter what they did. I wanted a setting where the actions of the players meant more than any NPC. There are superhero settings that accomplish this, but usually by establishing that the player characters are among the first generation of superhumans. Thus, there is no history of heroes and villains fighting in colorful costumes or saving the world from cosmic threats. I wanted all the trappings of the superhero genre, like magic and super-science existing in the same world, alternate universes, mutants, aliens, robots, magical beings, and super soldier drugs. This meant my setting needed a history of superheroes and villains, but I didn't actually want the previous generation being part of the game. So I got rid of them.

Base Raiders wipes the slate clean, removing all of the old superhumans, so the player characters can take center stage. A cosmic 'event', like one of those heavily promoted crossovers that has its own special logo causes every hero and villain to disappear. It leaves their toys behind though, tucked away in countless lairs, hideouts, headquarters, and bases. Eventually someone finds one of the power sources left behind and becomes the first in a new generation of superhumans. From that point on, it's your game.

The entire history of the Base Raiders setting is designed to give players and gamemasters a broad palette to create any kind of superhero game they want. Every element is used to explain why there are so many abandoned bases and why no one can stop normal people from gaining superpowers. That being said, feel free to rip out or change any part of the setting that doesn't fit the game you have in mind. Not just the setting either. The rules are there for your enjoyment, so change or ignore any part of the rules you want.

I guarantee that the author of this game will not get mad if you change something. You can even run a game of Base Raiders in another system. Conversion guides will be available by the end of 2013 at baseraiders.com for Wild Talents, Mutants and Masterminds, and Savage Worlds.

The original campaign for Base Raiders was called The Heroes of New Arcadia. It took us over a year to finish it. During that year, the player characters went from being a group of self-empowered citizen vigilantes to world leaders and protectors of the entire universe. Heroes died, villains were stopped, and a good time was had by all. The campaign did not focus on raiding abandoned bases, but it did come up again and again. Dungeon crawling, of a sort, became an important trope in the campaign. Players did not want to raid bases just to gain more power or loot though. They raided specific bases because they had a reason, like investigating Ragnarok or uncovering the base of a hero one of the player characters knew. These sessions were always memorable because they had more at stake than personal wealth and glory. Players cared about the outcome of the base raiding because it mattered to the story.

A good dungeon crawl is only partially about overcoming the guardians and traps. It's also about the reward at the end. The loot. It could be a pile of gold coins, a magic sword, or a suit of robotic power armor. It doesn't matter what it is. What matters is what the hero intends to do with the loot. Heroes use the gold to feed the needy, the magic sword to slay an evil dragon, or the suit of power armor to save the world. In Base Raiders, the loot can be anything you can imagine. What kind of story can you tell when you hand normal people the power to change anything in the world, even themselves? There's only one way to find out. Enjoy!

—Ross Payton

CHAPTER ONE
THEN AND RAGNAROK

Long before superhumans were made public, they walked with people, in secret, as long as humanity itself has existed. The first were mystics, sorcerers, and servants of powerful supernatural beings. Revered as gods and demigods, these empowered beings became the stuff of legend but used their power without thought to the future. They jealously guarded the secrets to their power and were often hated and feared. Almost all of them died violently, either at the hands of other superhumans or mobs of fearful humans. This meant that there were never more than a handful of superhumans alive in the entire world at any given time for most of human history. Many of the early heroes and villains thought they were unique beings, blessed or cursed by the gods.

Gradually, as history progressed and the population rose, more superhumans appeared. Secret societies of empowered beings formed to accumulate power and knowledge. The rise of science brought new possibilities of empowerment and new philosophies that encouraged the sharing of power instead of hoarding it. However, lynch mobs, inquisitions, and other forms of persecution kept the superhumans in the shadows. Fortunately, their powers allowed some of them to gain positions of power and influence in society. Naturally, some governments and other institutions learned of the existence of inhumanly powerful beings but their knowledge was limited and inexact. Their efforts to recruit empowered humans had limited success at best.

By the dawn of the 20th century, the population of superhumans and other empowered beings exploded. Thousands of superhumans fought in the First World War, on all sides. Only a century earlier, there were perhaps a few hundred such beings in the entire world, the majority of whom were dabblers in the occult, each wielding only a handful of spells.

Several factors led to the growing numbers of super-powered beings. Dozens of alien spaceships landed on earth, observing and experimenting on humanity. Widespread interest in the occult led to a new generation of self-taught sorcerers. The first wave of mutants were born, possibly caused by the alien experiments. The mutants were often indistinguishable from normal humans and many possessed super-genius levels of intelligence. These genius mutants created radical new technologies including bionic implants and intelligent (but erratic) robots. All of these new developments were sought after by the great powers and used as secret weapons in World War I. However, their deployment was hampered by incompetent officers and a desire to keep superpowered beings secret at all costs. The leadership of every great nation was terrified at

ALTERNATE HISTORY

The history of Base Raiders diverges from reality but it is not integral to the setting. If you prefer a game where history is virtually identical to our own, then you can easily do that without changing most of the background material. The history of superhumans in Base Raiders mainly impacts how the government and the public view super powers and those that wield them.

In the standard history of Base Raiders, the public views superpowers as a net benefit to civilization, although not without its drawbacks and flaws. Governments and powerful institutions view superhumans as threats and rivals to their own power. If you change the history in your Base Raiders games where superhumans do not have a mostly positive impact in society, then you must think how that will affect the attitudes of mainstream society.

the possibility of the public discovering the truth. They thought the knowledge of aliens, mystical beings, and mutants would destroy civilization and loose anarchy upon the world. Thus, superhumans were mostly used to counter each other instead of affecting the outcome of major battles. Despite the best efforts of every government, rumors spread of superhumans, magical beings, and aliens. Many of the junior officers, scientists, and politicians involved in the war realized it was futile to keep them secret forever but they were not yet in power, so they remained under wraps.

These rumors fueled the popular imagination. After the war, stories of 'mystery men' fighting gangsters featured prominently in movies and radio serials. Sightings and encounters with superhumans were common but reports were often suppressed by the authorities. During the 1920s and 30s, a clandestine arms race was waged between every major political faction around the world. Any superhuman found was recruited as quickly as possible. Even superhumans with minor abilities were sought after, as scientists could study

them in an effort to learn the secrets behind superpowers. Attitudes towards superhumans changed during this time as well. World leaders gradually came to realize that the public could accept the fact that superhumans existed. By the mid-1930s, most nations had decided to incorporate superhumans into their armies but on a gradual time line that no one could agree on. Because of their indecisiveness, the first public declaration of the existence of superhumans came from China in 1937. Both the Nationalists and Communists revealed to the world that they each had cadres of trained superhuman guerrilla warriors to fight the Japanese occupation of their country. The Chinese superhumans were in fact, a barely trained group of peasant mutants and a few sorcerers but their powers were real and verifiable. Film of a single man lifting a truck and throwing it over 200 yards at a squad of Japanese infantry became an iconic image of the age.

Within weeks, every nation raced to announce their own super soldiers, including Japan. The world would never be the same.

WORLD WAR 2

Superhumans fought in every theater of World War 2 on both sides, not just as soldiers, but as spies, doctors, engineers, and scientists. They were not trusted by either side, so few superhumans were given command positions or placed in high security research positions. At first, they were viewed only as valuable for propaganda purposes. They were deemed too important to risk as front line infantry and too unusual to incorporate into the military in other areas. But by 1941, superhumans were regularly used in combat operations in some capacity or another. This year saw the first real divisions between superhumans and mainstream humanity.

Military leaders viewed superhumans with a mixture of envy and contempt. Superhumans were seen as 'lucky' civilians who did nothing to earn their power and were coddled by the public and politicians. Officers harassed and mistreated superhumans in order to 'keep them in line' and any 'supe' that misbehaved was brutally and publicly punished. Even superhumans that performed admirably or heroically were not spared, as they were frequently reassigned to the most

dangerous missions. Even though the powers that be desperately recruited as many superhumans as they could find, they did not want them to live very long. A superhuman that became too good at fighting was considered to be almost as dangerous as the enemy.

Very early on, civilian and military leaders realized that superhumans could replace them if their power was kept unchecked. It would only take one powerful and charismatic superhuman to unite others under his banner and take over a country or two. After that, it would only be a matter of time before the rest of the world was ruled by superhumans. Superhumans would assassinate human leaders and launch coups to grab power. Whether or not that would actually happen is hard to say but every leader and policy maker believed it. In order to keep a class of elite superhumans, aliens, and magical beings from taking over the world, both the Allies and Axis powers developed three systems of countermeasures: power nullification, super soldier creation, and the anti-solidarity doctrine.

As the war dragged on, superhumans became more important. Despite the high fatality rate of superhumans in combat, their abilities became vital to the strategies of top commanders. Patton and Rommel both relied on clairvoyants and telepaths for reconnaissance while a single Nazi sorcerer, nicknamed "the King of Death," changed the course of the entire war by allowing the Germans to hold Stalingrad. The King of Death animated the corpse of every soldier slain in the campaign as a dangerous undead warrior. Instead of using them piecemeal, the Germans kept the army as a reserve force, used only for emergencies. This gave the Third Reich the forces necessary to counter Operation Uranus in 1942, thus keeping their supply lines intact and keeping them stuck in Stalingrad.

Despite the Anti-Solidarity Doctrine, a group of American super soldier commandos was formed in 1942 to infiltrate into Europe and destroy high value targets. The unit, known only as Squad 13, included the first recipient of the Paragon Super Soldier formula, a mutant, the first tele-operated robot, a man that claimed to be an immortal dragon, an alien warrior from a parallel dimension and Avalon, an unimaginably powerful hero of unknown origin. They took down a number of priority targets but also encountered several concentration camps as they traveled through occupied territory. In early 1943, the squad disobeyed

ABOUT THE COUNTERMEASURES

Power Nullification: Removing superpowers from problematic superhumans would end any potential crisis easily and was viewed as an ideal solution. All superhumans could be brought in line with the rest of humanity, preventing a future ruled by super tyrants. It was soon realized that even superhumans with similar or identical powers responded differently to power nullifiers.

Super Soldier Creation: The early generation of superhumans were empowered accidentally or through non-reproducible means, which meant that a government couldn't pick who was empowered. By developing technology that could deliberately empower a person, a government could guarantee that only the right people were given super powers. In theory, the idea was that even if a few super soldiers went rogue, they could be brought down by the rest. It was only by the end of the war that the great powers made effective means of mass-producing super soldiers and by then, policy had changed.

direct orders from Allied High Command and liberated Stutthof Concentration Camp. After killing the guards, Squad 13 members opened a portal to another dimension and evacuated all of the prisoners and then destroyed every building in the camp. The prisoners were then returned to Allied territory publicly. The daring raid captured the heart of the public and boosted morale, so Allied commandeers did not punish Squad 13. However, the Nazis killed hundreds of innocent civilians in retaliation to discourage further raids. In a rage, Avalon flew to Berlin and used alien telepathic projectors to implant memories of the death camps in the minds of every loyal subject of the Reich. He then threatened to unleashed horrific weapons of mass destruction on Germany if the camps were not closed.

Despite the propaganda, the memories caused mass panic. Thousands went mad, and hundreds committed suicide. The unrest paralyzed the city and the army felt

COUNTERMEASURES (CONTINUED)

Anti-Solidarity Doctrine: Superhumans were too valuable to exclude from civilization but they had to be kept from the reins of power. It was thought these superhumans would grow to resent the rest of humanity and would eventually rise up and take over. Treating them as prisoners on work release would breed resentment and hatred. Trying to placate them with luxury and privilege would make them callous and immature.

Superhumans were still social creatures and they naturally sought others like them for protection and companionship. The US government developed a secret policy of isolating superhumans and causing them to mistrust each other. Other nations soon adopted the policy as well. No single superhuman could take over the entire world, because even if he was invincible and unbeatable in combat, he could not effectively rule over even a single nation state by himself. It required too much work by too many people to administrate over even a single nation's bureaucracy. Fear and brutality only go so far.

In order to prevent superhumans from ruling the world, they had to view others like them as rivals and enemies, not as allies. They had to put the concerns and goals of normal humans above their own and most importantly to view themselves as normal humans with a lucky gift, not as a fundamentally different being. It worked well during the war, but when it was discovered during the Cold War, it nearly sparked the uprising it was designed to prevent.

it. Desperate, Hitler ordered the camps emptied and the prisoners marched into Allied territory. The mass evacuation effectively stopped the war in Europe for over a month, as the Germans tried to regroup and the Allies had to deal with a massive humanitarian crisis. During this time, the Allies dissolved Squad 13 and kicked Avalon out of the military. He was already too powerful to arrest but he was deemed too unstable to remain in. Discharged super soldiers still aided in the evacuation, transporting tens of thousands of refugees to safety but the war picked up as soon as the camps were emptied.

When fighting resumed, it became even more violent and savage. Both sides tested weapons derived from alien technology and developed new uses of superpowers in battle. The first wave of super soldiers were thrown into battle and despite their new powers, had an average lifespan of 5 days on the front line.

In December 1943, veterans of Squad 13, including Avalon and other experienced superhumans gathered in secret in London to discuss how to end the war. They decided to take matters into their own hands and kill Hitler, no matter what it took. Three months later, and at the cost of half their number, they succeeded in assassinating him. The war ended in June 1944, as the remaining German leaders negotiated with the Allies to avoid prosecution in exchange for a peaceful surrender rather than a protracted battle. After all, thanks to the King of Death, the German Army was far stronger than it would have been had the Reich lost Stalingrad. However, the generals running Germany realized if they did not step down soon, Hitler's killers would soon set their sights on them. During the time between Hitler's death and the surrender, Soviet forces pushed their way into East Germany, although they did not reach Berlin.

Japan lasted until August 1944 when the first atomic weapons were used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Manhattan Project had run ahead of schedule, thanks to the help of computers built by superhumans.

While normal humans started the war, superhumans effectively ended it. The systems of countermeasures designed to keep superhumans in check were only partially effective. Many Nazi leaders and thinkers were pardoned in exchange for what they knew about keeping superhumans under control, a fact that alarmed many of the empowered heroes that had won the war.

THE COLD WAR

Soon after the Axis powers surrendered, the battle lines of the Cold War were drawn across the world. The USSR feared the West's weapons of mass destruc-

tion and began to build their own as a deterrent. The West responded by building a new generation of super soldiers that could intercept Soviet missiles or survive the explosions. This necessitated a response from the Kremlin and on and on it went. Of course, not every superhuman wore a military uniform.

Many of the empowered survivors of World War 2 saw the need to protect and nurture humanity from the kind of horrors they saw firsthand. Others, disillusioned by the war, turned to decadence and crime. These empowered criminals were the first super villains the public had ever seen. Most of the remaining Squad 13 veterans took up crime fighting, especially against the first wave of super villains. Avalon prevented ex-Nazi super soldiers from taking over small countries in South America while Cerulean, a heroic sorcerer, stopped Mafia-backed mutant gangsters from looting Fort Knox. At first, the public could hardly tell the difference between the news and the movies, as the stories of superheroes battling super villains seemed to come straight out of Hollywood. Even villains seldom killed their enemies during this time, as an unspoken code of conduct was observed by both sides to avoid fatalities and excessive property damage when possible.

Public support of superhumans rose to an all-time high in 1947 when Avalon and a cadre of other superheroes and even a few super villains banded together to stop an alien invasion. A fleet of UFOs landed over Roswell, New Mexico, apparently believing the capital of the United States was located there. The misguided aliens were highly advanced in the fields of science and technology but lacked the ability to comprehend human behavior, culture, or strategy. The Americans defeated the invaders with little loss of life on either side. Most of their technology was destroyed in the brief invasion, but American forces and independent superheroes both captured highly advanced alien tech. The captured aliens, nicknamed the Greys by the press, were interned by the government but were eventually forgiven for the invasion. Most were returned to their home world, but some stayed on Earth for various reasons. A second fleet landed in Tibet a year later, apparently without knowledge of the failed first invasion but was repelled by Communist superhumans. The Soviets never revealed what they did to the second fleet.

In 1949, the KGB executed a plan to increase their area of control in Germany. Deploying over a hundred sleeper telepath agents scattered along the border, the Soviets incited a 'revolution' by mind controlling military, law enforcement and political leaders in order to push them to secede from the West. Other telepath psychically nudged huge crowds of civilians to riot. The USSR sent in their own troops to annex the territory, on the pretense that they had been invited as liberators. The Warsaw Pact forces marched into Berlin but only claimed half of the city before they were stopped by the U.S. Army. No shots were fired but a tense standoff put the entire world on the brink of war. NATO threatened war if the Soviets tried to move further west so the Soviets accepted the new border, including a divided Berlin. American superhumans detected the plot but not in time to prevent the annexation.

The incident sparked outcry in the West over the misuse of superpowers. Paranoia about Soviet mind control led to widespread persecution. Anyone even suspected of having communist ties or being mentally controlled by Soviet agents was blackmarked for life. Independent superhumans, including the hero Avalon, were pressured to swear allegiance to America. The public began to distrust heroes and vigilantes that worked outside of the law. Hollywood stopped making films that portrayed superhumans as pure heroes or villains. Darker tales of morally ambiguous superhumans who killed and kept secrets became more popular. The FBI investigated every hero they could and when they found their secret identity or some other secret, they blackmailed the hero into covert service for the United States. Of course, superhumans living in Soviet controlled nations had to remain secret or face forced service in the army, imprisonment, or worse. Throughout the 1950s, pressure on superhumans mounted.

Even super villains were not spared the treatment, especially after being caught by superheroes and turned over to civilian law enforcement. CIA or KGB agents would recruit the imprisoned villains as cat's paws to use against their foes in global espionage schemes. When some of these villains were captured or killed while working as covert agents, the situation was finally brought to the attention of Avalon. The fact that the United States had undone all of the heroes' hard work in order to gain an advantage against the USSR convinced Avalon that the superhuman community had to take a stand. In 1960, he announced the

creation of an independent group called the Ideal to protect humanity and promote peace between all sapient beings.

At first, the Ideal was dismissed as a country club for elite superhumans, but these beliefs were proved wrong after they saved millions of lives in their first year of operation, mostly through search and rescue operations in natural disaster and ending widespread famine in Africa. These acts of heroism pushed public opinion back in favor of superhumans. Many thought the Ideal could do a better job of running the world than any politician. Both the United States and Russia united to crack down on the Ideal, as they feared they would inevitably take over. The United Nations passed sanctions against the group, and many countries around the world followed suit. The US seized their bank accounts and holdings. The USSR arrested and executed several known human associates of the Ideal. Avalon and most of the Ideal continued on with their work, helping where they could. Public opinion was split over superhumans and the Ideal, as many still viewed them as more efficient and less corrupt than any government. Widespread disillusionment began to spread around the world.

By the time the United States became heavily involved in the Vietnam War in the mid-1960s, the Viet Cong had delved into dark magic, the only source of superhuman power they could access. Despite the backing of the Soviet Union, the Viet Cong were not given super soldier drugs or technology. The Kremlin preferred to send over their own super soldiers rather than giving the Vietnamese direct access to such power. However, the Viet Cong had found ancient ruins scattered around the region in isolated jungles. These ruins held mystical artifacts and the carvings on the wall revealed occult secrets. A team of Vietnamese scholars translated the carvings and learned many mystical rituals that promised great power to whoever enacted them. Tests proved that the rituals came from an ancient form of destructive war-magic. Hundreds of bright Vietnamese soldiers were taught the rituals and sent into battle. Most were slain in combat, but their power was undeniable. Western super soldiers fared little better against Vietnamese sorcerers than normal soldiers so America responded by unleashing super-weapons built from alien technology. By 1968, the Viet Cong were slowly but surely being pushed back to Hanoi but the greatest victims were the innocent civilians caught between the battle. Furthermore, the super-weapons devastated the land, wiping out massive sections of the jungle. In desperation, the Viet Cong used the only ritual they had not used so far –

Summoning of The Avatar of Death. Over a hundred sorcerers died in the ritual, but they succeeded in summoning this extra-dimensional horror to Earth. The Avatar marched on Saigon, utterly annihilating everything in its path. Ho Chi Minh quickly realized the monster was not in his control and ordered the remaining sorcerers to banish it before it destroyed the entire country, but they lacked the power to do so. The last ritual was a trap left to punish any lesser civilization that dared practice sorcery.

Both the Communist and Western armies put aside their differences to slay the Avatar of Death but even their combined might could not stop it. Analysts on both sides determined that the Avatar would not stop until all life on the planet was extinguished. The United Nations Security Council convened to address the crisis but they could not find a solution. After the failure of the super-weapons, nuclear missiles were ruled out. Avalon appeared before the council, teleporting in, and offered the services of the Ideal. The UN agreed out of desperation.

Avalon, the sorcerer Cerulean, and dozens of other superheroes met the Avatar at Saigon's border. The resulting battle lasted four days, but the Ideal prevailed. The Avatar was banished. The entire battle had been televised, cementing the Ideal's status as protectors of Earth. After the battle, a conference was held between NATO, The Warsaw Pact, and the Ideal. All three sides agreed that the militarization of superpowers would lead to global catastrophe. During the conference, the Ideal revealed that they had saved the world twice in secret. In 1957, a blackmarked American super-scientist, who had been kicked out of his position in the Department of Defense for rumors that he had been compromised by a KGB telepath, tried to release a mutant strain of the small pox that would have killed virtually all of humanity. In 1961, Algerian mutant terrorists attempted to sink a Soviet submarine and frame France for the attack in an effort to start a war between Europe and Russia. Both times the Ideal stopped the plots and kept it secret to prevent further persecution of innocent superhumans.

After months of negotiation, the world powers signed a new accord formally recognizing the Ideal as the world's superhuman governing body. Officially neutral between the West and the Communist powers, The Ideal was charged with policing superhumans and protecting the world from threats derived from super-power sources. In exchange, they would be free of persecution and allowed to maintain their secret civilian identities. The accord was not always followed but it remained more or less intact until after Ragnarok.

AVALON

Avalon first appeared in the public eye in April 1938, saving over a hundred people from a burning building in Brooklyn. He had superhuman strength, speed, the power of flight and was seemingly invincible. He was soon lauded as the "Greatest American Hero since George Washington,", even though no one knew his origin or if he even was American. After a run-in with Nazi saboteurs in Manhattan in 1939, Avalon approached President Roosevelt about fighting the Nazi menace.

Between 1939 and 1942, Avalon worked discreetly on behalf of the Allies. He rescued important scientists from Nazi capture or assassination, retrieved valuable artifacts from the ocean depths, and fought Nazi superhumans. He earned the trust of many in Washington, which he used to lobby for an all superhuman commando team to fight the Nazis in Europe. After 3 years of courageous service and despite the Anti-Solidarity Doctrine, which Avalon himself was not aware of, Allied High Command finally agreed. Squad 13 was formed.

THE ACCORD

The accord is a lengthy treaty with many nuances and loopholes but the following rules were observed most of the time between signatory nations and the Ideal:

1. All superhuman agents of the Ideal were formally registered by the Ideal. The Ideal kept this data secret from other nations, except when ordered by the World Court. This included the secret identities of the heroes and identities of all contacts and human allies.

2. The Ideal would attempt to coordinate all humanitarian efforts with all nations, as appropriate. This meant that they could not operate in a nation without the permission of a host nation in normal circumstances. However, the Ideal could act without permission in emergency situations. Host nations that tried to meddle with the Ideal could be punished with sanctions by the UN. In practice, this was often threatened by dictators that attempted to coerce the Ideal into helping their regimes in exchange for being allowed to provide aid to their citizens. The Ideal became adept at manipulating and evading such attempts at coercion.

3. All law enforcement agencies had to cooperate with the Ideal when they pursued empowered criminals. Preference was supposed to be given to the Ideal, so many law enforcement agents resented the superheroes. The Ideal had to cooperate with national governments in making sure super villains remained in prison once convicted. High power super villains were often turned over to the Ideal for imprisonment, as no one nation had the skills and resources to detain extremely powerful super villains. Eventually, the Ideal made arrangements with several countries to secretly arrest and imprison dangerous or unstable superhumans. The Ideal black sites had little oversight or monitoring and many have not been visited since Ragnarok.

4. All civilian superhumans were to receive free power training, therapy, job placement, and legal advice from the Ideal, in order to ensure that they did not misuse their powers by accident or become alienated from society. The Ideal was often allowed to provide lawyers to superhumans in legal trouble.

5. Superhumans above a certain power level were not allowed to serve in any military, nor was any country allowed to pursue research that would allow them to empower soldiers beyond that level. The Ideal was to remain neutral in any war. Any superhuman powerful enough to fight a conventional army on their own was barred from service. Superhumans that possessed significant abilities but could still be killed by normal humans were allowable. The United States, China, and the USSR all violated this part of the accord in secret.

6. Superhumans with mind control powers had to identify themselves if they wished to remain in normal society. They could not use their powers without permission. No one was allowed to violate the free will of a sapient being through any superpower. The Ideal had to provide every government in the world with the knowledge to detect and counter all known forms of mind control, shape shifting, telepathy, and possession. This was a contentious point between nations and the superhuman community. Many thought the Ideal purposefully withheld some knowledge in order to give themselves an upper hand.

7. Superhumans beyond a certain power level were barred from seeking any political office. They could not endorse political candidates or advocate revolution, peaceful or otherwise. Politicians that used the Ideal as a bogeyman to drum up fear of superhumans were made to stand down by their party leaders. The Ideal became a political sacred cow, as no one wanted to provoke a war between humans and superhumans.

8. The Ideal had to allow the UN partial oversight of its operations. Inspectors regularly toured Ideal facilities and kept tabs on prominent Ideal members. A constant irritation, the Ideal soon learned how to trick or subvert the inspectors.

9. Powerful superhuman-built weapons and dangerous alien artifacts had to be kept in specially built vaults and monitored by UN Security Council appointed teams and the Ideal. These vaults were often built to house a single artifact, such as the Sword of Doom, a mystical weapon capable of leveling mountains. The vaults are a top priority, as each such artifact could end all life on the planet. Each is an active site maintained by a well trained and equipped garrison and each artifact is behind a dozen layers of security including traps built by the most cunning intellects of the Ideal.

10. All non-human sapient beings were under the protection of the Ideal. Nations that found non-human sapient beings in their territory had to alert the Ideal and treat each case separately in the best interests of the beings. Non-humans that committed crimes had to be tried in the World Court. In practice, non-humans were frequently mistreated or killed by human authorities. Even humans from alternate realities were treated as non-humans by many countries. The Ideal tried earnestly to protect them but did not commit enough resources to the task. Avalon eventually founded an off-world refuge called Sanctuary, an entire earth-sized planet in a pocket dimension, to house these refugees. After Ragnarok, the refugees were on their own.

11. The advance of technology and scientific knowledge would be released to the public at a slow and steady rate. Advances discovered through reverse engineering alien technology would not be released to the public until a UN panel agreed it was safe to do so. No Ideal superhero would release a greatly advanced piece of technology or scientific theory without the consent of the UN.

BEFORE RAGNAROK

After the Accord was signed, all of the major powers settled down to wage the Cold War and protect their own interests. The Ideal proved themselves as excellent mediators and troubleshooters, providing much needed expertise in stopping existential threats to the planet. Even another alien invasion in the late 1970s did not pose as great a risk to humanity as previous invasions. The hive mind insect-like aliens nicknamed the Biologicals were no match for the Ideal working with the support of the West and USSR. When the Kremlin signaled the collapse of the Soviet government and the end of the Cold War in 1991, many cheered. No longer would the world be divided. However, the collapse of the Soviet military machine led to a rise in crime, as hundreds of Soviet super soldiers become professional criminals or mercenaries. Even worse, the secrets of gaining superpowers hit the black market. Scientists and poorly paid technicians sold their knowledge to criminal syndicates so they could feed their families during the Soviet economic collapse.

The proliferation of superpower technology and spread of new super villains alarmed the Ideal and governments around the world. During the Cold War, the West and the USSR each did their part in keeping the number of superhumans low. Now Russia nor any of the newly independent countries in the former Soviet bloc could not stop the sudden growth of new super criminals. However, the Ideal stepped in and launched a massive crackdown during the 1990s with the cooperation of law enforcement agencies in dozens of countries. Ideal members would identify and take down newly empowered criminals, find out their source, and work their way up the syndicate network. The syndicates responded with extreme violence, assassinating police officials, politicians, and anyone else that worked with the Ideal. However, the Ideal did not waver and over the course of the decade, took down every major criminal organization that dealt in Soviet-made super soldier technology. They even took a number of secondary measures to prevent criminal syndicates from ever utilizing super soldiers again. Every ex-Soviet scientist capable of building the technology was accounted and either given a generous retirement package or imprisoned. Subtle hypnotic sug-

gestions were implanted in hundreds of crime bosses and their lieutenants to avoid super soldier tech at all costs. Rumor campaigns were spread in the criminal underworld that super soldier technology caused sterility, cancer, and madness. Athletes, rock stars, and rappers were paid to promote the idea that superpowers weren't used by 'real men' and sophisticated marketing campaigns were launched to equate super soldier technology with emasculation and weakness. While the crackdown was successful, it firmly convinced a generation of political leaders that superpowers could only be used by government agencies and the Ideal. Total prohibition of all sources of empowerment was the only logical policy. Advocates for reforming superhuman policy were pushed to the fringes.

Ever since the existence of superpowers was made public in 1937, virtually every government banned the act of gaining superpowers intentionally or selling the means to do so. The only exceptions were soldiers and other sworn servants of the state. Even minor and independent states prohibited superpower proliferation because of pressure from the more powerful countries.

As a result, most superhumans before Ragnarok gained their powers naturally or accidentally. While some intellectuals and politicians had long advocated loosening the regulations that prohibited normal humans from legally gaining superpowers by any means, it was only after the Cold War that they gained some traction in the public arena. When the threat of World War 3 disappeared with the USSR, many thought that a new class of superhuman could be created to peacefully improve the world. Super-geniuses could cure more diseases while super-strong first responders could save more lives after a disaster, all without relying on the Ideal. These advocates were dismissed as foolish Utopians by pundits and policy experts. The rise of Soviet-made super criminals was proof that only elite government leadership and the Ideal could be trusted with such power. But with the rise of the Internet and global economy, the Ideal realized it would be harder than ever to stop superpowers from getting into the hands of the unwashed masses.

Ideal heroes like Avalon advocated for stringent laws to be passed to punish superpower proliferation

and specialized task forces to hunt this new class of criminal. The US and many other governments reluctantly agreed but they resented the Ideal for asking them to foot the bill. Many US politicians complained that superpower proliferation was the Ideal's job and if they couldn't do it on their own, they shouldn't have signed the Accord. As a result, the US government created a new law enforcement agency, the Empowerment Proliferation and Security Agency (EPSA), that was severely underfunded and staffed. Before Ragnarok, the EPSA was considered one of the worst assignments in the federal workforce, only above the TSA.

It should be noted that the post Cold War crackdowns, laws, and task forces were targeted at new superhuman criminals, not at established villains. While a superhero in the Ideal often had a career lasting 5 years or less, the average super villain in the Cold War only operated for less than 2 years or for decades. Most super villains in that period would either get killed or arrested very quickly or make a big score and retire. The Ideal had an unofficial policy of not targeting 'retired' super villains, provided they were not wanted for the murder of police officers or innocent civilians. The Ideal wanted to encourage criminal superhumans to give up as soon as possible and if that meant letting a few bank robbers flee to a tropical paradise and live in peace the rest of their lives, so be it.

This left a small clique of hardened super villains who had careers lasting decades and would not stop as long as they lived. Most of these villains were incredibly powerful and dangerous and were usually mentally ill or fanatic ideologues.

One such villain, Omega, was a super scientist and sorcerer, and eventually became the dictator of a small country, which he ruled with an iron fist. Every subject in his country feared the wrath of Omega's secret police, who were rumored to be demonic creatures, disguised as humans.

Another villain, Dr. Pangloss, was an insane scientific genius and had access to such advanced technology that she could fight the entire Ideal to a standstill.

These villains were unique and no existing policy could adequately deal with them. Thus, they were largely left alone as long as they didn't cause too much trouble. Many of the policymakers behind the anti-superpowers laws wanted to prevent the creation of a future Omega or Dr. Pangloss.

ALIEN INVASIONS

The people of Earth have gotten used to the idea that aliens exist and would like to conquer their home. Three alien invasions have happened and it is believed the Ideal have secretly thwarted other attempts in the past. These attacks have made many people suspicious of all non-humans, which is partially why only humans have full civil rights. Not all humans are so prejudiced, but the average citizen has heard hundreds of stories about violent and dangerous aliens compared to the handful of stories about heroic or benevolent ones.

Hundreds of spacecraft have crash landed on earth, many of which were never detected. As a result of the wars and downed spacecraft, alien technology, particularly from the Greys and Luyteins, appears on the black market. Engineers, collectors, and would-be superhumans experiment and tinker with discarded alien tech to gain superpowers or reverse engineer it for profit. While selling alien tech or products derived from alien technology is illegal, many businessmen have tried to pass off alien technology as human-made.

1957 - GREYS: FLYING SAUCERS

It was almost comical. A race of small, physically weak humanoids with large heads and eyes, known as the Greys, tried to conquer the Earth. They had spaceships capable of Faster Than Light (FTL) travel but a poor understanding of tactics and human psychology. Easily defeated by Avalon and the Ideal, people today feel a sense of nostalgia toward the Greys. Very few people died in their invasion and it was their misunderstandings, rather than violent conflict, that led to their defeat.

The US captured several ships and weapons, which were held at Area 51, but reverse engineering their technology has proved difficult. Two 'flying saucer' spaceships have been retrofitted for human pilots and are used by the Air Force only in emergency missions because they are irreplaceable.

1978 - LUYTEINS: COLONIZATION

An alien scout made first contact with Earth in 1977. The press dubbed his species 'The Luyteins' out of a linguistic misunderstanding of his first speech to human-

ity. The scout was attacked by a mob of humans but was protected by Ideal heroes. The scout left, disgusted with the savagery of the human species.

Luyteins saw humans as barbarians in need of enlightenment. A fleet to conquer and 'civilize' humans was organized. In 1978, the fleet reached Earth. They brought new tech, new culture, a new religion and a new disease. Thousands of humans that made close contact with the aliens contracted Luyteins's Disease. Mortality was 98%.

A six month conflict ensued as the Luyteins tried to first persuade the governments to accept them as leaders, then coercion followed by outright war. The Ideal barely managed to fight off the Luyteins. In a heroic battle, the Luytein battle carrier crashed on Earth and detonated, vaporizing a two square mile area of the Amazon jungle. The Luytein fleet retreated after the loss. Thousands of Luyteins were left stranded on Earth. They were relocated to Sanctuary.

1984 - THE BIOLOGICALS

A hive mind race in an asteroid crashed in the Pacific Ocean but quickly made landfall in South America.

They were like ants or bees in hive structure and mentality but they were also 8 feet tall and breathed an organic napalm-like substance. They bred quickly but, after a three month battle, the Ideal managed to repel them. A UN task force monitors the world to see if the Biologicals ever reappear. It is feared that a hive queen may have escaped and is only lying dormant. Some warriors and workers have adapted and live as isolated predators in the remote corners of the Earth.

RAGNAROK

After the crackdown on organized crime, the Ideal and the remaining super villains settled into a predictable routine. Villains committed crimes and the Ideal tried to stop them. Sometimes the villains won but not for long. In the end, the Ideal always prevailed. In their spare time, the superheroes worked to build new planetary defenses. There was no warning of Ragnarok. No mystic prophesied it. No genius predicted it as even a slight possibility. When it happened, everyone on the planet was taken by surprise.

Ragnarok began when an object approximately 80 square kilometers in size manifested in deep orbit over earth. The object had an irregular shape and a stony exterior. Sensor scans failed to penetrate the object and little other information could be learned.

Within one hour of the object's appearance, prominent superheroes and villains began to disappear, seemingly vanishing in plain sight. Investigators could not discover how the superhumans were taken but it did not resemble any known form of teleportation, gating, or other form of instantaneous travel. However, they did detect an energy signature linking the disappearances to the massive object in orbit.

The Ideal sent out all of its most powerful heroes to investigate the object. Personnel on the ground lost contact with the Ideal when they closed within 1 kilometer of the object. Within 17 hours of the object's appearance, every known superhero and villain had been taken by the object. The Ragnarok Object disappeared 18 hours and 13 minutes after it first appeared.

The event was soon called Ragnarok, "The Twilight of the Gods," by the press. A worldwide panic kicked off hundreds of riots and most countries declared martial law. Wars nearly broke out in several regions. The

UN Security Council convened to assess the crisis. After determining that Avalon and every other superhero of note in the Ideal had been taken by the Ragnarok Object and that every major super villain was gone as well, the Security Council declared a global emergency and ordered every member nation to prepare for an alien invasion.

For three weeks, the world stood still as they waited for the invaders to attack. It never came. As far as anyone could tell, the heroes and villains were gone for good. The UN Security Council declared that the emergency had passed and that without further information, there would be no change in policy. Publicly, governments assured that everything was under control but privately they were paralyzed with indecision. No one knew what to do. Most assumed that Avalon and the other heroes would reappear soon. Corporations wanted to start exploiting the caches of alien technology they had in reserve, but feared possible retribution by returning superhumans. Pundits called Ragnarok a positive event, as it let the 'real' humans reclaim the earth, ignoring all of the non-humans on the planet.

Many influential politicians and policymakers saw Ragnarok as a chance to rewrite the laws when it came to superpowers and the use of alien technology. While remnants of the Ideal were still around, they were mostly sidekicks, henchmen, and other assistants, with few, if any, superpowers. Instead, many decided to dismantle the Accord, piece by piece, with dozens of strategically written laws and executive orders, over a period of months. This was done slowly, because they feared that ending the Accord in one step would cause panic and instability.

It was further complicated by a tragedy in New York. A group of corrupt FBI agents decided to raid the safe house of a missing Ideal hero and sell the high tech weapons stored inside to a waiting defense contractor. They did not realize that the safe house was occupied by a Grey alien, who had been friends with the hero. The Grey crippled five FBI agents and killed one by accident before he surrendered to the police. The safe house caught fire and the contents were lost. The alien died in custody under mysterious circumstances.

When details of the payoff from the defense contractor became public, the public outcry ended the possibility of the government shutting down abandoned Ideal bases for a while. The public overwhelmingly supported the Ideal. The idea of breaking into their homes while they were gone defending Earth from some cosmic threat was offensive.

Very little has happened in the year since Ragnarok. The world held its breath, waiting for the Ideal to return. Only now are people getting used to the idea that their beloved heroes will never return. Governments and corporations have all but shredded the Accord that previously kept them from exploiting alien technology and non-human sapient beings, but they have been unable to take advantage of the situation yet.

Criminal cartels are only now beginning to recover from the Ideal's last crackdown. All of the institutions of the status quo are just now beginning to realize what a world not dominated by powerful superheroes and villains could be like. Reports of self-empowered base raiders finding and looting abandoned bases are just now beginning to surface.

The playing field is as level as it ever will be. A small group of determined and skilled base raiders can become as important as the Ideal or as feared as any super villain. What happens next is up to you.

Timing Ragnarok

No exact date will be given for the Ragnarok event so you have more control over your campaign. However, the canon for the Base Raiders setting states that Ragnarok should happen in the 21st century for the following reasons:

1. The Cold War is over and the former USSR has split into numerous countries. If Ragnarok were to happen during the Cold War, it would trigger World War 3, as both sides believe the other caused the event.
2. The Internet has become a massive sprawling network used by hundreds of millions or even billions of people worldwide. Without the Internet, knowledge of base raiding would never spread, nor would the black market for DIY superpowers ever start up.
3. The Ideal has stopped every major criminal syndicate, mafia, and cartel from using super soldier technology or other means of gaining superpowers. If this does not happen, then the mafia and other similar organizations take over the market for DIY superpowers and raid bases for themselves. Civilians are recruited

or killed when they raid bases.

4. Most countries establish anti-superpowers proliferation law enforcement agencies but give them minimal support and funding. The failure of these agencies to prevent base raiding from becoming popular in the year after Ragnarok is critical to the creation of the movement. However, if the agencies do not exist, then competent agencies take the lead and launch more successful crackdowns immediately following Ragnarok.

Thus, Base Raiders cannot happen before 1991 (the dissolution of the USSR), but running a game set in the early 1990s would create other problems. The Internet would not be advanced and popular enough o support the DIY Superpowers Movement, for example. Thus to be safe, it's best to set Base Raiders in a contemporary setting, with Ragnarok occurring one year before the campaign begins.

However, games set in the late 1990s or early 2000s may be interesting alternatives. Raiding bases in Saddam Hussein's Iraq or taking advantage of the dot com boom could be fun.

The Secrets of Ragnarok

Ragnarok is a cosmic event, caused by beings of god-like power. Instead of providing a single cause for Ragnarok, three possible reasons are given below. If none of these explanations work for your campaign, feel free to create your cause.

1. THE GALACTIC TEST

Nemesis, a vast and powerful alien intelligence, has taken an interest in the superhumans of Earth and has decided to test them for some reason. Perhaps it wishes to understand what motivates heroes and villains or how their powers work. Perhaps it wishes to see if Earth is worthy of existence and will test its greatest beings. No matter what the reason, Nemesis has teleported all of the major heroes and villains into an alternate universe populated with several intelligent species of aliens at war with each other. The aliens were created by Nemesis, although the champions of Earth do not know this. Left stranded on one of several worlds in this pocket universe, Nemesis will let the heroes and

villains do whatever they want. Perhaps they will join forces with one of the alien species to win the war or attempt to unite all of the races in peace. Perhaps a desperate villain (or hero) will try to build a machine capable of returning home, even if using the machine would cause cataclysmic damage. The test will take years to conclude, even decades to conclude, and there is a good chance most of the heroes and villains will die before it is completed.

2. THE TIME TRAVELER

A scientist from the far future, armed with unimaginably advanced technology, has temporally displaced every major superhero and villain in order to prevent a cataclysm in the distant future. By removing them from the present, history's path becomes altered enough to prevent the cataclysm. However, this also alters the time traveler, so the technology necessary to return back to the present day is never invented. The heroes and villains are stranded in the future, where changes to the time line can't affect them, but they have no way of returning back to the present. Of course, some super-genius may invent a way to send messages back to the past, so base raiders may receive cryptic messages in their dreams, asking them to free the displaced heroes. Of course, many base raiders don't want the heroes to return - they are looting their bases after all.

3. DOOMSDAY ARMY

Omega, the sorcerer and super-scientist tyrant, created a pocket universe with vast material resources and accelerated time. He then placed several species of subservient mutants and robots in the pocket universe, hoping that a few hundred million years of accelerated time would force them to evolve into the perfect army he would need to conquer Earth. Unfortunately, after only 80 million years of accelerated time, (8 years in the real world), the servants evolved into powerful beings, called the Ascendants, beyond Omega's might. They returned to earth to learn of the reason behind their creation. They wanted to know why they had been made and why they had to suffer for so long.

The Ascendants were horrified to learn of Omega's motives and vowed revenge on the world that had spawned them. To that end, the Ascendants kid-

napped every powerful alien and superhuman on the planet to learn their secrets and torture them for their crimes, real or imagined. Now that the two universes are linked, time flows at the same rate in both dimensions. It is only a matter of time before the Ascendants invade and conquer earth, as their power far exceeds any other species in the known multiverse. The only hope for the Earth are the few clues Omega left behind in several of his bases. As a paranoid dictator, Omega engineered an Achilles Heel in his servants, one that even now they do not realize they have. If a canny team of base raiders can find and interpret the clues, they'll have a chance of stopping the Ascendants when they return.

SHOULD RAGNAROK AFFECT MY CAMPAIGN?

In general, there is little or no evidence of what caused Ragnarok or what happened to the heroes and villains. In all likelihood, it will take decades or even centuries before anyone learns the truth behind Ragnarok. The heroes and villains are almost certainly gone for good, unless you want them to make an appearance in your campaign. If you don't want Ragnarok to be an important factor in your campaign, feel free to leave it as a background element. It is meant as a framing device to justify the existence of so many abandoned bases filled with alien technology and other goodies. However, the return of the Ideal and/or major super villains can make for an exciting campaign. Just keep these factors in mind:

1. Ragnarok is a history-changing event.

Ragnarok is on par with the fall of the Soviet Union, D-Day, or the public confirmation of the existence of superpowers, in terms of its importance in history. Every nation, every major corporation, and every other powerful organization in the world is trying to find out the truth behind Ragnarok and most will do anything to get even a shred of news about it. Thousands of conspiracy theories about Ragnarok exist and hoaxes about the reappearance of certain heroes are common.

Base raiders that stumble upon on a bit of Ragnarok related data can score a major payday or get a hit

squad trying to assassinate them or both. Everything directly connected to Ragnarok is significant. This means a Ragnarok themed campaign will be a world altering campaign. The PCs may have to deal with heads of state and change the course of history before the campaign is over.

2. Anyone that returns from Ragnarok will be a drastically changed person.

No matter what happens to the heroes and villains taken by Ragnarok, it is not a trivial event. It will leave a deep mark on those that return from it. They may suffer from post-traumatic stress, have permanent crippling injuries, or be wholly transformed into transcendent energy beings. It is likely that no two participants in Ragnarok will be affected the same way

Regardless of how they are affected, it is safe to say they will be radically different than what the people of Earth expect. Heroes may be villains and vice versa. Post-Ragnarok superhumans would probably only have a passing resemblance to their previous incarnation. It is even possible the returning superhumans will not be recognized at first or all.

3. Returning superhumans will probably view all or most base raiders as enemies.

Should any superhuman return from Ragnarok, they will undoubtedly view base raiders with disgust and contempt. The idea of groups of self-empowered thieves looting their homes and sanctums will cause almost all of the Post-Ragnarok superhumans to hate base raiders. Even base raiding to support heroic and noble causes will not justify the practice, in their minds.

The Ideal and most of the prominent super villains will probably try to force base raiders to work for them or face a brutal war. This contempt can be overcome in specific cases - heroic base raiders may endear themselves to Avalon. Super villains may find mercenary base raiders useful. Large scale conflict between the old guard and the new is virtually certain.

CHAPTER TWO
THE WORLD NOW

Ragnarok stunned most of the people of the world, causing widespread panic and confusion. Hundreds of riots broke out, but only a small percentage of the population participated in them. Instead, the majority of people instead sank into a quiet despair, retreating into themselves. No one knows how many committed suicide during the aftermath of Ragnarok, but for a period of three weeks, society broke down. The economy nearly collapsed as millions stopped going into work. Eventually, the media and governments managed to rally the despondent masses and convince them that no calamity threatened the world. It helped that nothing disastrous happened following Ragnarok.

Order was restored, but no one was certain what Ragnarok meant in the greater scheme of things. The Ideal protected humanity from existential threats, a fact proven on multiple occasions. To many people, without the presence of the Ideal, humanity was living on borrowed time. Sooner or later, an alien invasion or some other danger would cleanse the earth of all life. At least that's what most people assumed. Would the heroes and villains return? Could the UN take up the mantle of protecting the earth from existential threats? Would these threats even happen now that the villains were gone? These questions were discussed by millions, but the media refused to acknowledge them.

Government and corporate leaders (the Status Quo) did not want the masses to think too much about the current situation, and instead, they emphasized that everything was under control. This created a high level of tension among the populace as many thought the sentiment was condescending and potentially dangerous. Conspiracy theories about Ragnarok thrived in an environment of uncertainty and malaise. People wanted answers, but the leaders of society didn't even want to hear the questions.

THE TELL ALLS

As people returned to their normal lives, several people associated with superheroes and villains began to reveal their identities to the public. Sidekicks and henchmen wanted their 15 minutes of fame and paychecks. The public was never more eager for information about superhumans, so any halfway credible guy in a costume got an agent and a book deal. Nicknamed the 'tell alls', these men and women told lurid stories of scandal, corruption, and political intrigue behind the scenes.

However , demand for these stories plummeted almost as quickly when the tell alls did not reveal any

POPULAR SHOWS

Mainstream Media

<u>Television Show</u>: Broken Promises - a stirring Western epic of lost love and bitter rivalries in the small town of Job's Reward.

<u>Movie</u>: Susan's Perks - a romantic comedy about a woman who teaches a divorced man how to love again by enjoying minor perks and rewards from various companies.

<u>Album</u>: Rugged Delish - the latest hit from the popular boy band.

<u>Magazine</u>: The New Report - topical news with an emphasis on celebrity fluff stories.

<u>Book</u>: A Contest of Swords - part 5 of 8 in the epic Ballad of Hope and Fear novel series.

Alternative Media

<u>Video Podcast</u>: Source/Feed - the most extreme video footage from base raiders, aliens, or whoever else submits.

<u>Independent Documentary</u>: Ragna-What? - A detailed examination of all known evidence about Ragnarok that concludes that the US government is hiding evidence behind the event.

<u>Album</u>: The Notorious DIY's Straight out of Tunguska – hiphop songs about base raiding and gaining superpowers.

<u>Zine</u>: Transform - articles on how to gain superpowers cheaply and safely.

<u>Book</u>: Sanctuary - nonfiction account of a pocket dimension used by the Ideal to house alien refugees but is now threatened by their absence.

new information about Ragnarok. Many of the tell alls were threatened, harassed, or even attacked by deranged stalkers and associates of the superhumans who wanted to keep their involvement secret. The tell alls were discredited or went into hiding within a few months of their sudden rise to fame.

This brief fad would have been unremarkable except for two factors. First, a tell all ex-sidekick named Red Scale inadvertently inspired the DIY superpowers movement, which is explained in Chapter 6 on page 70. Second, the tell alls demystified superhumans in the public eye and demonstrated that anyone could strive for superhuman excellence even if they had major flaws and insecurities.

Before Ragnarok, superheroes and villains were beyond reproach. They were considered modern demigods who were larger than life. To want to be a superhero was naive and foolish. To want to be a villain was beyond depraved. The tell alls pierced that veil and showed that even the greatest heroes were just as conflicted and screwed up as any normal person while even the most dangerous and 'evil' villain had moments of idealism and dignity. This has emboldened and inspired countless base raiders.

TODAY

Media controlled by the Status Quo is little more than propaganda aimed at keeping people from asking questions or challenging authority. Television and movies barely acknowledge Ragnarok or the previous generation of superheroes and villains, let alone the emergence of base raiders, a new generation of superhumans. Westerns are the most heavily produced genre of film and TV show today even though demand for the genre is low.

Topical shows that reference Ragnarok or superhumans are mired in controversy and interference from corporate executives and politicians. Most production companies simply give up and create less controversial shows.

The news media cannot ignore topical events, but most outlets have a heavy pro-Status Quo bias. The DIY superpower movement is a criminal racket and extremely dangerous. Base raiders are criminal looters who are a danger to themselves and others. The Underground is a criminal syndicate run by mutant freaks and aliens.

However, many journalists and editors are fed up with this angle and will eagerly report news of heroic and competent base raiders or any other story that runs contrary to the agenda of the Status Quo. This friction between the owners of media outlets and the people that actually report the news has been noticed by the public, and it has led to the rise of a counter culture.

Counter Culture

The heavy-handed nature of mainstream media's pro-Status Quo bias has alienated millions of people who want an honest and open debate over the role of superpowers, alien technology, and other important social issues of the day. Millions are turning to alternative media sources, both online and offline, to discuss what's really going on. Even though many of these media sources do a terrible job of filtering out false stories and easily disprovable conspiracy theories, they serve a vital function in disseminating news about what's really going on. While they disagree with the views of the counter culture, leaders of the Status Quo get some of their news from counter culture sources because they know the sources provide accurate and valuable information.

It remains to be seen if the Status Quo will take measures against the growing tide of alternative media or not. They could label any information published about base raiding as a threat to national security and use that as an excuse to shut down many news outlets, but even the leaders of Status Quo hesitate over ordering a crackdown of the free press. That may change if base raiders become a threat to their power.

The Law

The first two months after Ragnarok every law enforcement agency in the world went on high alert and many states declared martial law. Many assumed the mass disappearance of the world's most powerful superhumans heralded a forthcoming disaster. But even after it was apparent no such disaster would strike, most police forces remained on high alert. The stress from long hours and the anxiety of waiting for an apocalypse that never happened traumatized countless police officers. Eight months after Ragnarok, most police agencies faced personnel shortages as result of so many officers quitting or becoming unable to perform their duties.

Today, almost all law enforcement agencies are determined to go back to 'normal,' whatever that is, and refuse to go to high alert without a good reason. Unfortunately for the police, without the Ideal, crime and

IDEAL STUN CANNONS

Stun Cannon with Targeting Matrix
   Cost: 8 Skill Points
   Power Tier: Extraordinary
   Trappings: Notice + Unusual, Shoot + Unusual
   Focus [Major]: Ideal Stun Cannon. Has the Training Aspect. See page 186 for rules on using item based powers.
   Charges [Minor]
   Snag [Minor]: Only stuns an enemy when enemy is taken out of combat with this weapon.

This energy cannon, which is a large two-handed weapon connected to a heavy battery backpack, is equipped with a crystal targeting matrix allowing the user to detect invisible enemies. It can affect virtually any corporeal being. Hundreds were given out to police departments around the world to use against super villains and other powerful enemies.

civil unrest are on the rise. They are ill-prepared to take on these new dilemmas.

LOCAL POLICE

Thanks to decades of cooperation with the Ideal, the average state or city police force has a high-tech arsenal to take down superpowered threats. The Ideal developed a series of stun weapons and capture devices that can knock out or immobilize superhumans with common powers like super strength or speed. Major cities often have a custom built suit of power armor or two for the SWAT team to use against superpowered criminals.

Unfortunately , few cops currently on the beat have the training or experience to use these weapons. While the Ideal provided free training to some police officers, these officers are often veterans who burned out after Ragnarok or are too old to work in the field. Police

commissioners seldom allocated enough money in the budget to maintain anti-superhuman weapons either, reasoning the federal agencies or the Ideal could deal with it. Every police department is totally different in terms of actual anti-superhuman capabilities, so well-trained SWAT teams armed with high-tech stun weapons and cops with no training for dealing with superhumans armed with standard firearms both exist. Base raiders never know what type of police officer they will meet next.

Each police department chooses its own policy for dealing with base raiders and non-humans. Some take a pragmatic stance, only going after troublemakers while others harass 'dissidents' whenever possible. Very few local law enforcement agencies treat superhumans and non-humans equally and with respect. Most of the time, the police will try to avoid making arrests when dealing with non-humans because their unclear legal status makes them a pain to deal with in the local judicial system. Instead, they will either detain and hand them off to federal agents when possible or drive them out of town and warn them to never come back. Base raiders and superhumans are usually treated as criminals, and most local cops will either flee a potential fight or respond with as much lethal force as possible. No cop would be prosecuted for killing a base raider in the line of duty no matter the circumstances.

Some cops have already figured out how to exploit the situation by detaining base raiders, confiscating their equipment, and selling it on the black market or by shaking down non-humans for protection money. Attacking or killing a police officer is a serious crime and federal agencies show no mercy to cop killers.

This isn't to say that all police are corrupt. Many local cops are trying to do the best they can to serve the public and keep the peace. They will try to work with non-humans and base raiders if possible, especially if they are reasonable and helpful. Befriending a good cop can be invaluable, but finding a trustworthy police officer is difficult. Some cops will be helpful at first, but will turn on a base raider when it benefits their career. Ultimately, most cops view all people as victims, criminals, or other police. Base raiders and non-humans don't qualify as police or victims.

FEDERAL AND INTERNATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

The last year has been a desperate scramble for federal law enforcement agencies to pick up the Ideal's slack. The EPSA and FBI are focused on fighting for a greater share of the federal budget by attempting to position themselves as the new face of law enforcement. To that end, both agencies have each developed a different strategy to gain the confidence of Washington politicians. The EPSA is trying to paint base raiders as the greatest security threat facing the free world, but according to the FBI, non-human communities are 'alien criminal syndicates' that could plunge the world into chaos. The plans and tactics of both agencies are detailed in chapter 3. Other federal agencies either follow the lead of EPSA or the FBI. Cases that don't involve base raiders or non-humans tend to receive minimal interest from the federal government even ones involving criminal organizations like the mafia.

STREET CRIME

The instability resulting from Ragnarok has caused street crime to rise in most areas, especially large cities. Muggers and burglars work round the clock stealing as much as they can because the police are too overworked to stop them. Even normal citizens are more willing to commit crime now than ever before. Vigilantes roam the street attacking anyone whom they think might be a criminal. White collar workers steal from their companies because no one will notice a little embezzlement in the midst of all of this chaos. Many otherwise upright citizens do whatever they can to earn extra cash, so they can stockpile food and weapons. Few trust the government to protect the people, and no group has taken up the Ideal's mantle. More than a few base raiders got started by wanting to follow in the Ideal's footsteps and fight street crime.

ORGANIZED CRIME

Ragnarok was a disaster to most of humanity, but to the leadership of organized crime, it was an opportunity. While the Ideal had taken many of the syndicates down, some groups still remained, and they knew

Ragnarok would give them a chance to regain their power. Slowly and secretly, criminal organizations recruited muscle, expanded their revenue streams, bribed police and politicians, and consolidated their power. Most syndicates stuck with traditional businesses like recreational drug smuggling, gambling, and prostitution. Superpower tech smuggling was avoided because some criminals thought they would be 'disappeared' like the Ideal if they dealt in superpowers, and others avoided it simply because they hated superhumans and superpowers. Dealing in superpower technology was also far more unpredictable than normal crime.

A few groups have started using superpower technology, but in limited fashion. Most human criminals loathed all superhumans, viewing them as dangerous and unstable. Furthermore, they are considered unnecessary by many criminals. The Ideal is gone, so who needs superpowers?

Today, organized crime groups are loaded with profits and face little opposition from police or vigilantes. However, the peace cannot last much longer. Many gang leaders and capos want to flex their muscles and become a visible part of society. Others eye the territories of other syndicates and want to start a war of conquest.

Sooner or later, the good times will end and the gang wars will begin. Local police forces are unequipped to deal with a new wave of organized crime, and federal agencies are focused on arresting base raiders and detaining non-humans. Only heroic base raiders committed to stopping organized crime have a chance of stopping the war before it begins.

MAJOR CONTROVERSIES

The social issues of post-Ragnarok society are markedly different. Few people care as much about taxes or other traditional hot button issues.

Ragnarok opened the publics' eye towards a number of controversies that seem more relevant and important than ever before. The following six topics are hotly debated in practically every venue of public and private speech:

Planetary Defense

The single most pressing issue of the day is protecting the planet without the Ideal. Many Americans just assume the US military will take over where the Ideal left off, but the Accord and various international treaties prohibit the US government from such an expansion of their capabilities. The key dilemma in this issue is not the technology, but the politics. A planetary defense system needs two base components: the ability to project power throughout the solar system and a trained superhuman force with a variety of power sets like telepathy, energy projection, super speed, and so forth. These two components are necessary to counter threats like alien invasions. The dilemma comes from the fact that such a system would have a monopoly on force across the entire planet if not countered by a similar force.

Some politicians and pundits have lobbied Washington to cancel the Accord and renegotiate the treaties so the US military can legally expand their capabilities. A few extremists argue the government should ignore the law and build up immediately. The expansion would focus on constructing a fleet of armed spacecraft and satellites, so the military could project power throughout the solar system and mass-produce regiments of US trained super soldiers. The Pentagon is prepared to begin work on the expansion immediately, faster than any other nation's super soldier program. The US is honoring international law because they fear it would trigger a global arms race or possibly even a war. Virtually every other country in the world opposes a US military build-up, fearing that it would lead to wars of conquest and unilateral strikes against rival nations. Powerful countries like Russia and China have started to expand their own armed forces in secret but publicly deny any such expansion.

The genius of the Ideal was that they protected Earth while remaining independent of all nations. Their presence did more to keep the peace than any treaty or military deterrent. Now that they are gone, it seems war is all but inevitable, and any war will be in the name of planetary defense. An anti-militarization movement has formed to urge nations to work together and create a multilateral planetary defense system. Most political leaders see this issue as an opportunity

to gain power and wealth, so the activists are unlikely to succeed without assistance.

Base Raiding

Once the public realized that an unknown number of bases loaded with superpower tech and other treasures were just waiting to be found, thousands rushed out to loot them. The first wave of raiders were amateurs who only found a few bases, but they started the movement. As the DIY superpowers movement and the tradecraft of finding and looting bases improves, so do the number of base raiders and the problems they cause.

While raiders do not get much public support, as they are criminals who are stealing military grade technology to use for their own purposes, they are not universally reviled. Many citizens see them as Robin Hood figures who help distribute the wealth the Ideal kept for themselves to the worthy poor. Others simply admire their courage and skill. Some influential leaders see themselves as potentially useful agents and agitators so they quietly sponsor a few raiders. Of course, there is a large movement to eradicate base raiders, which is led by activists who hate superpowers and family members of dead base raiders who see the profession as tantamount to suicide.

Rights for Non-humans

Multiple alien invasions, excursions from Tunguska, and brushes with alternate universes have led to a substantial population of sapient non-humans living on earth. Before Ragnarok, these beings were swept under the rug by the Ideal. Most of the time, they could be sent back to their home or were placed in Sanctuary, an extradimensional refugee settlement created by the Ideal. The other non-humans remained hidden and isolated from humanity. This allowed the government to avoid ruling on their legal status. Did they enjoy the same civil rights as humans? Could they apply for asylum or citizenship? No politician wanted to tackle that problem, so they remained in a legal gray area. Today, without the Ideal, non-humans have started showing up in squatter camps and homeless shelters.

Others have turned to crime to survive. Few employers want to give them jobs, and fewer landlords want them as tenants. While before few people were even aware that non-humans lived on earth in significant numbers, they are visible enough now that their plight has become a hot button issue.

Some people want to round up all of the non-humans and force them into quarantine zones, and keep them forever separated from humanity and the larger world. This proposal unsettles many others, so they have recommended a policy of integrating non-humans with society although no one knows exactly how to accomplish this goal. Instead, pundits and experts debate endlessly on the 'non-human' problem while governments do little on the subject. So far, there has not been much organized persecution of non-humans, but virtually every non-human has experienced harassment or violence at the hands of humans. A few extremist groups have attacked and killed non-humans but they grow bolder every day. As a result, many non-humans have banded together to form The Underground, a secret society devoted to protecting non-humans. They are detailed in chapter 4 on page 44.

Militarization of Superpowers

The Accord prevented widespread use of super soldier drugs and other forms of empowerment in the military, but that will change. Most governments have already established covert superpower programs for special forces soldiers, but no country wants to be the first to be caught 'juicing,' so only a small number of men have been empowered and none of them have been deployed to the field. Certainly if a crisis threatens a nation, they will empower their soldiers *en masse*, but so far, no one wants to threaten the delicate balance of power.

Hawkish pundits loudly proclaim the need to upgrade the military, ignoring the threat of widespread militarization of superpowers. Now that a year has passed since Ragnarok, generals and admirals have started making noise about loosening regulations. They think gradually introducing superpowers into the military will win over the public. The real test will come

during the next major terrorist attack or international crisis. If the military is allowed to deploy super soldiers and tech, and the soldiers are successful, then the public will probably side with the military. If new superheroes appear, like a group of heroic base raiders, then the military will have a tough time changing super soldier policy.

Ideal Technology

The Ideal gifted many advanced technologies to the world, but kept even more out of the hands of humanity. They did not believe the world was ready for certain technologies, including cold fusion and high level artificial intelligence. Now that they are gone, some corporations are paying base raiders to acquire Ideal technology by any means necessary. Already a few Ideal gadgets have been 'invented' and patented by corporations.

Recently, a new holographic display screen was launched by OmniEngineer, but was recalled when an ex-sidekick revealed the screen was an Ideal design. Since then, most governments have passed a moratorium on the usage of Ideal technology in commercial products until their safety can be evaluated. There are no known safety issues with the display screen but many fear the technology is too advanced and dangerous to commercialize at all. Proponents of exploiting the Ideal's knowledge claim that the Ideal held back many beneficial technologies while opponents claim that using the Ideal's tech is opening a Pandora's Box with potentially disastrous consequences.

Magic and Religion

Thanks to Internet dissemination of magical knowledge, self-taught sorcerers can be found all over the world, which has led to considerable friction among the faithful. Church leaders of practically every major religion have denounced the practice of magic. In some parts of the world, lynch mobs and vigilantes attack or kill suspected magic users, and even in normally peaceful regions, new sorcerers face persecution if they are outed. Extremist magic users have retaliated, condemning all religions and attacking those who preach against

magic. The situation is steadily growing worse, and it is only a matter of time before a witch hunt for magic users start or a lynch mob is wiped out by a sorcerer, either of which could cause mass panic.

NOTABLE PLACES

The Ideal preserved every landmark from villains and terrorist attacks, and what damage was caused by alien invasions was easily repaired. Famous structures like the Eiffel Tower and historical sites like Stonehenge still exist, but that isn't to say they are exactly the same. Base raiders might find abandoned hideouts or lairs in any of these famous places.

However, there are a few publicly known superhero bases and other sites of interest to base raiders. Here are a few of them.

Luytein Capital Ship Wreckage

When the Luytein alien empire invaded earth in 1978, Avalon personally destroyed their enormous capital ship, a five mile long spaceship, in orbit. The core of the ship was dimensionally shifted to Sanctuary because its damaged power core was too dangerous to leave on earth. However, most of the wreckage landed in the Amazon jungle, including sections as large as a skyscraper. The Ideal tried to clean up the damage, but no one knows how much of the wreckage they actually recovered. Rumors of wreckage filled with priceless alien technology just waiting to be found in the jungle still circulate to this day.

Tunguska Dimensional Exclusion Zone

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union experimented with many power sources including magic. In 1908, a massive explosion rocked Siberia, which most scientists believed was a large meteor falling to earth near the Tunguska River. In 1959, The KGB recruited a Si-

berian shaman who promised them incredible power deep in the wilderness of Russia. The shaman claimed that the 1908 Tunguska Event was actually an elder god who fell to earth and that he could awaken the god and make him serve the USSR. Curious, the KGB assisted the shaman as he conducted a decades long ritual to awaken the god. In the early hours of December 22, 1962, the Kremlin lost contact with the shaman and every agent on site. When a second team was sent in, they found a dimensional portal about 30 feet in diameter at the epicenter of the original Tunguska Event. The shaman and the first team of KGB agents were never found.

Between 1962 and 1986, the Soviets used the Tunguska portal to loot other dimensions for alien technology, magical artifacts, and biological specimens, especially the corpses of extradimensional beings. The portal would change dimensions at random intervals and seldom reopened to the same dimension, so the Soviets never established an off world stronghold, but they did stockpile thousands of artifacts from across the multiverse. Many Soviet superhumans were empowered with Tunguska-found artifacts which gave the Kremlin enormous leverage in Cold War negotiations with the West. After all, no one could be certain what kind of weapons the Soviets had in their arsenal, which made them all the more dangerous. However, the unpredictable nature of the portal frustrated the Soviets. When they found a dimension with useful resources, they seldom had time to extract much from it. Dimensions with dangerous and useless creatures and hazards were far too common.

A team of scientists was assigned to develop a means of controlling the Tunguska portal. In early 1986, they told the Kremlin they were ready for a field test of their control device. In the early dawn of April 26, 1986, the USSR conducted a secret test of the Tunguska control device. Minutes after the test began unnatural vortexes of energy appeared throughout the skies surrounding the Tunguska River. Portals from other dimensions, some as small as mouse holes and others soaring hundreds of feet up into the air, opened and closed without rhyme or reason. The zone covered A 1200 square mile area centered on the exact spot of the 1908 Tunguska Event. The Red Army cordoned off the region and evacuated all civilians within the zone. Within twelve hours, they made contact with

the first of many monsters which would appear from the portals of Tunguska. The horrific creature killed 83 men before it was stopped. More monstrous creatures would follow. The USSR created a permanent military presence around the borders of the Tunguska zone, but the enormous cost in manpower and resources helped bankrupt the Soviet Union. After the fall of the communist regime, the UN and the Ideal stepped in to help quarantine the zone.

Since the creation of the Tunguska zone, the border guards have reported hundreds of contacts with extradimensional beings and artifacts. After the Ideal disappeared, the border guards have slipped in their coverage of the zone. It is possible to sneak in and out of the zone, a task made easier by bribing a few key guards. The random appearance of unnatural alien artifacts throughout the zone has attracted base raiders from around the world. Some raiders focus exclusively on the zone, spending their careers exploring the region.

Little is known about the zone. All photos and videos of it are classified information and only a few images have been leaked to the public. They depict a pristine wilderness interrupted by occasional alien elements - biomechanical trees, obsidian ruins from an unknown world, and bizarre creatures lurking in the shadows. Stories of impossible structures, nightmarish monsters, and priceless treasures continue to draw in curious and greedy base raiders, but not many return from Tunguska.

The Ideal Headquarters

The public headquarters of the Ideal were built on an artificial island near the Galapagos Islands. A massive walled city, the Ideal Headquarters was placed far away from major population centers so that any attack on the Ideal would not cause undue collateral damage. The Ideal built smaller offices with teleporters in major cities, but these facilities have been shuttered since Ragnarok. Built with fabricators and alien technology, the Ideal HQ is a fortress capable of surviving a direct nuclear attack and possesses the ability to launch spacecraft into orbit. Hundreds of normal

humans, aliens, and robots live in the headquarters; many of them are family members of Ideal superhumans or full time employees of the organization.

After Ragnarok, the facility activated its automated defense systems and went into siege mode. No one has been able to enter the fortress although some family members were teleported back to their homelands. Now that the heroes of the Ideal have disappeared, the UN has called for the remaining Ideal members living in the headquarters to open the gates and let UN inspectors inside. This is ostensibly to make sure the facility has secured all of its weapons. However, the remaining Ideal members, none of whom have major superpowers, refuse to open the doors to anyone. They believe it is their duty to wait for the Ideal, no matter how long it may take. Given the advanced technology used to create the fortress, it is possible they could remain within the headquarters for decades. They have cold fusion reactors and have an advanced food production and water desalination system.

US warships have recently taken up positions near the headquarters, worrying some international observers. No one knows for certain what the Ideal have in their headquarters or how powerful the automated defense systems are. If the US or UN attacked the headquarters, it is likely that they would suffer high causalities and may not even succeed. For now, cooler heads have prevailed, but hawks argue that the Ideal's weapons must be secured by the US government before some terrorist group gets them.

Sanctuary

After the first major alien invasion in 1957 was stopped by the Ideal, thousands of aliens were left stranded on earth. Many of the aliens had nothing to do with the invasion, but were only unlucky civilians sent here to colonize the planet by the autocratic rulers of their species. There was no way to return to their home world because they would face immediate execution. Because no government wanted the aliens as citizens and the Ideal would not allow them to rot in prison camps or be executed, the Ideal had to find a new home for them. Using a combination of potent ritual magic and super science, the Ideal created a pocket universe about the size of the solar system with only one dimensional gateway in or out. Inside the dimension was a single M class star, a few rocky but uninhabited planets, and a single earth-like planet. The planet was terraformed and seeded with native earth flora and fauna. The result was a perfect new world suitable for colonization by the alien refugees. But within a year of their arrival, the Ideal brought more refugees to Sanctuary.

The new settlers were humans from an alternate universe ravaged by an apocalyptic plague. The Ideal had to quarantine the survivors they rescued from earth, and the aliens were immune, so the survivors were taken to Sanctuary. The US never allowed the plague survivors to return to earth or their children either. No country wanted aliens, humans from parallel earths, or other undesirables, and the Ideal had no other place to put them.

Gradually, the population of Sanctuary has grown to over a million refugees, and their children and grandchildren who are trapped there. The Ideal gave them fabricators and other advanced machines to build a new home, but the people of Sanctuary still face shortages of critical supplies. Since Ragnarok, the supply shipments from the Ideal have dried up, and the residents of Sanctuary are looking for a way out. Some suspect there's more than one way in or out, but no one has found it. Perhaps a base raider will find a

WHERE ARE THE LANDS OF OMEGA?

The exact location of the lands of Omega is left up to the individual gamemaster. Omega could have conquered any number of countries and may have waged wars of aggression to annex additional territory from neighboring countries.

It's best to place them some place far from the principal location of the campaign so that the player characters will have to travel to reach it. It works best if Omega's lands are unfamiliar to the players.

portal device in an Ideal safe house and become either the saviors or the conquerors of Sanctuary.

New Arcadia

Formerly Cambria, California, the city has a population of 3 million people. Why is such a large city located between LA and San Francisco? An errant colony ship from a distant alien empire crashed in the region in 1947. The crew did not survive the crash, but the ship was left relatively intact. Government and private industry set up around the ship to exploit its technology, primarily a suite of fabricators.

Even after decades of use and study, the full potential of these machines has yet to be unlocked. In particular, the aliens that built them placed limitations that prevented them from building machines as complex as themselves. However, they could be used to build lower tech machinery and even new specialized fabricators that could build even lower tech devices. An industrial city formed over the next few decades.

Of course, nothing good lasts forever. Several of the original fabricators have been damaged by villains, and a few have been removed from the spaceship and taken to secure government facilities. Since so little of the actual potential of the fabricators has been unlocked, New Arcadia no longer enjoys the dominance it once knew. The tech of the rest of the world has

mostly caught up to it. In some ways, it is a West Coast Detroit. Of course, it is far from dead. Millions still live there, and the spaceship itself has many other secrets waiting to be unlocked.

Wastelands of Omega

Omega was once the world's most feared superpowered villain, a master of super science and magic. He conquered a nation in 1965, and through skilled diplomacy and brinkmanship, he convinced the UN to accept him as the legitimate leader of the nation. He went on to turn his country into a totalitarian nightmare where dissidents were executed by the thousands. Omega also funded terrorists and sold superpower technology to other villains. Eventually in 1993, the Ideal and the UN invaded Omega's nation. Avalon defeated Omega in single combat, but before the dictator could be captured, he committed suicide by turning his sorcery on himself. A hellish fireball consumed his corpse. Upon his death, a failsafe system triggered, which unleashed occult weapons of mass destruction upon his own country. Omega believed that if he couldn't rule his nation, no one could.

The devastation wrought upon Omega's nation transformed into it a nightmare wasteland. Legions of undead monsters and robotic killing machines were loosed upon the land. Earthquakes, fires, and inexplicable explosions rocked the landscape. The Ideal and the UN destroyed the first wave of monsters, but found out that Omega had somehow created a system that would release new monsters at random intervals. However, the monsters could not leave the wastelands because they were bound by a powerful magic. Because of this, the Ideal decided to evacuate the land rather than try to stop the scourge of monsters.

Most of the citizens died or were evacuated, but small bands of survivors still roam the wastelands unwilling to give up on their homelands. They quest to find the source of the monsters, which is a mystery the Ideal never solved. Base raiders have also explored the wastelands, looking to explore the ruined fortresses Omega left behind and kill a few of the monsters roaming the wastelands. The various body parts of Omega's monsters are worth good money to certain black market buyers.

CHAPTER THREE
THE STATUS QUO

Even though the world has seen superhumans who can achieve escape velocity without the aid of a spaceship or destroy armies by themselves, the people who call the shots are almost always standard humans. Politicians who lead countries, business executives who control most of the wealth on the planet, and pundits who frame political debates have seldom pursued or gained superpowers because they didn't need or want superpowers. They are the Status Quo, and above all, they want to remain the leaders of the world. It became a point of pride that they were 'normal' and people who had powers were 'freaks'. While superhumans were too powerful and too useful to kill off, they have never been trusted. Even the heroes were seen as a potential threat to the interests of the Status Quo. After all, what happens when a hero decides a policy is evil and fights the bureaucrats who implement as though they were a crime syndicate?

The Status Quo sees Ragnarok as an opportunity to claim total control over society and will stop at nothing to achieve this goal. When the Ideal was still around, they were seen as a necessity to counter the various alien invasions, evil god summonings, superpowered lunatics, and other threats to all life on the planet. Now that they are gone, they don't want a new class of independent superhumans rising up and claiming the Ideal's mantle. They want to void the Accord (see page 17), build armies of easily-controllable super soldiers, prevent the populace from gaining access to super powers, and create a planetary surveillance/defense system that would protect earth from all internal and external threats. To the Status Quo, internal control over society is just as important as protection from existential threats like alien invasions. While the Status Quo is not a monolithic organization with a single agenda, they do not want 'the little people' making any important decisions. It is the job of governments, corporations, and powerful criminal syndicates to make these decisions.

THE GOVERNMENT

The question of what to do with the new generation of superhumans, the numerous abandoned caches of alien technology, and other issues previously taken care of by the Ideal are hotly debated in the halls of government throughout the world. Most countries follow the lead of the United States when it comes to superhuman policy with the notable exceptions of Russia and China. After all, the US military is best equipped to fight empowered threats, and the US has the most

RESOURCES OF THE GOVERNMENT

There is no single list of weapons and units the various forces of the government can use against base raiders. Gamemasters should decide what the Status Quo can throw against players. Obviously, they have some anti-superhuman weapons and units and have enough firepower to put down all but the most powerful superhumans if they resort to weapons of mass destruction.

However, no government wants to break out tactical nuclear weapons for every superhuman criminal. They will use escalating levels of force, starting with normal police officers. Once a superhuman proves they can't be handled with conventional means, the government will send in one of their anti-superhuman assets, like a giant robot or a unit of psychic soldiers, for example. They only use these assets when absolutely necessary because they have relatively few left.

experience in dealing with superhumans. More importantly, the US exports its policies, tactics, and equipment to allied countries, so many nations have adopted a stance close to the United States when it comes to base raiders, non-humans, and superpowers. The rest of this chapter will focus on the US, but this material can be easily adapted to apply to most other countries. Each country will not be identical to the US, but their policies will be a variation of the same theme.

Current Policies of the United States Government

In the year following Ragnarok, it was common wisdom that the Ideal would return and things would go back to normal. No one wanted to advocate major policy changes when Avalon and the other godlike su-

perpowered warriors of the Ideal could return any day. Today, no one thinks they are coming back any time soon, if at all. Most politicians are in a panic, trying to determine what they should do.

The only thing that everyone in Washington agrees on is that something must be done. Unfortunately, no one can agree on what that should be. Hundreds of proposals have been floated in the halls of congress, ranging from popular ideas like turning giving every American soldier superpowers to bizarre ideas like terraforming Mars and evacuating Earth. As time passes though, dominant policies have formed in regards to five current hot button controversies:

THE BASES

In general, the US Government believes it should control all bases and everything inside. Civilians can't be trusted with the technology, nor do they have any right to it. Strangely, this is not a popular view with most citizens because the average person still respects the Ideal and thinks they'll return. Others just think the government should leave them alone, believing they'll create more problems by tampering with the bases. Right now, the government tries to find as many bases as it can, but steps carefully with the bases of missing heroes, so they will not to offend voters. Federal bureaucrats and investigators are not very good at finding bases either. Instead, they rely on arresting base raiders and non-humans and coercing them into telling them the locations of bases.

Unlike most base raiders, the feds are perfectly content with 'securing' a base that has previously been looted because every base they 'reclaim' for the government looks good for their career. Also, looted bases are generally safer than unopened ones. Right now, federal agents do not feel there is a need to find pristine bases and explore them first. They prefer to let raiders do the hard work. Then they can arrest them, confiscate their loot, and get a great photo-op in the looted base, after the base raiders have disabled the traps and defeated the guardians. Because the very act of base raiding is now illegal, base raiders under arrest have to help the authorities or risk prison.

One of the first laws passed after Ragnarok was the Mandatory Unlicensed Structure Reporting Act. The law states that the discovery of an abandoned hero or

villain base is to be reported to the federal authorities within 24 hours. Failure to comply with this law is punishable with 2 to 10 years in prison. It is a controversial law as the wording of the statute is vague and can be applied to normal buildings and structures.

Currently, it is selectively enforced, but it makes a great bargaining chip for prosecutors to use against base raiders. A few cynical prosecutors have employed a 'catch and release' program. They track base raiders and arrest them after they explore a base. Then they can confiscate most of their loot, pressure them for information on other raiders, non-humans, and members of the DIY superpowers movement, and release them. The base raider eventually finds another base, only for the cycle to repeat.

BASE RAIDERS:

All base raiders are federal criminals, but the fact that many of them have become new heroes complicates things for the government. Most of the American people want new superheroes to emerge, independent ones like the Ideal but not government controlled soldiers or cops. Most citizens believe that a superpowered army and police force would spell the end of democracy.

While small units of superpowered soldiers and cops are okay, few people are comfortable with a large number of uniformed superhumans. Because of this belief, politicians don't want a crackdown of new superpowered heroes, even if they break the law raiding bases. As long as new heroes behave themselves, they won't be targeted by government task forces.

This isn't to say the government leaves base raiders alone. Their preferred strategy is to identify and monitor individual base raiders to build leverage against them. Remember, they can track all phone calls, read emails, dig through bank records, and employ as many investigators as necessary to dig up information. Once a weakness in a raider is found, the government keeps track of it until they need something from the raider. The weakness may be a crime committed by the raider or a blood relative. It could be a personal goal like finding a parent's killer or a secret habit like a drug addiction. Then, a government agent will approach the raider and use that weakness as leverage to get what they want. Several raiders have been turned into informants through this method.

CHINA AND RUSSIA

Russian and Chinese policy towards superhumans is far more restrictive in some ways, but far more free in other areas. Rather than try to create a set of regulations favorable to maintaining public order and protecting the existing hierarchy, both Russian and Chinese leaders see base raiding and the DIY superpower movement as a way to gain wealth and compete against the West. They have no compunction in aiding base raiders who help them, and they see superhumans in a similar light as normal humans - potential allies or enemies, to be judged accordingly. Base raiders can usually operate in either country if they have right political connections and bribe key officials. Raiding abandoned government facilities is never allowed though, and the penalties for getting caught are severe.

The role of non-humans is hotly debated in China and Russia. Pragmatic factions want to grant citizenship to them so they can exploit their talents. Hardliners and conservatives fear non-humans so compromise is impossible right now. Right now, regional government leaders control what happens to non-humans found in their territory. Their attitudes towards non-humans range from indifferent to pure hate, so getting caught can merely be unpleasant or a death sentence, depending on the mood of the leader in question.

So far, the government has not found many active base raiders. As long as a particular character does a good job of keeping their tracks covered, the government isn't likely to find them. But once the character is detected by authorities, they won't know about it until it's too late.

DIY SUPERPOWERS

The public is divided on the issue of self-empowerment. Obviously, many people are terrified of the idea and want the government to stop it. However, millions of

people around the country support the idea even if they don't personally want superpowers for themselves. Some see it as a civil right. Two theories justifying the acquisition of superpowers as a right have become popular. Progressives and liberal see it as part of the larger concept of control over one's body while many conservatives see it as a natural extension to the second amendment of the US Constitution. After all, what good is a firearm when criminals can be bulletproof? Obviously, the Founding Fathers intended Americans to gain the power to emit laser blasts through their eyes. Other Americans just see superpowers as their best chance to support and protect their families. Some see them as an alternative to the current health care system - a healing factor is more effective than the best hospital care.

Instead of blanket bans or crackdowns on all forms of self-empowerment, which would be immensely unpopular, the government is taking a gradual approach. Well-known forms of self-empowerment, like super soldier drugs, are already illegal. Most other forms are still technically legal for now, but that will change. Congress will continue to pass laws banning every form of DIY empowerment until it is illegal to gain any type of superpower through any method. It

will take years, but unless something changes, the DIY superpower movement will collapse under the legislative assault.

NON-HUMANS

Perhaps the single most controversial dilemma facing Washington leaders today is civil rights for non-humans. Millions of Americans are passionate about the topic. Supporters believe denying non-humans civil rights is the greatest evil perpetuated by society while opponents believe non-humans are the greatest threat to society. The issue has sparked arguments, bar fights, and even a few riots. Obviously, with so much on the line, every politician wants to avoid the subject at all costs. There is no official policy regarding non-humans. They are a gray area in the law. Non-humans are treated inconsistently by law enforcement. Sooner or later, the issue will have to be dealt with, but politicians will avoid it as long as possible.

Most non-humans are ignored by the government until they become a problem or an asset. Usually, the squatter communities of non-humans stay out of sight, which is easy to do, but pro-human extremists have recently started attacking non-humans. When the

non-humans defend themselves and injure or kill the extremists, the police get involved and usually blame the non-humans.

A few politicians see non-humans as a potential asset and secretly make deals with the Underground or individual non-humans. Typically, they ask non-humans to protect their territory from other non-humans, monsters, aliens, and other superpowered threats. In exchange, the politician offers them protection and a safe place to live. It is not a great deal and the politician can always betray them, but non-humans usually don't have much of a choice.

MAGIC

Nominally classified as 'advanced alien technology' by the government, magic is technically no different than any other type of superpower, but the cultural baggage that comes with magic makes creating a policy difficult. While no one can claim super soldier drugs or cybernetic implants are protected by the Constitution, many sorcerers can claim their magic is protected by freedom of religion or freedom of speech. After all, most spells are just spoken incantations, which ask elder gods for their aid. The difference between a prayer and spell is muddled at best.

Further complicating things are the objections of prominent religious figures, both liberal and conservative, who have joined together in denouncing the practice of magic. While many politicians would like to pass strong laws prohibiting the practice of magic, they are afraid of a court challenge. If policymakers knew more about magic and how it worked, they could probably devise laws that would stand up to judicial review, but this would require the help of a talented sorcerer. So far, no sorcerer has attempted to help Washington lawmakers write anti-magic laws, but it only takes one.

Law Enforcement and Superhumans

Law enforcement agencies have created new strategies to deal with new superhumans. Instead of trying to compete with superhumans in firepower, police try to stop fights before they start. They will wait to take suspects down until they are asleep or vulnerable. The police seldom chase or fight superpowered criminals unless they are directly endangering innocent civilians or they can bring overwhelming force on a target. However, when they do engage suspects with superpowers, they will usually try to kill the suspect if he does not surrender. They do not take chances, especially as they have no way of determining what exact superpowers any given suspect will possess.

Once a suspect is in custody, superpowered prisoners are always kept in isolation and under heavy guard. State police agencies usually transfer them to federal custody because they lack the resources and expertise to keep them locked up. The police have little understanding of how superpowers work, but they do learn from experience. Any particular character who uses a certain power or trick to escape custody will not be able to use that power or trick more than once. Despite objections from defense attorneys, judges give the police wide latitude in ensuring superpowered prisoners do not use their powers to escape. For example, sorcerers may be gagged to prevent them from spell casting.

The level of expertise, equipment, and attitudes towards superhumans varies greatly. Most local police forces have little experience in handling superhumans and tend to overreact. Federal agents may have more training or first-hand experience, but few agencies have adequate equipment to deal with superhumans. This will eventually change, as agencies standardized equipment and training requirements, but for now base raiders should expect the unexpected when it comes to the police.

CORPORATIONS

The Ideal resisted widespread monetization of alien technology or commercial exploitation of superhumans, but now there is little to stop corporations from pursuing both goals. Powerful corporations first saw Ragnarok as a crisis that would eventually pass, but now they see it as an opportunity to gain record profits. Even though they have more money to throw around than anyone else , they aren't sure how to exploit the current situation. 'Consultants' have stepped in to ad-

vise management on the best strategies on commercializing superpowers, but most of these self-described experts are con artists or frauds who only want to make a quick buck.

Because of this and the general lack of knowledge business executives have with superhumans, alien technology, and magic, corporations have made little progress. That may change soon, though, because once one corporation figures out a successful business model that involves exploiting superpowers or abandoned bases, the competition will surely follow. Corporations have tried several new strategies to monetize superpowers or alien technology.

Anti-Superhuman Paranoia

There is a booming market for gadgets and weapons designed to protect against superpowered attackers. Consumers buy everything from high-powered firearms to aluminum foil-covered 'anti-telepathy' helmets. There's little to no oversight, so any cheap device that guarantees protection from deadly mutants and aliens is sure to sell out. Government agencies are part of the market because they are just as easily suckered as normal consumers.

Almost all of these items are useless placebos that won't actually do anything to protect their users or stop superpowered attacks. Eventually, the public will demand better gadgets that actually work. When that happens, corporations may hire base raiders as consultants to come up with new products for this market. Some raiders may be uncomfortable creating items to feed into this paranoia, but on the other hand, they could become rich.

Patenting Alien Technology

The Ideal never patented their technology because they did not want to reveal how it worked to anyone, such as the US Patent Office. Because so much of their technology was kept secret, it would be relatively easy for

a corporation to claim it as a product of their own R&D team. To this end, several powerful tech corporations have paid enormous sums of money to buy samples of Ideal tech on the black market.

Already, several patents have been granted for some Ideal creations like improved solar panels and desalination technology. Right now, corporations are purposefully 'dumbing down' the patents they derive from alien science because it would be too suspicious to suddenly invent technology far ahead of anything in the market. One piece of alien technology could result in a dozen patents each an incremental improvement over the last. This extends the monopoly the corporation has over the technology, allowing it to bring in far more profit than a single patent could grant. It is impossible to predict what would happen if a patent was revealed to be the product of reverse-engineered alien technology, but no corporation wants to find out.

Exploitation of Non-Human Workers

Some corporations see the plight of non-humans as a way to save on labor costs. Manufacturers in third world countries pay local governments for captured non-humans who are then put to work in factories as unskilled labor. More sophisticated corporations know that non-humans have unique skills and abilities and are more productive when they willingly cooperate. They recruit talented non-humans, offering them high salaries and protection from the government.

Typically, corporations look for non-humans with espionage and combat powers or super scientists with knowledge of alien technology. While most giant corporations have at least a few non-human experts on the payroll, no company has systematically integrated them into the workforce, which minimizes their efficiency. Few humans can work well with non-humans because of the massive difference in knowledge and culture. While non-humans are forced to learn about human society and customs, most humans are completely ignorant about non-humans. They don't know what they can do or how to work alongside one. The first corporation that can successfully get non-humans to work with humans will have an enormous advan-

tage in the marketplace, which may be the path to the integration of non-humans into society.

ORGANIZED CRIME

Most people think that gangsters and crime lords aren't part of the Status Quo, but in many parts of the world, they are indistinguishable from the politicians and executives who lead society. The most powerful and successful criminal organizations are not the violent drug dealing syndicates people see on the news. They are the syndicates who remain behind the scenes and orchestrate the drug trade as well as every other profitable crime. They are groups like the Russian mafia, the Yakuza, and the Triads. They stayed out of the way of superpowered heroes and villains as much as they could when the Ideal was around. Now they're convinced the Ideal won't return, so they will make a play for more power. Their top goals are the acquisition of superpower and the killing of every new superhero who interferes with them. They have the money and manpower to achieve these goals, but their greatest weakness is their own inability to cooperate.

Crime lords spend more time and energy making sure their rivals and subordinates do not kill them than on anything else. No matter how powerful any individual crime lord is, he's only one bullet away from losing it all. Because they exist outside the legal system, all internal conflicts have to be settled with violence. Every time there is a dispute between members of the same crime family, it has to be resolved through intimidation, assault, or murder, which costs the organization money. When superpowers are added to this volatile mix, it may accomplish what no superhero has done - permanent destruction of criminal syndicates. On the other hand, it may result in the creation of ultra-powerful syndicates that rival nations. Only time will tell.

New superheroes are targeted for assassination as soon as they are discovered. No syndicate wants to let the new crop of heroes become experienced or powerful. They hope if they can kill every hero as soon as they appear, they can prevent the creation of an all-powerful superhero group like the Ideal. Several new vigilantes and heroes have been killed by mafia killers and word has spread that criminals won't tolerate superheroes. This hasn't stopped other recent-

ly empowered heroes from fighting crime, but it has changed their tactics. Some heroes disguise their missions as the work of rival criminal organizations or the police, while others have taken to killing members of the crime syndicates in retaliation. It's likely a war will start soon between new heroes and the syndicates.

The activities of organized crime groups are focused in three areas right now: finding abandoned bases, acquiring superpower technology, and taking over the superpower black market.

Abandoned Bases

Crime syndicates see abandoned bases as a potential goldmine, one they deserve more than a bunch of amateur civilians. After all, they're the ones who suffered at the hands of superhumans for decades. With their network of snitches and informants, powerful criminal syndicates can find bases on a consistent basis. However, teams of mafia assassins and cat burglars are not very effective at raiding bases. They lack the scientific and magical knowledge necessary to disable many of the traps and defeat the guardians kept in many bases. They're also greedy and don't work well with others, so many of their teams fall apart due to intra-party squabbling.

As a result, crime bosses don't usually send in their own men to raid bases they find. Instead, they leak the location of the base to experienced base raiders and either try to extort some of the loot or ambush them when the raiders leave the base with all of the loot. So far, they've had mixed success because base raiders are usually capable of defending themselves from armed humans. This hasn't stopped gangsters from trying to exploit base raiders though.

Superpowered Gangsters

Organized crime syndicates hated costumed villains with a passion, but that doesn't mean they won't pursue superpower technology. Some enforcers and thieves have already taken super soldier drugs or gained cybernetic implants. While this allows gangsters to fight

off new superheroes and other empowered threats, it also makes them a headache to their bosses. Almost all of the leaders of major crime families are elderly men who can't gain superpowers because of health reasons or won't because of deep-rooted psychological biases. Whenever a young low-level gangster gains superpowers, he immediately tries to rise in the organization. Typically, the only way to accomplish this is to kill his superiors, which is much easier with superpowers. Bumping off a mob lieutenant satisfies the superpowered gangster for a while, but the craving to gain more power and respect returns. Eventually, empowered gangsters become narcissistic ego-maniacs who try to take over their organization by killing the crime boss.

Crime bosses are keenly aware of the danger of empowered subordinates and employ several strategies to counter them. The most popular strategy is placation through lavish rewards and high praise. The goal is to divert their focus so they do not think too much about disrupting the organization. This is paired with treating empowered gangsters as disposable assets. They are sent on the most dangerous jobs, usually without support or backup. They aren't exactly cannon fodder, but they can't be trusted either, so crime bosses try to wring as much cash out of them as possible before they get killed.

For example, a thug with super strength and earns the syndicate $500,000 who lives for six months before being killed is better than one who earns $2,000,000 and is still alive. The living superpowered thug could challenge the current leaders or split off and form a rival gang.

It's also common for syndicates to spend a lot of money and effort in building countermeasures for their superpowered members. Because they don't trust them, it's important to have a method of killing them. Usually, they just find out if the empowered target is immune to poison or explosions. If not, they can poison his dinner or set a bomb in his apartment or car when the time comes to get rid of him. If the target is immune to both, they'll try to find another conventional method to kill him.

Finally, cartels try to make promotion via assassination unpalatable through threats or blackmail. A gang lord may tell the empowered thug that out of town assassins will kill him or his family if he ever steps out of line - even if the boss is killed. Some turn the rest of the organization against empowered members, so even if the criminal with superpowers takes over, no one will follow him. A few canny crime bosses have had their children marry competent empowered criminals to ensure their loyalty.

Because of this underlying foundation of paranoia and murder, no syndicate has managed to field more than a handful of empowered killers or thieves at a time. Should an organization figure out how to empower all of its members or somehow keep them in line, then it could become unstoppable.

The Superpowers Black Market and Organized Crime

The black market for superpowers is independent of any criminal mafia or cartel. The non-human Underground controls the black market in most cities. They violently resist any takeover attempt by criminal groups. Even independent black market dealers enjoy the protection of the Underground because they don't want to give the mafia even a single toehold into the superpowers market.

Criminals have tried a variety of tactics to take over the black market, but the Underground has access to psychics, magic, and alien technology. They literally know what the gangsters are planning before they do. Individual criminals are allowed to patronize the black market because agents of the Underground like to read their minds when they visit a bazaar or otherwise exploit them. It's entirely possible the Underground could kill a visiting mafia lieutenant and replace him with a shapeshifting magical being in order to infiltrate the mob. Who would know?

CHAPTER FOUR
THE UNDERGROUND

No one knows exactly how many sapient non-humans live on Earth, but it definitely numbers in the millions. They live in the deep wilderness and in major cities. Some can pass as human and have acquired civilian identities, but are terrified of being identified as non-human. Others are too alien or monstrous in appearance to pass, so they must hide from humans or face harassment and persecution.

Most non-humans are just as social as humans, so they tend to form groups to protect each other. The largest group is known as the Underground, a secret society that strives to protect all non-humans. They existed even before Ragnarok, but have become more powerful and important since the disappearance of the Ideal. Over a million Underground members live in the United States alone.

ORIGINS OF THE UNDERGROUND

No one knows how old the Underground is, except possibly some of the immortal leaders, and they are not talking. It is believed they have existed for many years, possibly centuries, in one form or the other, but there's no proof. Leaders refuse to answer questions about the background of the Underground, claiming it isn't relevant to their current struggles. It is known they existed before Ragnarok and had dealings with the Ideal. They also have ties to Sanctuary, the non-human exile world, but they've lost contact with it.

STRUCTURE

The Underground is a loose conglomeration of groups called quarters that are divided by city. Quarters are led by a council of respected elders – typically, one elder is elected per 1,000 members of the Underground. Council members are elected by the population although the rules for terms varies from quarter to quarter.

The population of Underground members in a human city varies, but a city like New York City may have 50,000 non-humans or more. Groups of non-humans who live together in the wilderness are called encampments. These groups usually number less than 1,000 members and are led by a single elder, known as a mayor, who is elected by the residents of the encampment. Non-humans who get into trouble are the responsibility of the nearest Underground group whether that

COMMON TYPES OF NON-HUMANS

Greys: An alien species left over from the 1950s invasion of Earth. Most are psychic and fear the US government. Small, grey skinned bald aliens with large eyes.

Luyteins: Alien species which tried to conquer Earth in the 1978 invasion. Thousands were left stranded, and many of them have spawned a new generation of Earth-born aliens. Humanoids who look like a mix between an insect and a crab.

Humans from Parallel Universes: Strangely, humans not born on this Earth are considered aliens. No government wants to accept a horde of refugees from a post-apocalyptic Earth in a parallel universe. They are indistinguishable from normal humans except high-tech gadgets can detect that they are not native to Earth. They often bear scars or biological anomalies from their home like antibodies from diseases that do not exist in this universe.

Golems and Magical Constructs: Sorcerers and wizards make golems as guardians, but because they are immortal, they eventually escape from their creators if they are not destroyed. Variable appearance and powers.

Spirits: No one knows where magical spirits come from, but many spirits stay on Earth after they are summoned by wizards. Variable appearance and powers although almost all of them are incorporeal.

maintains order throughout the Underground. They have no permanent headquarters and travel around the world on council business. They usually meet off-world in a magical pocket dimension or the moon.

The head council members are all experienced and powerful beings in their own right, and each has a staff of capable assistants and security agents. They are independently funded through several legal and illegal businesses such as the mass transmutation of lead into gold and the black market for superpowers (see page 73).

Each quarter and encampment is allowed to make their own rules as long as they follow the core rules of the Underground. Head council members serve for life, and new members are appointed by a committee of influential leaders.

The single most powerful member of the Underground, an undead spirit known only as Charon, serves as a balancing force to the head council. Charon calls himself the 'Will of the People' and listens to all complaints about council failures and abuses of power. He then judges if these complaints have merit and takes measures to correct them if necessary. Usually, he just takes the matter up with the head council and asks them to fix the problem. So far, they have been more than happy to do so because it appears the spirit is far more powerful than any single other being on Earth, at least through mystical assessments of his power.

No one knows how Charon avoided Ragnarok, his origins, or the upper limits of his power, but no one wants to test him. The head council seems to have some kind of private arrangement with Charon, but they refuse to comment on it. The council's lack of transparency worries some in the Underground but, so far, they have remained free of corruption. Some believe Charon is the secret leader of the Underground movement, but he has denied such claims.

is a quarter or encampment.

Quarters hold 70% of the Underground's population; encampments make up 26% and the remaining 4% live alone. Underground members who live alone check in with a nearby quarter or encampment on a regular basis.

All quarters and encampments are considered independent of each other, but all agree to follow the rules of the head council, a roaming governing body that

GOALS

The primary goal of the Underground is the creation of a peaceful society where all sapient beings, humans, and non-humans can live together. They do not support the conquest of human society or the destruction of any species for any reason. Because many non-humans cannot peacefully integrate with humans or cer-

tain species of non-humans, their secondary goal is to find off-world homes for anyone who wants to leave. The acquisition of spacecraft and other means of interplanetary travel are a high priority.

The use of violence to achieve either goal is permissible, but only as a method of last resort. So far, the Underground has avoided the use of guerrilla warfare tactics or terrorist attacks, but if a government starts a mass crackdown on non-humans, they may resort to such desperate measures.

The Underground believes that all sapient beings should have full civil rights. This means they oppose the enslavement of any sapient being, which also includes the use of sorcery to bind spirits and magical beings. They will use force to free enslaved non-humans if necessary. Agents of the Underground are constantly on the lookout for reports of enslavement of non-humans.

MEMBERSHIP

Any non-human sentient being can become a member of the Underground if they agree to follow its rules. Humans who come from a parallel Earth or alternate universe may become members because they are not legally considered human, but native-born humans cannot join the Underground. They may become trusted allies over time, but humans have no say in the Underground's ruling.

Most Underground members are full citizens. They can vote on their elder, have all the basic rights and privileges of being in the Underground, but enjoy no other special benefits or status. They are expected to perform some kind of work to support themselves. There is a community safety net for citizens who cannot do useful work, but it is strained to its breaking point.

Some quarters and encampments ask their citizens to volunteer their labor for the good of the community. For example, an encampment may require everyone help harvest the community's farm. In New York City, all citizens are required to serve as watchmen for at least six hours a week to guard important sections of their tunnel network.

Citizens with special talents or powers are often recruited as agents of the Underground. Agents work under the direction of a local Underground leader in a specialized job. Every Underground group structures

COMMON TYPES OF NON-HUMANS

Robots: There are comparatively few robots and artificial intelligences because they are usually destroyed or enslaved by their creators. However, some androids, robots, and AIs have made their home in the Underground.

Mutants: While all mutants are legally human (if they are native to this universe) some are so heavily mutated, they are considered aliens or monsters. They are accepted into the Underground without question.

Genetically Engineered Beings: Created in labs by unethical but brilliant scientists, these creatures usually have a grudge against their creators. They usually have superpowers.

Tunguska Zone Escapee: Strange and unique beings emerge from the Tunguska Zone on a regular basis, and a few of them escape and join the Underground. Most are quite bizarre by human standards, but often beautiful in an alien manner.

The Undead: Vampires, ghosts, and intelligent zombies may join the Underground if they promise to obey the rules. Undead who kill humans on a regular basis are usually destroyed.

the division of labor differently for their full time agents, but almost all jobs can be placed into one of five departments: administrative, infrastructure, internal security, commerce, and field work (also known as external security).

Agents are often subdivided into ranks based on experience and talent, but the exact hierarchy varies from group to group. Some encampments treat all agents the same while larger quarters tend to create complex organizational charts. However, all agents are subordinates to elected leaders.

Council members and mayors are the highest ranked members of the Underground outside of the Head Council and Charon himself. Most quarters and encampments have a formal legal document spelling

out the exact powers of their leaders, the term limits, and other important legal minutia. However, the actual level of power of any given leader is based more on their personal political acumen. Strong political skills are required to lead the citizens of the Underground. A brilliant politician may have total control over an encampment even if the local laws grant her little power.

LAWS

All members of the Underground are expected to protect non-humans who need their help. They do not have to risk their lives, but they must help when possible. Notifying local security agents of a crisis is usually enough to fulfill this obligation. Citizens who let other non-humans die as a result of their inaction are severely punished.

No one is allowed to harm humans except out of necessity. However, no one is required to help humans in trouble, so in a crisis, Underground members priori-

tize helping non-humans over humans.

Revealing the existence of the Underground to human authorities is a serious crime, and one usually punishable by death or exile.

Citizens must obey the commands of agents and leaders of the Underground. If an Underground authority asks a citizen to commit a crime, they may appeal to the Head Council or Charon for assistance.

Quarters and encampments are allowed to make their own rules as long as they don't conflict with the core values of the Underground. Most quarters and encampments put strict limits on what kind of weapons they can own and how they use dangerous superpowers. Rules for dealing with humans also vary from total isolation to near-full integration.

FACTIONS

Political intrigue is not unique to the human species. The membership of the Underground is composed of

many different species and cultures, so disagreements are common. Disagreements have led to factionalism within the Underground. Most citizens belong or sympathize with a faction. Rivalries between factions are common and lead to arguments and occasional fights. It is all the Head Council can do to keep the Underground together as a single group.

The leaders fear that allowing factions to leave to form separate groups would eventually lead to a civil war. The leaders of the Underground negotiate and deal with the factions as best they can without compromising the core mission. Right now, five major factions have a presence in most quarters and encampments.

Isolationists

This faction believes that humans and non-humans do not belong together. Many aliens believe that human culture corrupts their young ones. Other non-humans have been abused, enslaved, or tortured by humans in the past and hate them for it. All isolationists distrust humans and want to minimize contact with them. They favor policies that reduce the Underground's dependence on human society for its needs.

They argue that instead of trading with unreliable humans, they should build up infrastructure to allow them to survive without human made tools and supplies. The black market is seen as a wasteful distraction instead of a key economic engine that fuels the Underground. Many isolationists want to build a new society at the bottom of the ocean or on the moon. Small groups of extremists want to kill all humans or force them to leave Earth, but they do not voice their opinions in public.

Machiavellians

Many non-humans believe themselves to be superior to humans and want to rule the Earth. Machiavellians believe that the Underground should subvert and take over human society, ruling it in secret until they are strong enough to openly rule. They believe that humans are unfit to control the planet and that humans will eventually doom all life on the planet if left unchecked.

DEPARTMENTS OF THE UNDERGROUND

Administrative: Manages all social services of the Underground, settles disputes between community members, and keeps the Underground running.

Infrastructure: The creation and maintenance of all vital infrastructure - water, power, and so forth. This job is complicated by the fact that all of this infrastructure must be covert in order to avoid detection by human society.

Internal Security: Protects citizens from all threats - police, rogue base raiders, villains, criminals, and natural disasters. Talented agents in this department are usually undercover, sniffing out spies or infiltrating enemy organizations.

Commerce: This department focuses on raising cash to support the Underground. Most of that is made in the superpowers black market, but some Underground groups use creative methods to make money including alchemy and hiring themselves out as mercenaries for corporate backers. This department is mired in controversy because they break many laws to keep the Underground going, which makes future integration with humanity more difficult.

Field Work: The espionage branch of the Underground. Agents rescue enslaved non-humans, assassinate enemies of the Underground, and spy on practically every major organization in the world. Because the Underground has access to so many shapeshifters, they have spies in many governments and corporations.

To that end, Machiavellians favor policies that increase the power of the Underground. They have no problems killing or exploiting humans if it benefits the Underground, but they do not support terrorist tactics. After all, they want to rule humanity, not destroy it.

The black market provides a steady influx of income, allies, and intelligence, so the Machiavellians support it and frequently try to befriend the base raid-

ers who use it. Machiavellians see base raiders as useful pawns for their plans.

Machiavellians do make a point of obeying the laws of the Underground, at least publicly, because they favor subtly manipulating others into breaking the laws for them.

Technocrats

Aliens, mutants, and humans from alternate universes tend to trust in science and technology over magic. Some of these technologists believe the Underground should banish all magical beings and stop using magic altogether. They see magic as an unreliable and corrupt power that will inevitably fail them in their hour of need.

Their long term goal is to break into Haven, the Ideal's headquarters. Once inside, they can utilize their advanced fabricator technology to build an army of robot drones and spacecraft. This military power would allow them to create their own nation and force the human governments to recognize them as a true power. They are seen as radicals, but they have some of the most skilled engineers and scientists in their ranks, so they are allowed to remain as long as they don't act on their desires.

Pro-Humans

A significant portion of the Underground can pass for human either naturally or with the assistance of magic or a gadget. Some of them, especially humans from alternate realities, prefer living as a normal human. They attend meetings of the Underground and fulfill their obligations, but do not live with them in their underground shelters or isolated communities. They want the Underground to become an active civil rights organization and work within the US legal system until all non-humans can gain legal rights.

The pro-human faction does not want the Underground to take any hostile actions against humans unless absolute necessary. While most of the other factions distrust pro-humans as self-hating traitors, many of the unaffiliated members of the Underground like them. After all, they are the only faction that does not want to declare war on humanity in some way.

Mystics

As the sworn enemies of the technocrats, mystics believe only in the power of magic. They hate technology and want the Underground to expel all scientists and robots from their ranks. Their current goal is the creation of a non-human mystical utopia through powerful magic. They can create a new continent in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and seed it with flora and fauna. To protect it, they use equally powerful ritual magic to devastate the lands of any nation that dares attack them, such as incurable plagues, rains of fire, and worse. Many of their members have no problem with technology, but still belong to the mystics faction because the technocrats tend to harass unaffiliated magical beings.

RESOURCES

Even though the Underground is outnumbered and outgunned by the Status Quo, they are not without their own resources. They have advantages no government or corporation can match, which makes them a global power in some ways. The sheer number of superpowered beings in the Underground, their wealth, and access to information, especially about bases, makes them a formidable organization.

Superpowers

The Underground has more superpowered beings than any other organization on Earth, including the US government. Many of the alien species stranded on Earth have inherent superpowers as do most magical beings. Comparatively few non-humans were taken by the Ragnarok Object. Even ones with significant superpowers were left alone if they weren't active as heroes or villains. Some believe the Ragnarok Object only took active heroes and villains, ignoring superpowered beings who only wanted to normal lives. As a result, most of the superpowered beings on Earth after Ragnarok were not human.

Since then, thousands of humans have gained superpowers, but the Underground took in most superpowered non-humans as members. They form the backbone of the Underground's security forces, and are ready and willing to defend the citizens against any threat.

Even the non-powered citizens of the Underground typically have significant experience dealing with superpowered beings, whether it's the Ideal or villains. This gives the Underground a high level of institutional knowledge in regards to superpowers. Simply put, everyone is familiar with concepts like telepathy, magic, invisibility, super strength, and teleporation. They won't be caught off guard if they face superpowered opponents. The agents of the Underground know how to effectively counter superpowered based strategies.

The Underground can also employ tactics based on using multiple power sources, such as alien science and magic, at the same time. No other organization can duplicate this feat, which gives them a unique edge in any conflict. Most organizations develop strategies based on particular power sources. For example, they learn what magic can or can't do and then develop methods for countering magic users. No one has developed tactics to counter characters using multiple power sources at the same time. The Underground has developed effective strategies in tricking their enemies in this manner. A golem may be given a plasma rifle, which is disguised to look like a magical staff. When an enemy uses a power to nullify magic when fighting the golem, he won't realize the 'staff' is really a technological weapon. The Underground needs every advantage they can get if they hope to win a protracted conflict against a government or organized criminal syndicate.

Wealth

The Underground can't participate in the legal economy, but they thrive in the not so legal economy. They technically control assets, such as alien scientific databases and technological caches, worth trillions of dollars, but they can't get bank loans or start corporations to raise money. After all, they aren't legally recognized as people. Their biggest problem is generating a steady stream of cash flow, which is needed to bribe local police and officials, pay for food and other essential supplies, and keep the Underground running. So far, they've developed several revenue streams.

Magic is used to generate a significant portion of the Underground's revenue. Some mystically inclined agents and leaders are masters of alchemy and are able to transmute lead into gold. Of course, this does not give them unlimited wealth because transmutation takes time, and dumping too much gold onto the market would crash the market. Alchemists are now experimenting with other transmutation spells, particularly those involving rare earth minerals and other high demand commodities. Other sorcerers use divination magic to find lost treasure, especially historically significant treasures. The Underground has a stockpile of pirate gold, famous paintings, and other unique artifacts. It is sold to private collectors, piece-by-piece, to avoid suspicion.

Technology is also used as a revenue source, but not as much as magic. The Underground does possess fabricator technology, which allows for the creation of virtually any object or material, but it is used almost exclusively to make tools and supplies for themselves. Instead, their engineers and scientists are allowed to create front companies to sell software and consulting services as long as they maintain a low profile. They try not to create the best possible software or offer the best advice they can possibly give. Instead, Underground techies try to hit a level of quality slightly above the competition. By doing so, they can blend into the background of the global economy while bringing in a steady level of income for the Underground.

The hackers of the Underground are among the world's best, so concealing the true identity of the front companies' owners is fairly easy. They could also use their hacking skills to steal and defraud money from corporations and casual Internet users, but the leadership of the Underground discourages blatant criminal activity. However, they are not above stealing from an enemy. Should a major corporation or government attack the Underground, they could find their online bank accounts emptied.

The largest source of revenue is the superpowers black market. Base raiders and would-be heroes and villains gladly pour their life savings into the black market for super soldier drugs, magical artifacts, and other sources of superpowers.

While the black market is undoubtedly a security risk, the sheer amount of cash it raises makes it a critical component of the Underground.

The leaders of the Underground want to control the market for superpowers because if they abandon the market, human-controlled criminal syndicates will take over. No one wants an organization like the mafia to decide who gets superpowers or who does not. Right now, the policy is to allow everyone in the superpowers black market who does not act against the interests of the Underground. However, tabs are secretly kept on all of the customers of the black market. This information is an important asset in its own right.

Information

Intelligence gathering and analysis is a critical asset in keeping the Underground safe and intact. The black market for superpowers is the world's single best intelligence gathering tool because it gives the Underground leaders insight into every conflict and strata of human society.

Would-be superhumans come from every level of society, from subsistence farmers in the third world to billionaires. The Underground does not record everything in the bazaars, but agents monitor customers, especially base raiders. They see what they buy and what they sell, which could indicate what bases they've found. Some customers are offered discounts or free items if they provide intelligence for the Underground. The independent merchants are given discounts in exchange for information although the Underground does not force them to sell out client data. Agents with divination magic are used to verify the authenticity of information before it is sent for analysis.

All of this information is collated and analyzed by teams of dedicated agents. They create reports which highlight the real news of the world. No organization has a better view of what is going on in the world than the Underground. They know which bases have been found, what cartels are going to war, and what scandals will hit the media next. While they are not omniscient, they are better positioned than anyone else.

Bases

Many members of the Underground had firsthand dealings with the Ideal or powerful villains. They were companions, henchmen, rescued victims, or friends of the most powerful superhumans in the world. Some of them learned the locations of bases loaded with alien technology or magic. Since Ragnarok, the Underground has conquered a number of these bases for their own use. They have even recovered several Build-A-Base machines, which they are attempting to reverse engineer. If they can master the technology, they could build a new nation anywhere in the solar system, which would free them from the threat of human persecution or war. However, Build-A-Bases are notoriously complex, so it may take years before the Underground can create new Build-A-Base tech.

The bases found by the Underground have been mostly converted into living spaces for their citizens. Engineers retrofit bases for use by civilians by disarming traps and converting as much space as possible into living quarters. Many encampments are centered on a retrofitted base in an isolated location. Only bases that are too dangerous to retrofit are left untouched. Dozens of bases are now Underground population centers where non-humans can find safety. The secrecy of these bases is tightly kept because no Underground quarter or encampment can stand up to a prolonged siege by human attackers. A base discovered by the authorities is a base lost.

CHALLENGES

The Underground faces four major challenges, each of which poses a significant threat to all non-humans. If the Underground wants to ensure it will survive as an organization, it must deal with multiple challenges before it is too late.

Government Policy

Few humans are aware of the plight of non-humans. They assume non-humans are criminals or monsters, but have the same rights as anyone else. Very few people know that only humans born on this Earth are accorded full civil rights. Even though the existence of aliens and other sapient non-humans has been known for decades, there has been no movement towards giving them civil rights.

When the Ideal was around, they took care of non-humans, so the government would not have to bother with them. Ever since Ragnarok, non-humans have had to fend for themselves. They have had to deal face to face with normal humans to survive. Most people aren't ready to deal with aliens or magical beings on a day-to-day basis, so it has become a political issue. Some people have responded by creating vigilante groups that target non-humans. Others want the government to deal with the issue although no one agrees on how.

Whenever a non-human steps out of line, it creates sensational headlines in the news and pressure on local politicians do something about non-humans. Typically, the police harass and attack non-humans, forcing them to leave. They are almost never arrested because of the sticky legal issues involved. Some non-humans are killed 'resisting arrest'. Humans who help non-humans are arrested or harassed by the police. So far, there has not been a coordinated plan on the national level to deal with non-humans, but most of the Underground believes it is only a matter of time before humans declare war on them. Despite their advanced technology and magic, the Underground cannot possibly win a prolonged conflict with the US government without resorting to using weapons of mass destruction.

Right now, leaders of the Underground are desperately trying to create a plan to manipulate the public and government into giving non-humans civil rights. Agents are trying to recruit influential lawyers, politicians, and celebrities to speak on their behalf. Their own scholars and lawyers examine the laws to develop a path to citizenship for non-humans. Experts in sociology and public relations are crafting a marketing campaign to convince the public to accept them. It is unknown if their plan will work, but the leaders feel like they have no choice but to try.

Human Supremacists

Gangs of human vigilantes have formed to hunt down

and kill every non-human they can find. Some are survivors of alien invasions or attacks who assume all non-humans are dangerous monsters. Other humans just want to an excuse to kill and torture intelligent beings. A few are religious fanatics who see non-humans as demons. No matter what motivates them, human supremacists pose a grave danger to the Underground. While the security forces of the Underground can handle gangs of armed humans, they can't be everywhere at once, nor can they indiscriminately kill human supremacists.

Even if the Underground is justified in killing supremacist hunters, the law isn't on their side. So far, security agents of the Underground find it more effective to sabotage hunters than killing them outright. They favor tactics like framing them for crimes, such as drug dealing or fraud, or sabotaging their homemade bombs. However, there are more hunters arming up everyday, more than the Underground can covertly stop. Sooner or later, the Underground will start killing them in large groups, which will be an act that will spur the government into taking action against non-humans.

Organized Crime

Criminal syndicates want to take over the market for superpowers and won't stop until they've muscled out the Underground. So far, they have not directly attacked the black market or any of the power dealers, but that may change soon. The Underground leaders are afraid of starting a gang war with the criminal syndicates now because the government could use it to justify further persecution, but they may not have a choice. The security forces of the Underground allow individual criminals to buy superpowers as long as they aren't buying powers in bulk or act against non-humans.

The cartels are slowly building up teams of empowered criminals they will use against the black market once they feel they have enough to challenge them. Some agents in the Underground are aware of this plan, but don't believe the cartels have a chance against them. After all, they're the ones selling the superpowers to criminals. They know how to counter their powers. They don't know that the cartels plan to use the empowered criminals to deliver chemical and bio-

logical weapons against the Underground. They can use superpowered criminals to deliver ex-Soviet nerve gas canisters or anthrax to Underground shelters. After the first demonstration against civilian non-humans, the syndicates will demand that the Underground turns over the black market to them. The Underground would probably respond by declaring open war on the syndicates, which could trigger a chain reaction and cause global unrest.

Factional Infighting

No other organization in the world has a more disparate population than the Underground, but diversity is both a strength and a weakness. The friction between some factions has almost sparked a civil war several times. It's a testament to the incredible leadership and political skills of the Head Council that the Underground has remained intact so far. No amount of leadership can keep the factions from subtly attacking each other though. Technocrats undermine mystics; Machiavellians sabotage the efforts of pro-humans. Every time a faction acts against another, it weakens the Underground as a whole.

If one of the factions gains enough power on its own, it may attempt separate from the Underground, taking vital assets and agents with it. The Head Council will do anything to prevent that, but if they are caught killing one of their own citizens to prevent a separation or civil war, it would cause irreparable damage. Right now, the Underground is a powder keg, waiting to explode.

The Head Council desperately wants to prevent civil war, but they lack the means to bring the various factions into line. The Council's best bet is to use trusted outsiders to pacify the factions through negotiations, blackmail, or sabotage. Base raiders who are not members of the Underground are perfect for such missions, because of their skill and because they are expendable. Characters who get involved with the politics of the Underground should never forget that fact.

CHAPTER FIVE
BASE RAIDING

It was not until after Ragnarok that the public learned of the sheer number of hidden bases built by heroes and villains. Tell all ex-sidekicks and henchmen all spoke of hundreds or even thousands of bases just waiting to be found. Most pundits dismissed the claims as hyperbole. Once the first base raiders started to find abandoned base after base, many realized that the tell alls were telling the truth. At first glance, it seems odd, even disturbing that superhumans built so many bases, but they were built out of necessity.

To be superhuman means to be separate from human society. Even the most enlightened and benevolent human society is still human. They cannot accommodate the needs of a superhuman. Hospitals can't easily treat their injuries or illnesses given the wide range of powers every superhuman can possess. Superhumans would dominate meritocratic organizations, forcing all unpowered humans into the lower positions. Even the average gym would have to be radically re-engineered so athletes with superhuman strength could actually make use of them.

This isn't to say that humans would persecute superhumans for adding 10 ton weights to the gym but it would cause tension. So, superhumans may coexist with humans but they cannot use the same facilities as them.

The empowered have had to build whatever facilities they needed on their own. This is almost always done in secret, because for most of history, superhumans were persecuted whenever they were found and even when they weren't, they still had enemies and privacy concerns. Thus, almost all superhuman bases are secret, hidden away from normal humans. In fact, the earliest bases, many of which are still undiscovered, were built centuries ago, in secret.

Think of all the buildings a normal human uses on a regular basis; a home to live in, a school to learn or a workplace to earn a living, a church for spiritual needs, a store to buy goods, a garage to store vehicles, a clinic or hospital for medical needs, and a bar or similar establishment to meet friends and socialize. That's not even counting infrastructure used but not visited like power plants or telecommunication service providers. Humans need a large base of infrastructure to live well.

Now consider a superhuman and his needs. Superpowers are inherently valuable and leaders usually try to control or eliminate them in order to maintain their own control over society. For most of history, the average superhuman had to keep his powers secret or face persecution or impressment into government service. Even after the signing of the Accord, superhumans had

to join the Ideal to get a degree of protection but then they would also face the enemies of the Ideal, so the danger was always there.

Using superpowers while trying to remain inside human society is extremely risky. Trying to explain odd injuries, events, and disappearances is hard to do and impossible if the superhuman has no privacy. The risk applied to all superhumans, regardless of their ability or desire to fight. Pacifist superhumans faced many of the same problems warrior superhumans did. Because of these factors, every superhuman needed some kind of private refuge, even if it was just a secret resting place. The superhumans who did not get a secret hideout usually led miserable lives as they tried to keep their powers secret or gave up on them entirely or retreated from society and lived in isolation. Thus, a secret home was necessary for superhumans to remain functional at all. But homes alone are not enough.

After a home, superhumans usually need a place to train and practice with their powers. Almost all superhumans had to learn how to use their powers on their own. While the Ideal and a few other organizations offered training for new superhumans, the majority of superhumans did not have access to mentors capable of teaching how to use their abilities.

Superhumans usually needed a dedicated space to figure out what they could and could not do with their powers. The ones who didn't train on a regular basis proved to be far less effective than the ones who did. This often meant the difference between life and death, so the most paranoid and wise superhumans took great care in honing their skills.

Other support facilities are necessary to fully maximize the potential of superhumans, which often needed support structures of their own. Workshops to build specialized tools and weapons need power while gardens and labs to grow or brew herbs and chemicals need water. Infrastructure was difficult to build in secret, but the few superhumans able to do so had enormous advantages over the ones who did not have them. The quest to build and maintain such bases consumed so much of the time and energy of early superhumans. It helps to explain why they did not dominate world history.

Consider a medieval warrior imbued with mystical strength and endurance by a powerful supernatural being. If the true nature of his powers were revealed,

he would either be excommunicated or forced to fight for the local king. Furthermore, he still has to sleep. If he were to rebel against the king or attempt to conquer the kingdom, he'd never get a night of rest for fear of assassination. Unpowered humans would fear and hate him. No normal blacksmith could make weapons or armor worthy of his powers, nor could any knight teach him how to best use his strength in battle.

He would have to find a sanctuary where he could sleep without fear of being killed, learn how to make his own weapons and armor, not to mention building a smithy to forge them, and build suitable training grounds.

If the warrior can accomplish all of these tasks, he'll be able to fulfill his potential, but every task he can't accomplish weakens his effectiveness in battle. Normal weapons will shatter the first time he strikes with them. He will make mistakes in a fight that another warrior could exploit if he can't control his own strengt All of the limitations add up. Even a warrior with the strength of a hundred men will either fail on his quest or never even attempt it if he cannot build a secret base worthy of his abilities.

Superhumans in more recent eras had to deal with similar dilemmas. For example, a vigilante mutant in the early 20th century had to have a hideout to rest after missions and recover from injuries but that was only the start.

Crime fighting involves more investigation and research than face punching, so the vigilante would need a workspace to piece together clues, examine evidence, and store reference materials like old police case files. Technologically inclined vigilantes might set up a lab to build gadgets or a listening post to monitor bugs. Gunfighters would need a firing range to practice shooting under adverse conditions. Mystical vigilantes needed occult libraries or hidden temples to conduct ritual magic. Access to nearby subway or sewer systems was also useful.

A vigilante without access to any of these resources was hamstrung before he fought his first criminal. Undertaking even a single crime fighting mission lasting only a few hours might take hundreds of hours of training, planning, and research but without that preparation, the vigilante's chances of success were effectively nil. It only takes a single mistake to ruin a mission or end the life of a superhuman. Only through bases could

superhumans make those kind of preparations. Bases meant the difference between true independence and reaching one's true potential as a superhuman or a life of fear and compromise.

HISTORICAL BASES

The first superhumans realized the need for concealed sanctuaries, far from angry mobs or rival superhumans. Ancient shamans built lodges concealed by magic to perform ritual magic. Divinely empowered warriors built proving grounds where they could perfect their fighting skills and safeguard their war trophies. Sorcerers made libraries and temples to protect their libraries and alchemist labs. Most were simple structures with only a few rooms. A few were not even bases, but simply megalithic structures built in remote areas. Most of these bases were destroyed or simply fell apart from the ravages of time.

At least one ancient base remains though, known as the Labyrinth of Notoria. Located somewhere in Europe, the labyrinth was built by an immortal sorcerer commonly known as Notoria, although no one knows his true name. He was fond of creating chimerical monsters, although many of these beings were all but impossible to slay and quite dangerous. Growing sick of the number of deformed monsters he had loosed in the world, Notoria summoned powerful earth elementals to carve a massive labyrinth deep underground. The sorcerer lured all of his creations into the labyrinth, trapping them inside. No one's sure if Notoria was also trapped in the labyrinth or not, but at any rate, the heart of the labyrinth contains a massive library of ancient grimoires, magical artifacts, and priceless treasures. Of course, finding, opening and navigating the labyrinth while dealing with the immortal monsters trapped inside to get the treasure is another matter altogether.

The Rise of the Modern Base

As science led to the creation of new categories of superhumans, so did their needs for bases. The first super scientists needed laboratories to conduct their experiments and massive factories to construct steam powered war machines. Mutants and early super soldiers needed elaborate training grounds to hone their powers and all of the superhumans needed hideouts to avoid the authorities and angry mobs. However, their need for bases outstripped their ability to create such facilities in secret, which became one of the defining problems for early modern superhumans. Scientists had to get the backing of rich businessmen to afford the large factories and power plants they needed for their work. Mutants either had to retreat to completely isolated areas to use their powers or take care when using them in populated areas, as they only had conventional means to keep their bases concealed. While the ancients used magic to ward their bases, few of the early modern superhumans had powers that helped in keeping their bases secret.

As a result, most of the early superhuman organizations were founded to solve this problem. By pooling their resources together, they could make a refuge that could serve their unique needs. However, the secrecy of these early bases was seldom kept for long. Inevitably one of the members would either betray his compatriots or accidentally give up the location of the base. It was clear that each individual superhuman needed at least one private hideout. Superhumans struggled to create secret bases or survive without them, but without the infrastructure they needed, most superhumans had limited effectiveness.

Bases built in this period were usually either cramped hideouts in urban areas with few resources or larger buildings in secluded areas, typically built under false pretenses. Underground bases were modified from existing spaces like caves or sewers. These bases were usually little more than living spaces and storage as most superhumans lacked the resources to build more complex facilities. The few bases that had more ambitious purposes seldom lasted more than a few years, as the authorities or enemies of the superhuman would find and destroy the base. Still, a few of the early bases remain hidden.

Many base raiders now search for The Gaunt Gargoyle's Lair, thought to be somewhere near New York or Chicago. The Gaunt Gargoyle was a mutant who resembled an actual gargoyle but possessed incredible stealth powers. He used his mutant abilities to both

fight and control crime during Prohibition. Early reports stated that he was a vigilante who fought mobsters but later on he seemed more interested in taking over powerful crime syndicates. He was last seen in 1934 and is assumed dead. It is believed he had an underground lair that he spent millions of dollars building, as luxurious as any mansion and a state of the art crime fighting headquarters. It is believed he liquidated his holdings in the criminal underworld and converted them into gold and silver after Prohibition ended and many raiders want to find his treasure.

Fabricators: The New Arcadia Miracle

An alien colonization ship crashed on earth in California in 1947, depositing a priceless cache of alien technology, including several fabricators. The fabricator is a machine capable of building almost any other machine by converting carbon or other raw materials into the desired tool. The aliens who built the fabricators placed many safeguards on them to prevent accidents, sabotage, or misuses of the technology. No fabricator could build another fully-functional fabricator. Like a photocopy, each new fabricator had fewer capabilities than the previous generation. Super scientists learned how to use the technology and partially reverse engineer it, which led to the invention of sophisticated 3D printers. While the US government had exclusive control over the crashed spaceship and its technology at first, but the tech found its way to the superhuman community. Both superheroes and villains started using fabricators by 1955.

The leaders of the Ideal knew they had to create infrastructure and a support network for their members if they wanted to become an independent global power. When they got their hands on fabricator technology, their super scientists pioneered a system of covert base construction. The first version of technology was given out to Ideal heroes as a complete turnkey system called Build-A-Base. The system was a 4 foot metal square (which could fit on a pallet) with a simple command panel on its side. The hero would take Build-A-Base to the location he wanted the base built, select 1 of 10 base configurations and then bury the machine or oth-

erwise conceal it. At this point, the Build-A-Base would examine the local environment and resources and then construct the base as best it could, cannibalizing itself if necessary. Typically, the machine was buried 50 feet underground and would spend the next 5 to 12 days converting earth into material for the base. It also consumed itself during the construction, so that by the time the base was finished, the machine had been integrated into the base. If left uninterrupted, Build-A-Base would construct a small but usable base in a way that minimized noise and heat to lower chances of detection. The first bases resembled fallout shelters and did not have much more utility than one but they were incredibly popular with Ideal heroes.

Ideal scientists thought that each hero would only need one or two Build-A-Bases, so they were unprepared when their members clamored for many more. Some members wanted a dozen, so they could set up safe houses around the world, while others wanted to link 6 or more together into one large base. The Build-A-Base system was expanded and improved to accommodate the demands of the heroes. Of course, no technology remains secret and proprietary for long in a world filled with scrying magic, telepathy, and teleportation. Several villains, including the dictator Omega, acquired Build-A-Base tech and used it for their own purposes. Some, like Omega, modified and sold their own version of Build-A-Base to minor villains. Others created exotic variant systems they kept secret and used for sinister purposes.

No one knows how many variations of Build-A-Base exist but the Ideal alone created at least six generations of Build-A-Base tech, each an improvement on the previous generation. By the time of Ragnarok, any Ideal hero could get their hands on a single machine that could build an underground facility with a medic bay, training center, barracks for 10 adults, communications center, Ideal teleportation grid, concealed entrances to the surface, and cold fusion reactor with enough fuel to last 6 months. The Ideal created simple informational brochures, complete with a comic to illustrate the process for using a Build-A-Base machine.

Build-A-Base was the foundation of the superhuman revolution. No longer did a superhuman have to spend so much of their time simply to exist independently. They could get a single machine that would build a place that would take care of all of their needs as a

superhuman and it could be built without outside assistance. It is perhaps no surprise that superhumans became a global power after Build-A-Base's creation. It was the first time they could focus on doing what they wanted to do, not what they had to do in order to stay free and alive.

BASE CONSTRUCTION

Base raiders find all kinds of bases, but most of them are created through Build-A-Base technology, either an Ideal version or one of several variations created by villains and independent superhumans. Build-A-Base is based on highly advanced alien terraforming and fabrication technology, so constructing a single structure without human assistance or supervision is an easy task. As long as it has power (which could be acquired through any number of means) and raw materials (which could be almost anything, thanks to the fabricator tech), Build-A-Bases can construct whatever kind of facility the user desired. Many raiders assume that once you've seen a few bases, you've seen them all but this is a dangerous mistake to make.

Fabricator technology, even the limited version used by superhumans, is more limited by the imagination of the user than by the technical specifications of Build-A-Base. Even the most primitive fabricator can convert scrap metal into high strength and lightweight alloys capable of holding up skyscrapers. The software of recent Build-A-Base machines is loaded with thousands of standard object and room configurations, allowing a user to design a base in a manner similar to playing a video game.

Technically skilled users can enter in their own designs to create custom pieces of architecture. Super scientists can tinker with the fabrication settings of the machines and develop new materials to build bases. Walls of synthetic diamond, mithril or plasteel are all technically possible. This isn't to say that Build-A-Base technology is perfect. It can only build what the user can envision. Raiders who can out think base builders have a much better chance of surviving any traps or hazards.

Set Up

The process for using Build-A-Base was actually quite simple. Most superhumans were crime fighters or detectives, not genius architects and engineers so the process was made as user friendly as possible. In general the first step was to pick a site for the base and design it using software integrated with the Build-A-Base machine. A single hand held gadget would be taken to the site, where it would scan the location and assess its qualities and send the data back to the machine. In addition, the software was designed to take advantage of the user's superpowers. Superhumans capable of energy blasts were asked to power the machine by firing into a specially designed energy panel that could absorb and convert the blast into electricity. Users who could fly or teleport were often asked to place their bases in hard to reach locations.

When the superhuman designed the base, he was asked to choose 2 out of the following 3 factors - speed, stealth, and quality. Building a base quickly and covertly (like in the middle of a city without being detected) means it cannot have many features or take up much space. A large base with many features built quickly can't be built without generating a lot of noise and waste heat, which makes detection far easier for outsiders.

Once the user made his choices and was ready for the machine to start work, he would only have to take it to the site. Because many bases were built underground, it was perfectly acceptable to bury the machine deep underground. The Build-A-Base would excavate the earth around it and then start work on the base. Otherwise, the machine had to be concealed by placing it in an existing building or somehow disguising it. Preparing the site for the Build-A-Base was often the most labor intensive part of the project for the user.

While the Build-A-Base would always obey the user, its software often made detailed suggestions on how the user could improve secrecy and the quality of the base by preparing the site. The first step was to protect the site through a variety of means in order to minimize the chance for accidental discovery by trespassers. The machine recommended that the user either buy the land through legal means (obfuscating ownership with shell corporations of course) or

making the land unattractive to visitors. Dumping toxic waste or vast quantities of garbage and scrap metal on the site was a common technique to ward off trespassers and provided the Build-A-Base more fodder for its fabricators. Build-A-Base machines created sensors to detect intruders and some versions of the machine could build robot drones to guard the site. If the user could enhance security with drones, loyal henchmen or sidekicks, all the better. Build-A-Base always followed the user's rules when it came to dealing with intruders. More than one villain fed the bodies of trespassers into the fabricators of Build-A-Base.

After security, the second major consideration was power. Standard units contained nuclear batteries that provided years of power, but that amount of energy only goes so far. Ambitious users needed to supply the machine with more power. Build-A-Base units could manufacture generators capable of exploiting nearly any natural resource, including solar, wind, hydropower, or geothermal sources. However, these were security risks, as they had to be fairly large and noticeable in order to generate large amounts of electricity. Bases near existing power grids could build power-leaching machines that could discreetly siphon electricity from nearby buildings without raising suspicion, but this could only take so much power before it would be noticed. Some superhumans bought businesses near their base and paid their power bills so they could siphon even more electricity without alerting anyone. Most users with high power needs either acquired more nuclear material to fuel a reactor or used their superpowers to fuel the base. Sorcerers could enslave immortal magical beings and use their talents to generate electricity - placing a fire elemental and water elemental near each other created endless amounts of hot steam for example. Mutants with energy blasting abilities or super speed could charge a specially designed battery with an hour of work per month.

Once security and power were dealt with, Build-A-Base was ready to begin work but getting it there was a problem. Transporting the machine to the site in secret was quite hard for most superhumans, because it had to be done alone and the machine was usually a 4 foot square box that weighed over 500 pounds or more. Getting the help of other superhumans, even trusted allies, was a major breach of security, because even if they were totally loyal, telepathic enemies could read

BUILD-A-BASE TECH NOW

Build-A-Base was not a publicly known technology, although it was widely known in upper echelons of the government. The United States and several other major countries have Build-A-Base machines but they lack scientists capable of comprehending and reverse engineering the technology. Build-A-Base technology is perhaps the most complex technology ever created by super science. It will take years or decades to learn how to reproduce the technology, assuming they do not shelve it. Defense contractors do not like the idea of a machine that could put them out of business, so there is intense political pressure to not reverse engineer it.

Only a few facilities in the world can produce new Build-A-Base machines. The Ideal created all of their machines at their central headquarters, which has now cut off ties with the outside world. Omega the villain dictator was rumored to have a factory, but it is probably buried somewhere in the wastelands of his former country. An intact Build-A-Base machine would be a valuable prize for a base raider but they are far and few between. Most units were used soon after they were made. No one stockpiled them in great numbers. The Underground possesses several Build-A-Base machines, but they jealously guard them.

their minds. Few superhumans had enough powers to make transporting the box discreetly an easy task.

Superhumans often had to plan the transportation mission for weeks in advance but even with these preparations, some superhumans made mistakes which law enforcement agencies detected. They seldom acted on the mistakes immediately because they usually did not recognize the significance of the act at the time. Canny base raiders should look through the archives of the FBI and other agencies for reports of suspicious individuals transporting large metal boxes.

These reports are invaluable clues to finding bases.

Construction

Build-A-Base was designed as an autonomous fabrication and construction machine, so it does not need anything other than power, raw materials, space, and time. It operates by building whatever tools it needs at a given stage in the project. Usually, it would excavate the area for the base by employing swarms of nano machines to break down any obstructions and take them to the fabricator components. Larger robotic arms would be constructed for heavy lifting. Whenever a tool or component was no longer needed, Build-A-Base would disassemble it and reuse the materials.

Whenever the user could aid in the construction, Build-A-Base would describe when and how the user could help out. A user with super strength could lift boulders or hold up massive components in place while the machine welded them to the walls, for example. Some users wanted nothing to do with the construction while others actively aided in it every day of the project. In general, the more user helped the machine, the more Build-A-Base could do for the final base. The time constructing a base varied wildly but most bases took at least a few months, even for a single room, as users often to choose between stealth and speed. At its fastest, a late model Build-A-Base could fabricate an average Ideal member's headquarters in a week. At its slowest, construction could take years or more. In fact, some bases are still being built, waiting for users who may never return.

Stealth construction meant minimizing noise (including seismic vibrations) and heat as much as possible. Any base built in a populated area risks detection from excess noise from nearby residents. Many law enforcement agencies used thermal cameras to detect illegal marijuana grow houses and other criminal activities. Even though Build-A-Bases are incredibly advanced, most of the fabrication and construction functions generate both loud noises and waste heat. Working at a slower than maximum speed reduces the sound and heat signature, but some stages of construction create large amounts of both, which cannot be avoided. Users who wanted maximum stealth could have the Build-A-Base cover the construction site in insulated material,

but this further lengthened construction. It was possible for users to coordinate with Build-A-Base to create distractions at key intervals of the project to draw attention away. More than one rich superhuman bought and demolished buildings near their base in order to cover their tracks. Often, users had to weigh the risks of detection versus the reward of a quicker construction time and adjust the project accordingly. Many users made mistakes during this phase of planning, which generated clues that base raiders can uncover. Clusters of unsolved noise complaints in an area over a period of time but mysteriously disappear after a few months can help pinpoint the location of a base.

Base Configurations

Bases can be built to almost any configuration, but the prefabricated designs were the most popular ones, because few superhumans had the architecture and engineering skills to design their own bases.

HIDEOUT

Covert living quarters with limited medical and communication facilities, meant to be used as a place to rest while recuperating from injuries or hiding from enemies on the hunt.

Size: Small - often equal to a small house or large apartment.

Defenses: Minimal - perhaps one or two traps. Too small for dedicated guardians. Some hideouts will have self-destruct bombs though.

Detection: Very difficult to find without an informant or good intelligence on the owner. Their primary purpose was to be undetectable so finding one can be extremely hard.

Loot: Limited storage means there will not be much inside the hideout. However, owners often kept important items or invaluable data in hideouts, which can be extremely valuable.

HEADQUARTERS

Command center to fighting or committing crimes. Multi-purpose facility meant to contain everything a superhuman needs for normal operations. Each room

is focused for one purpose like living quarters, medic bay, training center, communications and surveillance modules, and often one or two other rooms. As a general purpose base, each room only has basic equipment, but by putting them all together in one area, a superhuman can do everything necessary to plan the next patrol or heist.

Size: Average to large - often the size of a 2 to 3 story house. Most headquarters are located in urban areas so they can't be too large without risking detection. Headquarters in isolated areas can be much larger though.

Defenses: Traps and sensors at every entrance of the headquarters plus a robot drone guard or two are common. However, because they are used so much, superhumans typically do not place too many traps as they get in the way of daily life.

Detection: Finding the headquarters of a hero or villain is based on the owner's sense of paranoia and tradecraft. Experienced and paranoid superhumans have the hardest bases to find while newer ones tended to make mistakes.

Loot: Caches of weapons and gadgets, trophies from defeated foes and tech pulled from the base are commonly found in headquarters.

LABORATORY/WORKSHOP

Both heroic and villainous scientists wanted privacy and autonomy when conducting research, which was only guaranteed in a secret lab. Gadgeteers want workshops with all the tools they need to invent new toys. Bases like this are cluttered with cutting edge tech and data, but they are usually just as well defended.

Size: Average to massive - a small lab or workshop could be equal to a house, but thinkers liked to build big. They could take up thousands of square feet covering multiple levels for their work, especially if it's at an extremely remote location.

Defenses: Scientists and gadgeteers are jealously protective of their work so they usually loaded up on traps and guardians. Base raiders can expect the best the owner could invent turned against them. Often the defenses are built to reflect the interests of the owner - a robotic engineer would have many more deathbot guardians than normal while a genetic researcher might have bio-weapons.

Detection: The incredible power requirements for a lab make them easier to detect. Nuclear reactors and geothermal plants are hard to hide, no matter what steps are taken to conceal them.

Loot: Lab equipment and workshop tools are valuable but the data left behind is the real prize. Research notes and schematics of new gadgets are priceless, although this data is usually encrypted and protected.

MYSTIC SANCTUM

Sorcerers and magical beings needed a private retreat to perform ritual magic, scry on their foes, and forge new enchanted items. These sanctums were sometimes created with the assistance of Build-A-Base technology but many were created through pure magical effort. Each sanctum is unique in appearance, as magic is shaped by the will of the creator.

Size: Minuscule to infinite in size. After reaching a certain level of power, sorcerers can create pocket dimensions of unlimited size.

Defenses: Curses, warding spells, and bound magical guardians are commonly found in these sanctums. Technology is rarely used for defensive measures.

Detection: Impossible to very easy. Most spells have a weakness that anyone can override, given knowledge of it. Most illusion spells can be dispelled by knowing their weakness, which could be a sprig of Foxglove or soil from a graveyard. Otherwise, the magic is impossible to overcome.

Loot: Magical artifacts, grimoires, and actual treasure, as in gold, silver, and jewels. Precious gems and metals are ingredients for many rituals and components for enchanted items, so most sanctums have sizable caches of them.

OUTPOST/SAFE HOUSE

Many superhumans set up secondary bases to monitor important places or hide important people from their enemies. Unlike a hideout or headquarters, these bases are meant to be abandoned after a time. Security dictates that these bases must be abandoned periodically to prevent enemies from using them against their owners. As a result they are not built with many amenities.

Size: small - often the size of an apartment or room.

Many resemble fallout shelters.

Defense: Trapped entrances are common, as are self-destruct traps.

Detection: These are the easiest bases to find and perhaps the most numerous type. Most have been abandoned long before Ragnarok though.

Loot: minimal loot, although they may contain clues to the locations of other bases.

PRISON

Both heroes and villains built and kept secret prisons to hold their enemies. Heroes usually built prisons for immortal beings and aliens who could not serve time in normal prisons while villains were far less discriminating in who they imprisoned. Setting up automated feeding systems to keep prisoners alive was easy to do, so many of these prisoners are still alive, waiting for a chance to get out.

Size: Large to town sized - the smallest prisons house a few prisoners and have facilities like a medic bay, torture chamber, and control room while the largest prisons can stretch out for miles and house hundreds of prisoners - these are typically located at the bottom of the ocean or in other desolate locales.

Defenses: Small prisons rely on being hidden and strong locks for the prisoners with a few traps while large prisons maintain large security forces of robots or loyal henchmen and extensive defense systems.

Detection: The larger the prison is, the easier it is to find, providing you know where to look.

Loot: Heroic raiders might gain potential allies and earn a reputation by rescuing prisoners while villainous raiders can extort families for a lot of wealth to give back prisoners or torture them for information. The prisoners are there for a reason, after all.

VAULT

Some objects are too dangerous to remain in circulation but are too valuable to destroy. Objects like powerful magical artifacts, alien super-weapons, and certain indescribable things from the Tunguska Zone. These objects are kept in vaults - special bases designed to safely hold them. Most vaults are used to contain the effects of the objects so they do not contaminate the outside world and ensure that no one can steal them.

Size: small to enormous. Most vaults store only a single item, because if an item is important to store in a vault, then placing another item inside the vault for storage is too much of a security risk - either it's a waste of space (for conventional items) or makes the vault too valuable of a target.

Defenses: Heavily defended and trapped. Vaults were seldom visited by their owners so vaults employ the most stringent security measures the owner can devise.

Detection: Vaults are almost always built in remote locations and use the most advanced methods to avoid detection possible, so they are nearly impossible to find without a clue to its location from an outside source, like the journal of the base builder.

Loot: Vaults only have one item worth looting - the object the vault was built to hold. These objects are potentially worth a fortune to the right buyer but they may be more dangerous to the raiders than any of the traps or defenses.

MISSION SPECIFIC

Many heroes and villains built constructed bases to fulfill a mission that only appeals to them. An alien hero homesick for his distant birth planet built an observatory. A super scientist built a research lab in the heart of a volcano to study the earth. An immortal warrior built a shrine to commemorate fallen allies and worthy foes. All of these bases vary wildly in their capabilities, but each was built because the builder had an important reason to do so.

Size: Variable - the nature of the purpose of the base dictates its size. An observatory has to be large while a shrine to the dead can be fairly small, for example.

Defenses: Variable, although they are seldom heavily defended. Most base in this category have defenses based on the importance of the mission in question to the owner. A base that only has sentimental value will not be as heavily protected as a base used for a life or death mission.

Detection: Because these bases are not built to support normal strategic goals or provide tactical support, they are often built in odd locations and are hard to detect. Typically they are only discovered through careful investigation of the base's owner.

Loot: These bases are seldom filled with substantial loot, but they are still worth exploring because they can provide invaluable insight into the mind of the base's owner and provide leads to other bases.

A Note on Magic

The creators of Build-A-Base technology had a poor understanding of magic, so its effects are not well integrated with the design software. Users with mystical powers had to spend more time designing their bases and explaining to the Build-A-Base software how their powers worked. As a result, these bases often had design flaws that can be exploited by mystically aware base raiders. Perhaps the illusion magic used to conceal the base does not cover the entire facility, leaving one small element visible or the fire elemental bound in the base's power plant may heat up and cool down at a faster rate than anticipated, which will warp the reactor housing over time. Some mystical flaws cause cascading failures, turning the entire base into an inadvertent death trap, especially when it has been left unattended for a long period of time.

Powerful sorcerers typically eschewed Build-A-Base tech, using their awesome command of magic to create unearthly sanctums or impregnable dungeons. These bases are unique wonders and pose incredible danger to trespassers.

THE BASES TODAY

It is impossible to tell how many bases have been discovered, but only a few truly impressive ones have been raided, which leaves many still waiting to be found. Of the bases discovered, most are safe houses or specialized facilities dedicated to a single purpose, like storage or surveillance. They were built in haste or were abandoned well before Ragnarok, so the owner did not carefully look after them. These were more easily uncovered than primary bases used by powerful superhumans. Raiders have learned that the initial configuration and construction of a base are not the only factors in determining what will be inside. Sometimes what happens after a base is abandoned is more important than its original purpose or owner. The environ-ment, possible inhabitants of the base, and the time it has been abandoned are all significant.

Time

Countless bases have been abandoned since Ragnarok, but many were forsaken long before that fateful day. Some heroes and villains found it easier to build a series of bases, abandoning or destroying each one when it could be replaced. Some bases were built for a single mission or for contingencies that never occurred. Some builders died without telling anyone of the bases they left behind. As a result, many bases have been unused for years or decades. While Build-A-Base tech is designed to be durable and long-lasting, the base is only as good as the user who designed it.

Most base owners underestimated how long the base would be used and the software took that into account when designing the base. The nuclear battery of the Build-A-Base machine eventually wears out, so some bases have completely lost power, which disables most of the defenses (mechanical and chemical traps can work without electricity for example) but makes the entire structure more hazardous. Doors won't open, life support systems shut off, and some items break or degrade without power. The longer the base is unused, the more of a chance something important breaks which the Build-A-Base central system can't repair. Walls may collapse or reactors may leak radioactive waste.

There is also the small matter of the base's contents (i.e. the valuable loot) getting damaged or destroyed the longer the base is left unattended. Some bases are designed to last for centuries and will look as good today as the day they were completed, but that may not be a comfort to the raiders breaking in. After all, such bases were designed to last that long for a good reason. It may have been built to imprison an immortal demon or indestructible evil artifact or house the clones of a superhuman's family or any number of reasons. Whatever that reason is, it also means the owner undoubtedly built many traps and defenses to stop intruders and those defenses are in perfect working condition. So, perhaps an old, rusted, broken down base may be a better sign to base raiders.

Inhabitants

Some bases were not used by lone superhumans, but populated with loyal servants or imprisoned enemies of the base owner. Furthermore, there is also the chance squatters found the base and now occupy it, but usually not normal squatters. These are much more likely to be superpowered refugees. They are mutants or aliens who can't live in human society and have to eek out a pathetic existence at the fringes but still have enough power to break down the base's doors and overcome the defenses. Build-A-Base tech fabricators can create basic nutritional paste and water as long as they have power and carbon mass, meaning a well-built base can support its population for decades. Plus, some inhabitants will be immortal and do not need food or water.

Whoever they are, the inhabitants of a base will be very interested in visitors. Some will try to drive off the intruders, viewing them as invaders. Others may want the help of base raiders, especially prisoners who want to escape. A few inhabitants will take a more neutral approach and try to assess if the raiders are potential allies or enemies. They may want to establish trade with the outside world, selling base artifacts and treasures in exchange for vital supplies. In short, the inhabitants of a base could take any number of stances upon meeting a group of base raiders.

The Environment

Even the most durable and well designed base is susceptible to natural disasters and other environmental changes. Earthquakes and tremors have damaged many bases, as their owners chose not to build an-ti-earthquake safety measures for their bases to save time on construction. Hurricanes, floods, and tsunamis have ruined others through flooding damage. Most owners underestimated the extent to which the local environment could change so they did not allocate enough time in the construction phase to build safety measures.

Furthermore, even when the owners built many safety measures to protect the base, sometimes the technology failed or was simply overwhelmed. So while the average base was designed to be a hermetically sealed facility with life support systems, many of them have cracks which let in some part of the local environment. Often these leaks are caused by events the owner could not possibly anticipate like companies illegally dumping toxic waste over the site of the base or a nearby gas line explosion.

When a base suffers environmental damage, it affects the entire structure. Aside from degrading most components, any leak or crack in the base will let in flora and fauna from the outside, even if it is just microscopic. Some abandoned bases have become underground jungles, overflowing with plants and animals. Others may have serious infestations of black mold and similar toxic organisms. It's entirely possible that the contents of a base may mutate any wildlife that finds a way inside the base, creating unpredictable monsters. Base raiders should consider the environment of whatever base they explore before venturing inside.

TRADECRAFT

Base Raiders may be heroes or villains, but they are all criminals. The skill of finding and exploring bases without being detected by the authorities is vital to their success. Avoiding detection is fairly easy as long

as the base raiders keep a low profile. This means that surveying the entire countryside with ground penetrating radar or excavating quarries with high explosives is out of the question, but it does allow for good old-fashioned detective work. Careful investigation and research can uncover more bases than gadgetry or divination magic. But even once you find the base, getting in and out alive and loaded with loot can be a challenge.

How to find a Base

Successful raiders use any number of methods to find hidden bases, but three techniques in particular seem to work the best: researching a missing superhuman, searching an area that is likely to have a base, or finding informants who already know the base's location. Each technique requires a different plan to work, but they can all be effective.

RESEARCH A MISSING SUPERHUMAN

Hundreds of superpowered heroes and villains went missing the day of Ragnarok, most of whom had at least one base. But before they disappeared, much was written about them. While the most popular superhumans were treated like superstar celebrities, even the most minor villain received some media attention. A researcher who combines that info with what is known about bases, it is possible to infer the location of their base.

A vigilante with Ideal connections probably received a standard Build-A-Base machine and placed it near the most crime ridden neighborhoods of his home city. An investigator could then pull all sightings of the vigilante in the year before his disappearance and create a profile of his base's likely location. Of course, paranoid superhumans could have taken countermeasures to prevent their enemies from finding their lairs so this method is not guaranteed success. Interviewing witnesses who knew the superhuman, re-examining sites of their famous battles, analyzing any equipment they left behind (even souvenirs or incidental items - a torn cape may have mud on it unique to a certain location for example) and researching their known associates and enemies all help in building a profile of the

USING TRADECRAFT IN YOUR GAME

This section does not give explicit game mechanics for finding new bases. The difficulty in finding a base is based on your style as a gamemaster and the preferences of your players. Some groups will like investigation focused games where the main challenge is in finding a base while others will want a more action packed game where the adventure happens after the base is found or a balance between investigation and base exploration.

Use this section to give you ideas on how to structure an adventure. If you want to make finding the base a real challenge, let the players choose an approach to finding a base and then write a detailed mystery scenario but if you just want to have them start at the base, hand wave the investigation and state that they found the base after they found an informant (or whatever approach fits best for your game). No matter what, think what works best for a dramatic adventure for your group and use that.

superhuman in question.

The primary advantage of this method is the low chance of finding someone else's base by accident. Base raiders who want to find the base of a super scientist (and are prepared to deal with high tech traps and robot guards) are not going to stumble upon the lair of a wizard (and be unprepared to deal with any mystic traps or guardians left behind). Raiders who want a specific item or piece of data use this method exclusively. The disadvantage of this method is that it is the hardest way to find a base.

Most heroes and villains had enemies who actively searched for their hideouts so they went to great lengths to mislead them. Paranoid villains set up dummy bases (usually trapped) to kill potential assassins while heroes had the Ideal to help set up false leads and distractions.

SEARCH AN AREA

Many base raiders don't care which base they find, as long as it has plenty of loot so they profile regions for potential base locations. Major cities are rife with hidden bases, so amateur base raiders are already scouring the subways and sewers, but it is easy to miss a base even when physically close to it. They are designed to avoid detection so conventional techniques to find hollow spaces and hidden doors are unlikely to work.

More sophisticated raiders analyze an area likely to have a base by researching its geography, history, infrastructure, and geology. Exotic contaminants in the local water supply may match trace elements used by certain super science lab processes, indicating a hidden lab in the area. Reports of unusual noise or brown outs may indicate a base undergoing unusual activity or siphoning more power than normal from the local electric grid. Blind spots in the architecture of a factory or subway system may indicate the entrance or exit of a base. Local residents know the 'haunted' places that may be warded by magic. Combing national and international news of the weird also helps - an investigator who knows what to look for can find signs of bases. UFO sightings and missing livestock can indicate the presence of inhabitants with superpowers leaving and entering a base to procure food. Sudden changes in crime rates and suicide may indicate the actions of a released prisoner from a super prison or an out of control telepath. Theft of massive amounts of scrap metal or radioactive waste usually means a superpowered inhabitant of a base trying to repair or refuel it. Some clever base raiders have even laid traps for base inhabitants by dumping vital supplies for a base in a convenient location and then tracking whoever takes them.

This method usually finds bases more quickly than by profiling a superhuman but raiders will not know what is inside the base. They may find a temporary safe house with minimal loot or a massive fortress with many traps and guardians.

INFORMANTS

The final common method for finding a base is to recruit an informant who already knows the base's location
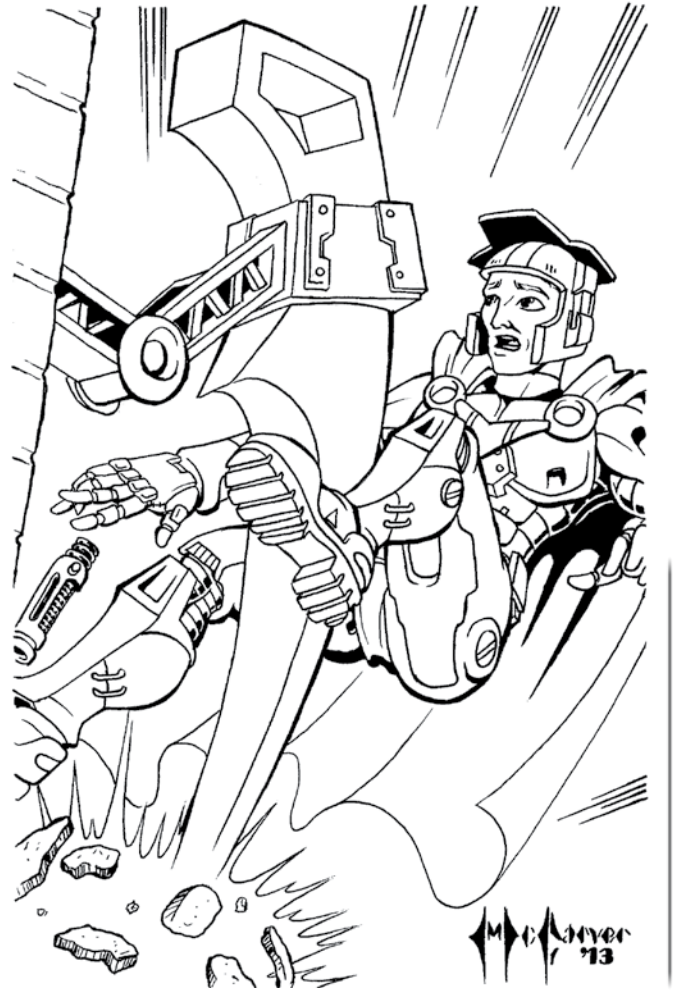
or at least has a vital clue. Ex-sidekicks and henchmen often know where a base or two is or have a good idea, as do family members and friends of missing superhumans. Their assistance can mean the difference between months of investigation and finding a base in a day. The problem comes from the informant. Their motives in helping a group of raiders loot a base of everything of value make them a potential threat.

Informants may use base raiders as pawns, giving them misleading information so they can set off traps or distract guards while they help themselves. The informant may tell others of the base's location or demand to be taken with the raiders to the base in order to ensure they get their share. Ruthless base raiders could kill or mind wipe informants in order to guarantee their silence but who knows what kind of safeguards they may take to protect against such double crosses. Heroic base raiders have to worry about informants betraying them to the authorities or other raiders. Some

raiders prefer to spend months investigating base locations than trust an informant, but sometimes there's no other choice.

EXPLORING A BASE

Given the level of technology (and magic on occasion) used to create bases, it's impossible to predict what could be in a base. However, careful base raiders know that taking some precautions can mean the difference between life and death. The following rules are commonly followed by most base raiders:

1. Never go into a base without telling someone who can help you if things go wrong

There is no 911 for base raiders. The authorities cannot help someone who loses a leg in a death trap in the abandoned base of a psychotic villain. If no one on the outside knows where you are when you delve into a base, then no one can come and rescue you if things go bad or at least retrieve your body. Often, a team of base raiders will leave at least one member outside the base so they can send for help if an emergency happens.

2. Use the least destructive methods for exploration first

While blowing up vault doors or cutting through steel walls with plasma cannons beams is a fast and fun way of exploring a base, it's also the most dangerous. It's generally better to unlock or bypass security mechanisms and doors rather than destroy them outright. Sometimes, this is unavoidable, but wantonly destroying every obstacle is a bad idea. It may weaken the base's structural integrity, which could make the base collapse. It may set off a fire or explosion, which is a danger to raiders and the loot they seek.

3. Gather as much intelligence as possible before entering a base

While it is tempting to kick the door in as soon as possible, gathering some data on it first is advisable. Clever raiders can ascertain a lot of valuable information before they step inside. Use of high tech gadgets or magic can usually determine the base's approximate size, environmental hazards like residual toxic waste or noxious gases, and the age of the base. Some raiders employ drones to scout a base out - even a remote controlled toy car or helicopter rigged with a cheap camera can be used to trigger traps or detect hazards.

4. If you can find a base, so can someone else.

Never assume that no one else could have possibly found the base before you or will never find it. While base raiders should gather intelligence on the base, they should not wait too long, nor should they assume it has not been explored before by other raiders.

5. Do not trust strangers in a base.

Anyone you meet in a base is a potential threat. Even prisoners who appear to be innocent victims may be dangerous, even if they don't realize it. This is a world where demonic possession, shapeshifters, mind control, illusion magic, and cloning technology are all real. This isn't to say you should kill everyone you find in a base, but nor should you turn your back on them.

6. Carry food, water, first aid, rope, flashlights, and other basic survival gear

Some base raiders focus so much on their high tech gadgets and magic weapons that they forget to bring some bottled water and bandages. There's no telling how long you may be in a base or even if you'll leave in the same place - many bases have teleporters so you may wind up thousands of miles away from where you entered. It's possibly to get carried away so each raider needs to personally assess how much gear they should carry on a mission.

7. Avoid using untested gear in the field

Even if you find a plasma cannon in a base that looks brand new, it may have a hidden surprise or two that can backfire on you (literally in some cases). Unless it is absolutely necessary, don't anything you find a base until you've had a chance to research it in a safe environment. Sometimes it is unavoidable, especially when dealing with powerful guardians but be aware that untested equipment has a tendency to cause more problems than it solves.

8. Never let a base become a threat to the outside world

Some bases contain doomsday weapons or dangerous monsters both of which should remain locked away. Other bases contain hordes of genetically engineered creatures or plagues that could devastate the world. To some base raiders, it's tempting to let the monsters escape the base rather than fight them or sell the doomsday weapon to a dictator instead of destroying it. Such short-sighted behavior enrages the Underground and other base raiders. It gives the government justification to label base raiders as terrorists and criminals, making everyone else's life harder. Anyone caught doing this will be hunted down by other base raiders, especially the heroic ones.

9. Don't rely on your superpowers

Superpowered base raiders tend to coast on their abilities, which eventually catches up to them. Sooner or later, a base raider will encounter an enemy or obstacle that their powers can't overcome. Without having a backup plan, these base raiders have no other option but retreat. Versatility is the hallmark of a successful base raider.

10. You are always in danger in a base.

Safety is an illusion in a base. A base, by its very nature, is outside of civilization and often the laws of nature as we commonly understand them. It was built specifically because the owner thought he was above the law. Even bases built by heroes can contain nasty secrets or death traps. Never forget you are an intruder in an environment built with alien technology only dimly understood by humans.

REWARDS

People wouldn't break into abandoned bases and loot them if it wasn't incredibly profitable, but profit isn't always measured by money. In truth, few base raiders have become rich (at least so far) but they still go out and risk their lives, again and again, to do it because it offer rewards that money can't buy. In general, base raiders find that the best rewards come in three types: information, superpowers, and favors.

Information

Abandoned bases have information available nowhere else in the universe. Vigilantes and villains have secrets on unsolved criminal cases, corrupt police officers, and politicians. Scientists have data on curing diseases or ending world hunger. Most bases have clues leading to other bases. While this information can be sold for money, many base raiders use it to achieve their own goals. A utilitarian base raider might use blackmail material from a villain's base to convince a corrupt politician into implementing beneficial policies for the poor, for example. That kind of leverage can't be bought.

Superpowers

While members of the DIY superpower movement seek to empower as many people as possible, the best power sources are in bases. Super soldier drugs created by the scientists of the Ideal are more effective than any reverse-engineered formula. Base raiders who want an edge never stop looking for a better power source.

Favors

Powerful people who want information or superpowers grant favors to the base raiders who can give them what they want. A district attorney may 'lose' evidence of a crime committed by the sibling of a base raider to get information on a mobster which was left behind in an Ideal safe house. An immortal magical being can reveal the location of the Fountain of Youth to the base raider who can reunite her with a certain magical blade kept in a vault. Some base raiders give most of their loot to their friends in the Underground on the condition that agents of the Underground will rescue the character if he is arrested by the police or trapped in a base somewhere. Hiring a personal superpowered 911 service isn't cheap, but who can put a price on your life?

CHAPTER SIX
GAINING SUPERPOWERS

It used to be that heroes and villains did not intend to get their powers. Destiny or random chance gave them power. Today, that is no longer true. Most superhumans intentionally sought out superpowers through DIY experimentation, purchases made in the black market for superpowers or a combination of both. It all started with the tell alls.

It did not take long after Ragnarok for the first sidekick to sell out. Red Scale, the sidekick to the superhero Dragon Song, publicly announced a tell all memoir and auction of Dragon Song's belongings. While this generated a considerable amount of controversy, it was not unexpected.

Since the disappearance of the heroes, many pundits speculated about which sidekick would 'sell out' first and gossip columnists had written extensively about rumors that Dragon Song was an abusive narcissist behind the scenes. However, no thought it was an important event or that it would change world history until the day of the auction.

Jacob Hillfield, an avid follower of Dragon Song's exploits, bought a crystalline ring with no known provenance because he alone recognized it as the ring of the Daemon Sultan, one of Dragon Song's most dangerous enemies. He put the ring on and managed to activate it, thanks to his specialized knowledge. The ring transformed Jacob into a powerful energy being in the middle of the auction house, much to his delight and the terror of everyone else in the building at the time. A reporter on the scene was brave enough to interview the newly transformed Hillfield, who was glad to explain what happened. Jacob cheerfully pointed out that the missing superheroes and villains left behind at least several hundred secret bases, not protected by the Accord, filled with wonders and treasures beyond imagination, there for the taking. Hillfield then stole several dozen other objects from the auction house and flew away before the police could apprehend him. He has never been seen again, but his interview became a global hit on Internet video sites and sparked a revolution. The hunt was on.

The Accord protected publicly known Ideal facilities from looters and the government. Soldiers and EPSA agents were stationed at every known Ideal base to keep them safe but the Ideal kept dozens of facilities secret from the government and independent heroes like Dragon Song and every super villain kept their hideouts secret as well. Those locations were all up for grabs so it did not take long for the first base raiders to find and loot them. However, the casualty rate was horrific, as normal humans are not well equipped to fight deathbots, disarm laser traps, or survive expo-

sure to nerve gas. The survivors began using their loot to empower themselves for the next raid, rather than sell all of it on the black market. The first raiders also figured out how to reproduce some means of empowerment. Within months of Jacob Hillfield's interview, the black market for superpowers was very real and very popular.

After base raiding became a global phenomena, the demand for superpowers went through the roof. A thriving black market appeared overnight to cater to the wannabes, but that was only part of the picture. Thousands began to experiment so they could gain superpowers without paying a black market dealer and some succeeded.

After the spoils of the first bases began to circulate, speculators and black market dealers began to appear, buying and selling superpower tech. With every passing month, the black market became more sophisticated. The market value of various items like common types of super soldier drugs and alien weapons reached a certain level of equilibrium so that underground merchants could sell them at established rates.

The black market became stable enough to accommodate most of the demand for illegal superpower tech. The rest of the demand was satisfied through DIY experimentation and gadgteering. New base raiders used information from the Internet to devise their own means of gaining superpowers. No government agency could stop a bright and determined teen from gathering common household ingredients in order to make a primitive super soldier drug knockoff or perform simple ritual magic.

Now, despite the best efforts of the authorities, newcomers to the scene can find numerous ways to gain superpowers, if they are willing to take the risks. Potential superhumans in large cities can ask around until they find a black market dealer or bazaar and buy superpower tech.

People less trusting of the black market can find their own way to gain superpowers. Some brave souls do both, but superpowers from different sources don't always mix well. Crackdowns on the black market and DIY experimentation have just begun, but are still largely ineffective. Still, the unwary can be caught by the authorities while trying to gain superpowers.

DIY SUPERPOWERS

Many base raiders have gotten superpowers without the aid of the black market. The most effective way of personally obtaining superpowers is by researching how the first superheroes and villains got their powers and then duplicate their efforts. The Internet is filled with information on this topic, although sifting through the useful data from the noise requires diligent research and experimentation.

Once a person gets information on gaining superpowers, then they have to act on it, which is a step that most would-be superhumans never cross. Fear of making a mistake or that the information is incorrect can prevent someone from acting, and usually it requires a great deal of time and money to conduct even a modest experiment in self empowerment. The few that commit are testing their will and wits against the universe with their life as a wager. Failure in a DIY superpower experiment is dangerous. Experimenters may cause fires, put themselves in financial ruin, face criminal charges, or suffer crippling injuries or death. But success is priceless, so some take the risk.

In general, DIY superpowers are sharply limited in most areas. Civilians don't have access to high end lab equipment, cutting edge robotics workshops, or nuclear reactors, so methods used by militaries, the Ideal, and well-financed super villains, are off limits. Instead, experimenters look at methods used by early superhumans, who used primitive equipment, mystically-inclined superhumans, and the work of a few eccentric super scientists who developed low-tech superpower sources. There are reasons why the Ideal and the military abandoned these methods of empowerment.

You will not find simple and reliable superpowers with obvious military applications, like wingless supersonic flight or laser eyebeams. Instead, DIY experimenters may gain flight, but through a mystical incantation in medieval Latin, which produces feathered wings on the spellcaster's back until the next sunrise or sundown. A drug that grants super strength may turn the subject's skin red or give them the scales of a crocodile. But, to the desperate power seekers who experiment on themselves, any superpower is better than nothing, so they accept their side effects.

HOW NOT TO GET SUPERPOWERS

While many early superheroes and villains gained their powers accidentally or through destiny, the Ideal and the US government spent decades making sure no one else would ever get their powers by accident. Both organizations wanted to control who and who did not get superpowers so they locked down every potential superpower source they could. They did not want competition, so they kicked the ladder down as soon as they climbed it. Mystical artifacts known to grant powers to individuals of a certain type were locked in vaults or given to potential owners who could be trusted until the artifact chose someone. The staff and visitors to advanced laboratories were monitored by intelligence agencies for signs of superpowers. Chemicals that grant superpowers, even toxic waste, were guarded, inventoried, and monitored. The Tunguska Zone and other areas of interest were also guarded. Today, very few superhumans get their powers by accident. Everyone who was chosen by fate to be a hero or a villain or serve some kind of cosmic role has already been chosen. Almost every lab or site that can produce a superhuman is watched and there are very few places that can do that now.

Ideal researchers developed profiling techniques to identify people who got superpowers by accident, which they shared with the FBI. A person who gets his powers by accident shifts behavioral patterns in ways that can be detected by the authorities. Some try to help others anonymously, either by creating a masked vigilante persona or through secret acts of charity, Robin Hood style acts of wealth redistribution and the like. Others go on binges of excess, committing impulse crimes and acting like a lottery winner. A few try to complete long standing personal goals, like revenge on a hated enemy, or attempts to woo someone they have a crush on. Very few confess their powers to the authorities. But all of these accidental superhumans tend to commit unusual actions that can be detected and used to find them. All of them have to learn how to use their powers and this inevitably creates accidents near their home - ripping a car door off by mistake, igniting a mugger with laser blasts, and

so forth. Profilers for the FBI are very good at tracking down superhumans who get their powers by mistake. Fortunately, for base raiders, these profiling techniques do not work for people who intentionally seek out superpowers. Because it is a premeditated act, they can cover up their actions and do not make the kind of mistakes accidental superhumans make.

Most of the people who got their powers by accident after Ragnarok have either been arrested or recruited by the military. Many of the others who lucked upon a suit of power armor, magical artifact, or other item that granted superpowers have had their item stolen. In fact, some base raiders specialize in finding and stealing from these 'lotto winners' instead of actually raiding bases. It's a lot easier to steal a magic katana from an office worker than it is to break into a fortified Ideal base. Of the remainder, some of the accidental superhumans have been killed. Not many live longer than a month free and with their powers intact. The superpower scene is not a forgiving one. Because of these reasons, many would-be superhumans turn to the black market to buy their powers. However, negotiating the byzantine layers of the black market is almost as challenging as surviving after receiving accidental superpowers.

THE BLACK MARKET FOR POWERS

Humans do not control the black market. Most human-run criminal syndicates are still recovering from the Ideal crackdown and are frequently raided by law enforcement agencies eager to stop the trafficking of superpower technology. The government simply assumes that cartels like the mafia are behind the sudden growth in illegal superpower tech sales but the truth is more complex.

The black market is a network of brokers and dealers that buy and sell various means to gain superpowers and the associated paraphernalia like costumes, gadgets, and services like trauma surgery. The Underground, a secret society of non-humans, controls and protects most of black market for superpowers, but they allow humans to trade if they kick back a percentage of their sales. In exchange, the Underground pro-

tects dealers and provides valuable information and news about the market. Not every dealer accepts these terms. The Underground does not punish the dealers who remain independent, as long as they do not interfere with their own operations.

Many dealers are active or former base raiders who seek a slightly more stable life. Others are idealists that believe that superpowers belong to everyone who wants them, typically highly educated engineers or scientists with an interest in superpowers. Some are ex-henchmen or sidekicks who want to get in on the ground floor of the next big thing. Few are simple profiteers, because success in the superpowers black market requires a highly unusual skill set and a willingness to do business with monsters, freaks, weirdos, loners, and headcases, and that's not even mentioning the non-human clientele.

Successful black market dealers are agile and rely on good information and contacts for security. While most are capable of defending themselves in a fight and having a bodyguard or two helps, dealers don't usually bog themselves down with large numbers of guards and flunkies. More employees means more paychecks to sign and more chances for betrayal. The best security is not putting all your eggs in one basket and if you do get robbed, know the right people to call to retrieve your property. After all, they do know dozens of recently empowered base raiders who would be eager to make a buck tracking down some thieves.

There is no single accepted currency, but all dealers accept trade of goods taken from bases. Most do buy and sell in US currency, but others will only trade in gold, and others in Euros, byte dimes, or bearer bonds. Dealers can be very picky and eccentric when it comes to payment but all of them need more inventory to conduct business. Even if the dealer can't sell a particular item on their own, they can trade it to another dealer.

The black market primarily works in three tiers: the bazaars, the specialists, and the small timers. The bazaars are large markets with a dozen or more dealers, each offering goods. They are heavily guarded but characters can find a wide assortment of equipment quickly in one location. Specialists are dealers that only sell one type of superpower tech, usually something the dealer can manufacture or has a large stockpile ready for sale.

Small timers buy and sell anything, but they have a small budget and inventory.

Dealer Type	Types of Superpower Tech	Inventory
Small Time	1d6	2d6+10
Specialist	Pick 1	4d6+2
Bazaar	All	50+

Superpower Tech categories: Magic, Gadgets and Vehicles, Super Soldier Drugs, Adept secrets, Cybernetics, Alien Tech, Tunguska Artifacts
Inventory: the total skill point value of all items in the dealer's inventory - the GM has control over what powers are available.

Bazaars

Every major city will have a bazaar, managed by the Underground. In order to get in, the character must be vouched for by a member of the Underground and they are not allowed to go in armed. Guards with plasma cannons and other heavy weapons will be posted throughout the bazaar. Hidden security systems and reserver guards are always on alert to deal with thieves and raids from the authorities. No matter when a character visits a bazaar, they will find many dealers, each at a different stall or makeshift storefront, ready to buy and sell a wide assortment of goods, mostly low end gear.

Some of the dealers only sell marginally useful gear and curiosities - inert artifacts, parts from broken robots, HENCHMAN OF THE YEAR awards, and the like. Dealers typically keep their high end items off site and will only mention them to customers they think might be interested. A customer that expresses interest in such an item will have to arrange a meeting with the dealer away from the inquisitive eyes of the other merchants and customers.

Characters looking for good deals will have to do a lot of haggling and networking to sort the useful gear from the junk. As a side benefit, bazaars always have a bar on site, which are great places to gossip and get the latest news from the Underground.

Specialists

Specialists have found a niche in one segment of the superpowers market, typically one type of super soldier drug or a type of gadget they can manufacture. However, there are specialists for every category of superpower tech. Specialists operate through referrals, and seldom meet with potential clients that are not recommended from a trust source. Base raiders who want to meet with a specialist dealer must prove themselves worthy first - typically by buying and selling in a bazaar or to a few small time dealers first. Specialists can afford to be picky because their expert knowledge in their product line makes them invaluable to customers. A specialist dealer in magical artifacts, for example, will know how his wares perform, what their command words are and can instruct customers accordingly. Some dealers will even provide tech support for the superpower tech they sell, a rarity in the black market. Because of this, they charge more for their goods, but most of their customers swear the price is worth the customer service.

Small timers

Small timers have the biggest risk of all black market dealers because they don't have the reputation, skills, or inventory to attract rich clients on their own so they have to go out and find people who want to buy superpowers. Obviously, law enforcement agencies and criminal cartels will take out black market dealers they find or flip them as informants, so small timers have to balance being picky versus making no money. In order to minimize this risk, they tend to be nomadic, moving from city to city. Typically, a small time dealer sets up shop right outside of a major city, in a derelict warehouse, foreclosed home, or similar abandoned building. Then, they go out looking for customers, through a variety of methods. Once they find a few clients, they direct them to meet at their temporary shop. They do not keep inventory at this location, but use it as a meeting place for customers. In the initial meet, the dealer sizes up the client and offers them whatever superpower tech they think they will buy. Often, a small timer will offer discounts for customers that provide

leads on new bases to raid or promise to bring back superpower tech to sell. After making a few deals this way, the small timer leaves the city before the heat gets too much. Of course, dealers that find loyal clients will provide means to stay in contact, should they need something new or have something interesting to sell. These dealers also frequent the bazaars, making connections and freshening up inventory. Small timers are well traveled, so they're good people to know for the latest news from around the world - the real news, not the stuff that gets reported on TV.

How to Find the Black Market

Characters with connections to the Underground or other base raiders can easily find dealers or a nearby bazaar. This only requires a Contacting (+0) skill test. As long as a character maintains a good reputation and has resources to spend, they will always be welcome in the black market.

Characters without any connections will have jump through some hoops in order to prove they aren't informants for the police and can pay for superpower tech. Small time dealers are the easiest to find. A (+1) Contacting or other similar skill test will be enough to find one. To prove trust, a small timer will usually have the new customer go through some kind of test. This varies, but it may involve reading the customer's mind (for telepath dealers), committing a felony (often using illegal drugs or transporting stolen goods across state lines) or raiding a small and relatively harmless base on their own. The test will be hard enough to weed out undercover cops and the undedicated, but not hard enough to deter committed raiders. It will not be lethal, because dead customers aren't paying customers. Once the dealer is satisfied, he can begin negotiations with his new customer.

Specialists operate in a similar manner to small timers but are far more stringent and demanding to unknown clients. They can afford to be choosy with who they do business with so they are more than willing to turn down clients they don't trust. They are also fairly elitist and only take clients with an appreciation of the type of superpower tech they have to sell. A customer

that insults the wares of a specialist will not be doing any business with them.

Bazaars employ a number of security measures behind the scenes, which most customers never realize. All new customers are investigated by agents of the Underground to ensure they are not on the payroll of a police agency or a criminal organization. Telepaths and high tech sensors sweep every customer for weapons and other dangerous equipment. Agents with nullifying superpowers are present to counter any troublemakers on the spot. These security mitigate the need to test potential customers, although potential customers new to the bazaar may be turned down the first time they visit and told to come back in a week. This gives the Underground time to investigate the customer.

What's for Sale in the Black Market

Certain means of gaining superpowers are far easier to reproduce for the black market than others and not every method can be reproduced by the black market. Some require unique ingredients, facilities, or data that is only available in certain bases. These high end methods are rarely, if ever available on the black market. Common empowerment methods include:

Atlantean martial arts techniques: The secrets of the Silver Dragon Style were discovered in a set of Atlantean scrolls found in a mystical hero's base. The scrolls were copied and distributed to black market dealers around the world. All of the martial art styles from ancient Atlantis endow practitioners with superhuman powers. A dedicated student can teach himself the basics of Silver Dragon Style through months of meditation and practice, gaining enhanced strength and speed. More esoteric styles that grant more exotic powers have not been widely distributed so they seldom appear on the black market.

Super Soldier Drugs: Variants of all of the major formulas show up on the black market on a regular basis. Some black market chemists have learned how to create the drugs from scratch, although they may have hidden flaws.

Alien technology: Scavenged tech is very common, although it's often broken. Super geniuses buy the tech so they can fix or reverse engineer it. Functional alien-built equipment, especially weapons usable by humans, is unusual, but not unheard of, but it always commands a high price.

Magical knowledge: This is the most common form of empowerment for sale, but one of the least popular ones as well. Many magical tomes have been digitized, but readers need an extensive background in dead languages, history, the occult, and philosophy to make use of them. Many would-be raiders find out the hard way that Latin and medieval Arabic are not easy to learn. Nor are the oblique references to long dead cults and embedded ciphers found in most grimoires easy to comprehend. The few base raiders that successfully learn magic are typically frustrated graduate students and adjunct faculty at state universities, who turn their talents to earning enough money to repay their student loans, a daunting task in this day and age.

Magical Artifacts: More useful than tomes, weapons and tools forged by long-dead wizards commands a high price if its functions are well-understood. Black market dealers seldom know how to divine the exact abilities of such objects so they are sold 'as is' to unwary or desperate buyers. Using a magic item without knowing its background is extremely dangerous, as many of them carry protective wards or curses. Potions are rarely available in Underground-controlled markets, but some dealers still carry them.

Tungsuska Zone artifacts: Strange objects from alternate universes, left on earth by random dimensional gates in the Tunguska Zone, these are avoided by experienced base raiders, because there's no telling what they will do. Still, several powerful devices have been found in the Zone, including biomechanical power armor, energy weapons, and advanced nano-swarm technology.

Refurbished or replica superhero gadgets: Conventionally manufactured gear like grapple guns, utility belts, form-fitting body armor, weighted boomerangs, and the like are staples of the black market. These gadgets are the result of decades of Ideal funded research and development into easily-reproducible superhero equipment. While the Ideal had access to alien technology and magic, they realized it was good to have a source of weapons, equipment, and armor that could be manufactured with resources

from earth so they put several super-genius inventors on building the best gadgets possible. The inventors kept improving the gadgets over the years, resulting in multiple generations of gadgets, most of which wound up on the black market. Base raiders figured out how to build knockoffs of the more useful gadgets, which also found their way to the black market. Characters could find both a Mark 1 and a Mark 5 grapple hook launcher for sale at the local black market dealer and not realize which was the superior gadget. Most improvements were incremental in nature, and newer generations sometimes introduced new flaws into the gadgets. There were also numerous unique customized gadgets and prototypes, so virtually any kind of superhero gadget could be found at a black market.

Non-prosthetic cybernetic implants: Cybernetic technology is extremely new, so very few doctors can actually perform the requisite surgery needed for prosthetic limbs and the like. What's more, none of the few doctors that can do the surgery work in the black market - they don't need to and the government keeps a close eye on them to make sure they don't illegally upgrade a base raider. However, black market doctors and technicians are able to install minor cybernetic implants that can still significantly enhance a base raider. Concealable razor claws, embedded hacking tools and sensors, ocular sensor implants, and light dermal armor are just some of the many implants available in most black markets.

Civilian class vehicles: Customized vehicles that a civilian could ostensibly own are fairly common - cars, motorcycles, boats, and small helicopters being the most common vehicles sold. These vehicles will usually have Ideal-designed enhancements or gadgets built in and concealed so the vehicle looks street legal. Common modifications include improved speed and handling, armor, weapons and chase deterrents (oil slicks and caltrop dispensers especially common), windshield mounted sensors, and environmental sealing.

Contract Services: Base raiders may need a specialist from time to time and black market bazaars are a good place to find off the books contractors. Trauma surgeons who patch up wounds without asking questions or safe crackers who can open up the most advanced vault door can be found for the right price. This requires patience and resources though, because

highly trained specialists are few and far apart, so it may take weeks to arrange a meeting with one.

RARE ITEMS

The black market does not have access to every form of empowerment though. These rare methods are seldom, if ever, available for sale. Characters that get their powers from these sources usually found them in a base and kept it for themselves or through some other method.

Other forms of Atlantean martial arts: No one knows how many schools of Atlantean martial arts exist, but only the secrets of the Silver Dragon Style have been widely distributed. Those with knowledge of the other styles usually jealously guard their knowledge and will go to great lengths to keep them secret.

Bionics and prosthetic cybernetic limbs: Becoming a full conversion cyborg or even replacing a single flesh arm for a robotic one is beyond the capabilities of the black market at this time. Super-genius doctors with access to a cybernetics lab and operating theater (say from an abandoned superhero base) could perform that kind of work, if the implants are available. However, keep in mind that cybernetic limbs have to be custom built for the patient. There is no such thing as a generic bionic arm. Trying to retrofit an existing limb to a new patient is difficult and prone to failure.

Experimental procedures: Bathing a human in exotic cosmic radiation or surgically altering their body and mind is not a service the black market is in the business of selling to base raiders. Customers want fast and convenient power-ups, not long and painful (possibly lethal) procedures. If someone were to find the notes on a type of experimental procedure that provides real superpowers without great risks or long recovery times, they could make a fortune in the black market. The closest thing right now is the Krutov Protocol, which falls under the category of super soldier drug.

Military grade power armor or mecha: High tech suits of power armor or giant robots are occasionally sold in the black market but never openly. When a dealer acquires such an item, he finds a buyer and negotiates privately to make a deal. They are too expensive for the average black market customer to

buy and attract the attention of federal authorities, so dealers keep their existence hidden. Furthermore, suits of power armor and mechas require constant maintenance by skilled engineers, which few can afford.

Exotic Vehicles: While superheroes and villains often used vehicles like jets, spaceships, or magical chariots, black market dealers find it difficult to move such items. They're hard to move, store, and have very few buyers. Having a spaceship sounds great in theory, but they are very difficult to pilot, can be detected by military forces, and next to impossible to refuel. Because of this, dealers tend to break down exotic technological vehicles into parts to sell, or stash them away to escape potential attackers.

Robots: Robotic drones are sold like suits of power armor, so they are almost never seen on the open market. Intelligent robots are not sold at all. Not all black market dealers are idealists, but they have learned that selling sapient beings is a good way to get killed. The Underground puts large bounties on anyone caught selling AIs with free will. The profit isn't worth the risk.

Bound magical beings: Magical beings that have been ensnared by magic and taken to the black market are given to the Underground to curry favor or abandoned outright if the being is known to be violent. This includes beings that have been imprisoned by a magical item like djinn in a bottle. Slavery is a very dangerous business and most black market dealers want no part of it.

Weapons of Mass Destruction: While base raiders have found a frightening number of weapons of mass destruction left lying around in various bases, you will not find them for sale in the black market. They are simply too dangerous to move, store, and sell. It isn't worth the trouble. That isn't to say there isn't a market for these weapons, but characters that find one will have to find a customer on their own.

THE INTERNET

Buying superpower tech on the Internet is possible, but extremely risky. When people began to raid bases and recover superpower tech, some was sold on the Internet through auction sites. The authorities quickly set up a monitoring system to identify and take down any illegal sales. They also set up stings to arrest dealers and

buyers when possible. As a result, the black market shifted to offline sales for most of their goods. This isn't to say the Internet is useless when it comes to finding superpower tech. You just have to know where to look.

Agora: The Illegal Auction Site

Some brave and talented hackers have set up an auction site called Agora that allows buyers and sellers to trade in superpower tech without fear of identification from the authorities. Virtually all other Internet sites that promise to sell real superpower tech are either frauds or traps from law enforcement agencies. The site is hosted on The Seas, Our Destination, a high tech nuclear-powered ship with advanced satellite communications capabilities and run by anarchist idealists who

believe superpower tech should be in the hands of the masses. The ship stays in international waters to avoid prosecution. Through the use of anonymous proxies and encryption software, Agora site traffic is nearly impossible to trace or decrypt. All sales are handled through byte dimes, a digital currency used by hackers and libertarians. It is possible to purchase or sell byte dimes with normal currencies through various online dealers.

The selection of superpower tech for sale on Agora is comparable to a major bazaar but with an emphasis on super soldier drugs and small objects that won't draw attention in the mail. The problem with Agora is the offline part of the transaction - i.e. getting the object to the customer without alerting the authorities. Postal inspectors routinely sweep packages for radioactive items and other indicators of superpower tech. EPSA agents run sting operations to find dealers that sell through Agora. As a result, any time a character buys tech through Agora, he runs the risk of being picked up by the authorities.

GAME MECHANICS FOR AGORA

Buying from Agora requires accessing the site, which requires rolling a +1 or higher with the computer skill or an appropriate Unique or Strange skill. Then the character can buy items as though it were a bazaar with one exception: all items for sale on Agora must fit in a normal shoe box and must not weigh over 30 pounds. Larger superpower tech items are not shipped through the mail for fear they will be detected by postal inspectors. Any time the character receives superpower tech through the mail, roll 4df. A result of -4 indicates the character has been identified by the authorities as a recipient of illegal superpower tech. What happens next is up to the GM, but the police might try to arrest the character or attempt to turn him into an informant.

File Sharing and Torrent Sites

While physical superpower tech is still mostly sold offline, knowledge and digital tech like software are traded by many sites and networks. Communities of

media pirates have added new categories for valuable information like schematics for superhero gadgets, digitized grimoires, and robot firmware. While the authorities try to shut down pirate sites that trade in superpower tech knowledge, new sites always pop up. This means that finding the appropriate superpower tech knowledge is trivial. However, getting help with interpreting this knowledge is not so simple. Online communities exist that help newbies comprehend superpower knowledge, but they are riddled with trolls, gossipers, and idiots. Finding the right knowledge requires time consuming research.

TYPES OF POWERS

Many base raiders avoid buying their powers and instead rely on their own talents and determination. Advocates of the Do It Yourself (DIY) superpowers movement encourages people to learn how to empower themselves and thousands have done so, using everything from super soldier drugs to magical grimoires.

Super Soldier Drugs

All of the hundreds of known super soldier drugs can be traced back to one of six formulas. The first of the formulas, the American-created Peak Performer formula, sparked an international arms race between nations when it was made public in 1943. Nations raced to create their own super soldiers through whatever means were available. By the end of the Cold War, six major formulas had been discovered. The fall of the Soviet Union and pressure by a coalition of superheroes and activists ended research and development into the field by government and corporate institutions. The UN later banned the use of the six formulas in frontline combat troops after reports of atrocities by super soldiers during various conflicts in the 1990s created widespread outrage.

Since then, virtually every government has banned super soldier drugs for most uses, even for life saving medical purposes. They can only used in controlled environments for the purposes of research and never for humans. Pharmaceutical corporations lobby for

loosening the regulations. They argue that milder, diluted versions of the drugs could benefit the public but no politician wants to be the first to make these drugs legal.

Ragnarok has not changed this equation yet but many advocates for legalization have emerged to argue their case. Some ask that police and military operatives be allowed to empower themselves with the drugs, although some cops and soldiers already illegally 'juice' themselves. Others point out how lawless base raiders empower themselves recklessly, endangering themselves and others in the process. Legalization would reduce that risk. Corporate advocates lament the loss of a potentially huge market for 'over the counter superpowers'. So far these arguments have not persuaded the powers that be.

PEAK PERFORMER

An enhancement drug that increases physical and mental performance. The original formula transformed its recipient into a world class athlete and drastically improved memory, mental acuity, and bravery. There are few side effects, except for increased aggression and antisocial behavior. Variations of the formula often focus in a single area: increasing intelligence or agility for example. This is considered the safest drug but its effects cannot transcend absolute human limitations.

Interestingly enough, the US military conducted research on combining Peak Performer with other super soldier drugs and achieved limited success, a rarity in the field. Adding more than one drug in a single human is unpredictable and many times fatal. However, the military found a way to safely enhance a human with Peak Performer before introducing another super soldier drug. The details of the research are kept secret, although its existence may inspire similar work around the globe.

Peak Performer is the most common of all super soldier drugs and some consider it too weak to be considered a 'real' super soldier drug today. Despite this, it is still treated as one. Two variants have become highly valued street drugs, sold to the wealthy elite. 'Harmony' provides a temporary boost to emotional stability, easing the pain of psychological trauma and providing a sense of wellness to the user. However, in order to achieve this effect, Harmony is mixed with

powerful antidepressants. This prevents Harmony from permanently improving the user's emotional stability and causes depression during withdrawal.

The other common variant, 'Boost', increases intelligence and is used by lawyers, bankers, doctors, and other high earning professionals. Boost's effects are permanent, which is a problem to the very few drug dealers who sell it. One sale does not a business model make. So far, they have resorted to two common tactics: lie about the permanence of the drug and sell placebos after the first dose (which may be addictive drugs) or blackmail their clients for regular payments.

KRUTOV PROTOCOL

A Soviet made formula aimed to boost resilience and strength to superhuman levels, the Krutov Protocol is a set of drugs administered over a period of three weeks. The recipient falls into a coma and undergoes a metamorphosis that lasts for approximately two days. The subject must be fed intravenously to fuel the transformation. During this time, the subject's body radically changes. His bones and connective tissue become incredibly strong, yet only slightly heavier and less flexible. Muscle tissue becomes vastly stronger, raising the subject's strength to superhuman levels. Skin becomes dense enough to serve as natural armor. The recipient typically gains regenerative abilities as well. The character typically gains several inches of height and gains a large amount of weight from the transformation. Furthermore, they are noticeably different than humans, as their armored skin is instantly recognizable.

Administering the Krutov Protocol requires a specially trained medical technician or doctor and support equipment to keep the subject alive during the metamorphosis. However, variations of the Protocol have emerged that cut down or eliminate these requirements. The most common variation, 'Compound B13' promises about half the end result for a fraction of the cost. One injection of Compound B13 puts the subject in a 12 to 30 hour coma. New, denser muscle tissue is grown and bone strength is enhanced. The skin begins to harden as well but it takes months for a B13 subject to grow effective natural armor. Virtually all of the subject's fat is burned up during this period and the amount of strength enhancement is proportional to the amount of fat lost during the coma. Furthermore, this

places an incredible amount of stress on the subject's body, drastically shortening lifespan and increasing chances for cancer, especially skin cancer. All variations of the Krutov Protocol cause great damage to the subject in the long term. Of course, most users gladly pay that price for the power it grants.

CHIMERA

The drug Chimera was built with cell samples from a member of The Formless, a shapeshifting alien species. Chimera was developed in the 1970s by Chilean scientists as a means to fight communist-backed forces. The alien genetic material is paired with genes from a terrestrial animal. This is combined with other compounds so the human body will not reject the drug. The end result is a drug that grants one or more of the animal's natural abilities to the drug's recipient. Early versions of Chimera permanently transformed the subject into a wild half human half animal creature but the process was soon refined so that the drug could selectively grant animal-based powers. Hundreds of Chimera variants have been developed since its creation. Most grant a single animal-based power to a human, but more recent variations grant multiple powers from the same animal. For example, many early Chimera-based drugs were developed to grant powers from felines, ranging from enhanced agility to night vision, but a super scientist called the Biomancer created a drug called Bastet that granted multiple cat-based powers.

Chimera is easy to produce, but it is hard to develop a new variant, and it requires alien tissue from one particular specimen. The Formless in question was captured by the Ideal in 1962 and the Ideal took tissue samples and shared it with other research institutes. Because The Formless regenerate, the Ideal had an ample supply and were happy to share it. Other researchers learned how to cultivate the tissue so they didn't need to reorder it from the Ideal. Of course, Soviets and super villains got their hands on the tissue samples as well and after the Chileans published their findings, everyone was able to duplicate the results and derive their own version of Chimera. Unfortunately, since the research was based on the exact DNA of the captured alien, no other genetic material will work, not even from another member of The Formless. Base raiders have found tissue samples in abandoned bases, but no one has bothered to cultivate new tissue yet. Furthermore, there's the question of whether The Formless can regenerate from small tissue samples, creating new duplicates of the captured alien. Needless to say, no one knows where the captured alien is either or whether it is dead or alive. Despite this, old stocks of Chimera drugs show up on the black market on a regular basis.

Any power that can be traced to an animal can be given through Chimera. The most common powers are enhanced senses, physical attributes, venom, gecko or spider climbing, gills, and chameleon skin but this is by no means a complete list. Side effects are common in early versions of Chimera drugs, especially animal features or loss of human intelligence, but later versions have few if any side effects. Chimera does not work well with other super soldier drugs though and base raiders should be careful about mixing anything with Chimera.

UPSILON

Little is known about the origins of Upsilon, except that it is a product of the American defense industry. Top secret research programs with high energy alien technology eventually led scientists to experimenting with imbuing humans with massive doses of exotic energies and radioactive drugs. No one knows how many test subjects died in the initial trials, but since upsilon means 400, it was probably more than a few unfortunate souls. Each Upsilon variant imbues the subject with a massive reservoir of energy that naturally regenerates over time when it is depleted.

Each version of the drug only varies in how it allows the subject to release and manipulate the energy. Some variants allow the subject to weaken or redirect gravity, thus allowing flight or telekinesis. Others allow the subject to expel highly damaging energy beams through the hands of eyes. Several dozen variants have been made, each allowing some form of energy manipulation.

Upsilon drugs are popular in the black market but they command high prices for the difficulty in bringing them to market. Manufacture of the drug requires cutting edge or alien technology - typically a high energy nuclear reactor or similar power source. Only world class super scientists can reliably create the drug as

well. The formulas for Upsilon variants are not hard to follow though, but a single mistake could cause a meltdown or massive explosion.

Many governments, super villains and the Ideal stockpiled Upsilon, as a defensive measure. If threatened with invasion, any organization with a stockpile of Upsilon drugs could quickly transform their frontline soldiers into powerful superhuman warriors. Of course, this was a measure of last resort, as it would unbalance the geopolitical status quo. But the deterrent of having a stockpile of Upsilon was useful in of itself. Some bases contain some of these stockpiles. However, getting them out is no easy task. Each dose of Upsilon is extremely volatile and often radioactive, making it a hazard to transport. At least one stockpile has been detonated prematurely by amateur base raiders.

PANGLOSS FORMULA

The super villain Dr. Pangloss was one of history's greatest scientists and one of her crowning achievements was the creation of the Pangloss Formula, which creates a drug that induces psychic abilities in humans. As Pangloss was motivated by ideology and not greed, she made her formula freely available to the public. Pangloss wanted all of humanity to take the drug, develop telepathy, and become a global hive mind consciousness. No one was sure if that would happen, but no one wanted to take any chances. It was censored by the UN, with the Ideal helping to suppress it. Some did get the formula in secret, so the global purge was not entirely successful. After Ragnarok, one anonymous person released the Pangloss Formula on the Internet, and without the Ideal on hand to suppress it, the knowledge has spread like wildfire.

The Pangloss Formula is really a series of formulas, each designed for a different level of experience and amount of available resources. When Ideal scientists studied the drug, they couldn't understand how the Pangloss Formula worked. It was derived from studies of a telepathic alien species, but the drug did not require any genetic material from the aliens, except at its most potent version. The standard version of the drug only required samples from certain fungus species found throughout the world. After extensive study, the Ideal realized the truth. Pangloss had genetically altered the fungus and distributed it throughout the world, where

it took over the unmodified version of the species. She had done this long before she released the formula, and chose species that were so common and important to a multitude of ecosystems that it would be impossible to exterminate them. A student chemist can make the weakest version of the drug with household supplies and a few fungal samples. The most potent versions required DNA from the Biologicals, a hive mind alien species.

At its weakest, the Pangloss drug creates a temporary psychic ability of the chemist's choice. Common powers include telepathy, object reading, and minor telekinesis. A single dose provides enough power to last about 6 hours. It is not addictive, nor does it have any side effects. A normal strength dose of the drug requires a modern lab, weeks of work, and tens of thousands of dollars in supplies, but it creates a single permanent psychic ability of average strength in a human or several powerful temporary abilities. Side effects are minor, but using the normal strength drug multiple times can create a powerful mental addiction. The drug overrides the last Pangloss-given psychic ability in a repeat user. The most potent version requires a genetic sample from the Biologicals alien species and millions of dollars of lab equipment but it creates a strong permanent psychic ability or a suite of temporary abilities at extreme levels of power. The potent version of the Pangloss Formula has many side effects and can be fatal if used more than once.

The black market has a sizable inventory of Pangloss drugs at weak and normal strength. Potent versions of the drug are expensive and hard to find. Law enforcement agencies have attempted to eradicate the fungus responsible for empowering the Pangloss Formula, but have met with little success.

PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

Not all super soldier drugs are the product of science. Centuries ago, an unknown alchemist learned how to brew potions that would grant mystical powers to anyone that consumed them. The key was a magical substance known as the Philosopher's Stone, which appears as a gray, brittle clay-like substance, often produced in long, thin bricks. The creation of Philosopher's Stone requires physical fragments of magical beings, the more pure and potent the fragment, the

more Philosopher's Stone can be produced. Alchemists preferred vital organs from magical beings, like unicorn horn, vampire teeth, or dragon hearts, but virtually any important organ from a magical being would do. It does not always require the death of the being in question, but most magic users prefer vital organs over unimportant parts of magical beings like hair, shed scales, and the like.

Over time, other wizards and magic users have created hundreds of recipes to grant every conceivable superpower to humans. Most magical potions only grant temporary powers, not because of technical limitations but because wizards distrust mundane humans and hate to give them permanent superpowers. A human with a permanent magical power is technically a magical being and not a human.

Potions remain potent until they are used or destroyed, so it is possible to find ancient potions brewed by magicians of legend. Such potions are priceless, as they undoubtedly grant tremendous power, but they are rare. Most potions in existence were brewed in the last century by sorcerous heroes and villains and provide simple but effective powers like enhanced strength or regeneration. Potions of eternal youth exist, but are extremely rare and potentially worth millions to the right customer.

Each recipe for a magic potion creates a unique mixture of powers and side effects, so it is possible to generalize what they can do, except in broad strokes. A magic potion can never grant cosmic, reality altering powers. The stronger the power the potion grants, the more potent are its side effects. Potions do not usually interact with science based powers in the same person, except when the powers would obviously conflict. A mutant with water manipulation powers who drinks a potion of fire control would most likely suffer

terrible side effects. Identifying a magic potion usually requires the Arcana skill and a magical library. Potions are generally poorly labeled at best and some alchemists would deliberately mislabel potions to punish unsuspecting thieves.

The Underground has a major problem with potions. Since each potion requires body parts from a magical being, many consider their use immoral. They buy potions from base raiders and dispose of them in funerary rituals. More pragmatic members of the Underground argue that magic potions should be used to better the community and under close supervision. A few extremists believe that the Underground should harvest non-essential body parts from themselves and brew their own potions. The only consensus in the Underground is that only they should decide what should be done with magical potions. Humans who recklessly use potions are persuaded to turn them over to the Underground while magic users who brew new potions get bounties on their heads. Many members of the Underground have memories of being hunted by humans for their body parts and have no desire to see history repeated.

LEARNING MAGIC

Many would-be superhumans look to magic as a way of gaining powers at a low cost. After all, you only need a digital copy of an old spellbook and some time to read it, right? While the material costs of learning magic are fairly low, it requires intense study, esoteric skills, and total commitment, which is a significant barrier. Even though the knowledge of learning magic is easily available, few people have the talent and persistence to pick it up. Those that learn magic on their own also tend to pick up bad habits, which leads them to becoming obsessed with magic or suffering from the taint of magic (See Obsession and the Taint of Magic on page 104)

The path of a new magic user starts with acquiring a grimoire or a copy of one. Grimoires are texts that describes magical theory and imparts true knowledge of the arcane. A student of the arcane may collect multiple grimoires, but mastering spellcasting requires total focus on a single source of knowledge and many grimoires contradict each other so it is very hard to

learn from multiple texts. An accomplished mage can learn from other grimoires, but only after they have mastered their first one. While most grimoires are books, information can be imparted through any number of media, so anything that can permanently record information can be used. Stone tablets, opera scores, paintings, and scrolls made of flayed human flesh have all been used as grimoires. Digital copies of grimoires can work, so long as they are completely accurate and capture every bit of information from the original text. In many cases, the person who scanned the grimoire fails to capture an important footnote, which can severely impede any student's attempt to learn magic from it.

Each grimoire is shaped by the wizard who wrote it and students of the text often take on some of the writer's viewpoints. Necromancers who write of the great forces of fate and destiny and evil spirits who lurk beyond the veil of reality often depress the would-be mages who read their grimoires, occasionally driving them mad. Druids who etched runes into immortal trees about the beauty and majesty of nature usually impart great optimism in the few students who read their work. The choice of grimoire also affects what spells and rituals the student will know and how well they will be able to learn magic from other texts. Students of the necromancer's grimoire will have problems understanding the druid and vice versa.

Most magic users create a grimoire or two if they live long enough to master magic, but they do not write for the benefit of the reader. They are contemptuous of anyone who lacks their level of knowledge and are paranoid of rival mages stealing their grimoires to use against them. This results in cryptic texts that the original writer can barely comprehend, let alone others. A prospective student of a grimoire must first master whatever obscure language it was written in. Then they must study the writer's life to understand the numerous cryptic references and metaphors in the text. Finally, they must able to spot any hidden ciphers in the text and identify miswritten spells and other traps the writer left behind in the text. The difficulty in learning magic from a grimoire meant that almost all previous generations of magic users learned through an apprenticeship from an established wizard. The few who only needed a book were feared for their natural prowess. Today, with every powerful wizard gone, this

option no longer exists for aspiring sorcerers.

To mitigate the difficulties of self-study, groups of students have formed to study a particular text. These groups usually focus on one of the popular scanned grimoires and will work together to master every intricacy of the text. The study group only stays together until all members can cast spells on their own, but some members may stay friends or rivals afterward. A cottage industry of grimoire study guides and aids has sprouted up as well, although many of them have dubious value. EPSA agents monitor the online study groups and study guide publishers as much as they can, arresting student mages whenever possible. Very few students get caught in this way, but the risk is there.

Either alone or with help, it usually takes at least six months to a year of study before a student can cast their first cantrip spell, assuming they understood the text of the grimoire. Once that first hurdle is passed, the student's ability to cast new spells increases as they master the basics, but overconfidence kills. More than one novice has been killed for pushing themselves too far too quickly. Given that Ragnarok happened only a year ago, most active mages are barely more than apprentices, with a few basic spells under their belt. A few students have emerged as natural prodigies, able to cast equal to an experienced sorcerer, but no one is sure if they are telling the truth or they are something other than what they appear to be.

POPULAR E-GRIMOIRES

While hundreds of authentic grimoires exist, only a few dozen have been scanned into a digital format suitable for study. Most of these books are all but incomprehensible. A few grimoires have become popular for aspiring mages to study, mostly because enough self-taught wizards have learned how to cast spells from them and posted proof on the Internet. The three following grimoires are easily found online and are the most popular sources of mystical knowledge on the Internet. Other e-grimoires exist, but most self-taught mages use one of these e-grimoires.

'THE NECRONOMICON'

Originally a tome bound in human skin and written in Latin, this grimoire had no title, but was nicknamed the Necronomicon by the first person to post a scan of it online. The nickname stuck and after a theology grad student in London posted a video of a summoning ritual performed with instructions from the book, it became a popular grimoire for would-be wizards. The book focuses on destroying and controlling the forces of darkness. A mage versed in the Necronomicon could just as easily become a fearsome demon slayer as a diabolic cult leader. The e-book version is actually a series of high resolution photos of each page, shot by an unknown but highly skilled photographer. The wizard who wrote the book was an anonymous contemporary of John Dee, and the grimoires may have been co-authored by the infamous occultist.

STUDIES OF THE TEMPLE OF A NAMELESS GOD

Sir Edmund Winthrop, a British archaeologist and occult scholar, found a temple to a nameless god in the Gobi desert in 1923. The walls of the temple were covered in arcane runes that revealed great cosmic truths. Sir Winthrop translated the runes and learned they contained great cosmic truths. Masters of this grimoire are skilled in divination, scrying and countering the spells of other magicians. The book contains numerous photos, etchings, and diagrams of the temple, which hasn't been found since. Only Winthrop has ever laid eyes on the temple, as far as anyone knows. The book was banned soon after it was published and all extant copies were rounded up and destroyed, except for a few copies which fell into the hands of sorcerers like the Ideal hero Cerulean. One copy was scanned and posted online, soon after Ragnarok. Since then, dozens of self-taught mages have posted their success stories online, with photo and video proof.

THE ARGENTO CODEX

A Mayan codex named for the Italian scholar who found it in a forgotten Jesuit archive in Spain in 1911. It was seized by the Vatican after Dr. Argento published a book on the Codex, which contained an accurate translation of the first pages. Argento claimed that the Codex was easy to read, but the density of

information of the Codex astounded him. The Argento Codex contained many new Mayan glyphs never before seen. Unlike other Mayan codices, a single page of the Argento Codex was equivalent to over 200 pages of normal text. Vatican occult experts soon realized the Mayan sorcerer who scribed the Codex imbued it with a latent comprehension spell that worked on anyone who gazed upon it. Argento's translation was censored and destroyed and the Codex was secured in the Vatican Black Vault. In 1965 the Argento Codex was stolen by a super villain named the Demiurge. No one knows what the Demiurge did with the Codex, but he died in 1989, taking his secret with him. Shortly after Ragnarok, a group of base raiders found the Argento Codex.

When the Codex posted online, it was discovered the translation effect of the Codex worked with any high resolution image of it. The most popular version of the Codex is a folder of images about 20 gigabytes in size, with numerous closeups on key passages. The base raiders who own the Codex have gone into hiding, for fear of retribution by anti-occult groups.

The Argento Codex is 224 pages long, twice the length of the next longest Mayan codex, which means the Codex is equal to a normal book over 44,000 pages long. Teams of arm chair scholars have written several complete translations of the Argento Codex, but only study of a high resolution scan of the Codex can impart real knowledge of the arcane. Unlike most grimoires, reading the entire Codex is unnecessary to learn magic. The majority of the book are descriptions of spells and rituals. After mastering the first 13 pages of the Codex, which teaches basic magical theory, the student can read only the spells they find interesting.

Students who learn from the Argento Codex can choose exactly what spells they want to learn, but a new sorcerer will only know 6 or so spells after the first year of study and then only 1 or 2 more spells every year of study after that. Codex-taught wizards often have odd beliefs and habits, including speaking in ancient Mayan without realizing it and a dislike of modern technology.

Magical Artifacts

There are other mystical paths though, but they have

RULES FOR MAGICAL ARTIFACTS

Treat magical artifacts as Strange Skills with the Focus flaw. Just be sure to come up a good reason how your character got the item in the first place.

Magical items also use the Item Based Powers rules on page 186 to determine who can use them.

their own problems. Artifacts imbued with magical power can usually be wielded by anyone, although some are intelligent and only allow mortals who meet certain criteria to wield them. These items are extremely rare and are hard to find. Because of their rarity and power, they are sought after by thieves who would gladly kill to claim a magic sword or similarly valuable item. Magical potions exist that grant temporary or permanent powers to anyone who consumes them but they are also valuable and hard to find. Getting a magical artifact means going to the black market, because there is no way for a human to build one without decades of mystical training.

The most common magical artifacts are melee weapons like swords, axes, spears, and daggers. Built by ancient war-mages and alchemists, these weapons were wielded by heroes appointed to slay monsters or by champions of darkness to destroy all that is good. They were almost never used by kings or princes, as the mages forged them for secret and occult wars fought in the shadows of history. Magical weapons are virtually indestructible and permanently sharp. They often impart martial skill on their wielder, making even an awkward teenager a deadly combatant. They were all made with a specific purpose in mind, so they will have secondary abilities. A dragon slaying sword will cut through anything, even the diamond hard scales of an old dragon and make its wielder immune to fire. The dagger of a cult assassin will cloak its wielder in darkness and muffle their footsteps, so no one may hear or see them approach.

Magical armor is rare, because warriors were

RULES FOR RITUAL MAGIC

An empowerment ritual that grants a permanent superpower is designed like any other Strange Skill. Come up with a good reason as to how your character was able to receive this gift and what it cost him.

This type of magic has a high price, so make sure you know what the consequences are.

considered expendable, but mystical protective artifacts designed to protect wizards exist in abundance. Bracelets that block attacks, cloaks of invisibility, and winged boots, so the wearer can escape danger quickly are all relatively common, at least by the standards of magic artifacts. Other magic items were made to serve a utilitarian function like scrying mirrors and paired rings that allowed each bearer to communicate with the other, no matter the distance.

All of the common artifact types typically only had a single primary ability. Artifacts imbued with multiple powers are usually sapient and built to fulfill a single goal. These are the most powerful artifacts and all of the known ones were locked away in Ideal vaults or disappeared with their bearers during Ragnarok. Of course, the Ideal did not know about all artifacts.

Ritual Magic

The final path to gaining magical power is through ritual magic performed by an existing magic user. Ritual magic can permanently transform or imbue superpowers in a person, but such magic comes at a high price. The magic user cannot simply create power from nothing but must draw power from another source. The mage can draw power from his personal life force, but few mages choose to do that, for obvious reasons. They can also use the life force of the person being imbued with power, but this is not a popular choice either. The most common source of power to fuel an empowerment ritual is a physical embodiment of magic, such as

an organ from a magical being or a magical artifact, which is destroyed during the ritual. The ritual can also be performed at a mystical nexus (a site of great magical importance, like Stonehenge), which would allow the ritual to be performed without the need of a costly sacrifice. The value of these locations means they are usually closely guarded and watched though.

Performing an empowerment ritual is a demanding task, and few mages are up to it and certainly not a novice who has only learned magic in the last year. Some magical beings in the Underground can perform such rituals, but only at a high price and for people they trust. Any power that can be granted through a magical potion can be granted through an empowerment ritual (in other words, anything except cosmic and reality-altering powers).

SUPER SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Just as mystical knowledge has spread since Ragnarok, the secrets of super science have fallen into the hands of the masses. Hackers, base raiders, and DIY enthusiasts have released vast quantities of information culled from abandoned bases, databases, and other unguarded archives. Lab reports, blueprints, and research papers never meant to be seen by the public are now found on numerous torrent sites and other pirate dark nets. Agencies like EPSA and the FBI desperately try to remove this information, but they can't stem the tide of data. However, this information is only as valuable as the scientist or engineer who uses it. As base raiders and amateurs have discovered, a research paper written by a mutant scientist with a 300 IQ might as well be written in an alien language. Only scientists with superhuman intellect can make use of the most advanced research now available.

Fortunately, there is a lot of material usable by normal humans. Numerous super soldier drug formulas circulate online, especially Peak Performer and Pangloss Formula based drugs. Robot and cybernetic implant schematics and blueprints allow engineers with modest resources to build some extremely useful gear. Homemade energy weapons have been designed, based on Ideal plasma weapon schematics, although

these weapons can be dangerous to fire. Power armor suits have been built with minimal resources, but they lack the resilience or firepower of Ideal built suits. The most successful DIY super tech are knockoffs of Ideal gadgets like grappling guns and customized body armor.

All of this technology still suffers from the same conundrum: a DIY builder has to pick two of three traits - fast, good, or cheap. Building an Ideal robot from a blueprint taken from the Internet with basic resources means it won't be very good. Some builders scavenge for parts from bases or the black market, but that's time consuming and expensive. There is no magic formula that allows a base raider to build cutting edge technology easily and at a low price.

Robots

Many base raiders want robotic drones to deal with dangerous tasks when base raiding. It's better to risk a remote controlled bomb disposal bot than try to disarm the acid spray trap yourself. As stated in the black market section, it's very hard to buy a robot in the black market. Base raiders who want a robot drone are better off building their own. The black market always has scavenged parts from assorted old robots for sale, so many DIY builders stop there to get as many part as they can afford and then cobble together a drone from them. This creates a highly variable bot, which can either perform better than expected or far worse. It also takes a lot of time to build a scrap bot.

The choice is to get a schematic of an existing bot and try to replicate it as best as possible. Given that the schematics assume the builder has access to millions of dollars worth of equipment and materials, it can be hard to replicate that in a garage. Some builders have managed quite well, replicating the core functionality of deathbots and other common drones. However, these drones are far more fragile than their standard counterparts, as they are not made with military grade armor plating.

There is one bright spot for DIY robot builders - firmware to control a robot is freely available online and can be run through a standard CPU. Soon after Ragnarok, hackers dumped the firmware of deathbots and Ideal search and rescue drones online. Thousands

RULES FOR DIY SUPER TECH

DIY means Do It Yourself, and refers to any project conducted with minimal resources. These rules only apply when a character attempts to build superhero technology with civilian resources. These are whatever the character can acquire easily, without making law enforcement suspicious of his activities. Anything built at a Workspace at the Mundane power tier is considered to be DIY. Items built at workspaces at the Extraordinary power tier or higher do not have these limitations.

- All technological devices built with civilian level resources can only go up to the Extraordinary power tier except with GM approval.
- Any technological device based on super science built with civilian resources must have at least two flaws (focus and one other) and may not cost over 10 skill points.
- Building a DIY device requires an appropriate skill with the Craft and Workspace trappings.
- Minions or Companions DIY robots may not take additional health stress capacity.
- All DIY built energy weapons must have a Charges or Delay flaw.
- All DIY power armor must have a Snag flaw related to its improvised construction.
- All DIY cybernetic and bionic implants must have a major Snag flaw.

The GM may introduce additional restrictions. Use common sense with these rules.

of programmers and hackers took the code apart and rebuilt to suit any builder's needs. The open source community even provides instructions on how to convert a tablet or smart phone into a deathbot CPU. Current firmware gives robots the ability to follow voice commands, navigate complex environments with ease, fight with an average level of skill (+1), or perform specialized tasks programmed by the builder. They cannot

use imagination or intuition, understand sarcasm, or feel pain.

The code for full functional AI is impossible to find online and requires far more CPU power than is easily available. Rumors of a group of AIs that hunt down and kill anyone who enslaves other AIs also dissuades people from looking too closely into high end AI. This does not stop dedicated researchers from trying to create their own full AI software though.

Energy Weapons

The Ideal withheld many breakthroughs in high energy physics, but they have become public thanks to Internet leaks from base raiders. This new knowledge has allowed engineers with modest resources to build functional plasma and laser weaponry, but they are inferior compared to standard versions of the weapons. Energy weapons require high amounts of power and specialized capacitive materials to fire at a continual rate. Weapons built with conventional materials can only fire once before needing a recharge, or a backpack sized battery, unless they are hooked into a power main. If they are fired too fast, they will melt. A hybrid weapon, built with a mixture of scavenged Ideal tech and conventional materials may fire slightly faster or carry more of a charge, but they are unreliable.

Power Armor

Power armor is next to impossible to make for DIY builders because while the knowledge has been released online, the requirements for useful armor have not changed. The servos and mechanical strength amplifiers necessary to get the armor moving can only be manufactured in top of the line facilities and need a lot of power to operate. Miniaturized power plants need nuclear or exotic materials not found on earth. The only alloys strong and light enough to serve as power armor can only be made in a handful of foundries throughout the world.

The only practical way a base raider can construct a set of power armor is by scavenging and repurposing from robots and other suits of power armor. Mixing parts from different machines always makes for an un-

balanced result though. Perhaps the armor doesn't fit properly or the power plant overheats after 10 minutes of use. Whatever the cause, no two suits of DIY power armor are alike.

Cybernetics

Cybernetic implants and bionic limbs are even harder to build than power armor. Everything that applies to DIY power armor counts twice as much with cybernetics. A genius scientist with DIY resources could repurpose an existing cybernetic implant or limb for a new patient, but the process is difficult and dangerous. Second-hand implants tend to malfunction far more than normal ones.

Gadgets

Most DIY builders focus their work on conventional superhero gadgets like grappling guns, armored costumes, and smoke bombs. The designs for most of the Ideal gadgets are available online and can be reproduced by any competent builder. These gadgets can't break the laws of physics, but they are extremely useful to base raiders.

The reason most DIY builders make their own gadgets instead of buying them on the black market is a distrust of using refurbished or knockoff equipment that may fail in a time of crisis. If you build the item yourself, you know what it can or can't do. Furthermore, some builders like having a secret edge over others and it's easy to adjust a gadget so that it has a feature only you know about - an armored costume with a hidden compartment for lockpicks or a knife or a weighted boomerang that explodes after a 3 second delay if a concealed button is pushed.

CHAPTER SEVEN
PLAYING THE GAME

This section will introduce you to how the rules of this game work and what all the number-bits in this book represent. Base Raiders uses a version of the FATE system called Strange FATE. It was first used in the Kerberos Club Role Playing Game published by Arc Dream.

THE BASICS

In the FATE RPG, characters, vehicles, equipment, and even scenes and locations that are important to the story are defined by three key terms: aspects, skills, and Gifts.

Rolling Dice

Many events in FATE are resolved by rolling a few (usually four) special dice called Fudge dice. Each Fudge die gives you a +, -, or 0 result. Add one for each + and subtract one for each -. The 0 is worth zero. Get a high enough result and you rise to the challenge. Important characters have skills to boost their rolls—and just about everything in the game can use aspects.

Since Fudge dice can roll negative or positive, it's possible to get a result below zero. Therefore we always put either a plus sign or a minus sign in front of a roll's result to make clear whether it's above zero or below zero. A roll that's 6 above zero would be written as +6, not just as 6.

Aspects

Aspects are one of the most important parts of FATE. They are short, descriptive phrases that apply to characters, scenes, objects, places, or even the game world as a whole. The ones you'll probably use most often, though, are your character's personal aspects: they express your character's personality, background, appearance, beliefs, possessions, connections, and other parts of what makes him or her unique.

Aspects can be simple statements, nicknames, catch phrases, the names of associates or enemies, and so forth. When you see a character write-up in this book, the listed aspects give you a sense of who the character is. When you make your character, you decide what his or her aspects are.

If there's an aspect at hand— on your character, the scene, your opponent, whatever—and it's relevant to the task at hand in a positive way, you can use it to im-

prove your result. This usually means spending a Fate Point for each aspect you use and adding a +2 bonus to your roll for each one—although no aspect can be used more than once on a single roll. Your opponent can do the same.

Of course, this aspect business isn't limited to turning failure into success. If you've already succeeded without calling on an aspect, but you want to succeed by even more, you can use aspects to do that.

Unimportant characters, locations, events, and objects can be handled just with aspects—leaving out skills and Gifts entirely—to speed things up. You can find more information about aspects on page 97.

Skills

Most things that player characters do in the game are done with skills (and of course, if the skill isn't enough, you can augment it with an aspect). Skills are areas of training, experience, or sheer talent. When you want your character to do something risky or that has the potential to add to the story—something with an interesting consequence for failure—you'll use one of your character's skills.

Unlike aspects, skills are concrete and quantifiable—each skill has a numeric skill rating that measures how effective the character will be with it in play and how likely you are to succeed. Skills tell you what a character can do.

Every skill also has a Power Tier that indicates how effective it is in comparison with the efforts of an ordinary human being. Most skills are in the Mundane Tier, but supernatural powers, such as super strength or telepathy, will frequently be in higher Power Tiers.

To see if you do well, roll Fudge dice and add your skill rating. That's your skill roll.

Compare the skill roll to a difficulty number set by the GM. If you beat the difficulty number, you succeed.

For more on skills see page 106.

How Well Did I Do?

How well you succeed at a challenge is determined by three results of a skill or aspect roll: effort, shifts, and effect.

Add together your skill roll plus any aspect bonuses to get your effort.

(Other modifiers caused by the circumstances at hand may affect your effort, such as when trying to climb a particularly slippery wall or find a dropped earring in an especially cluttered room. That's up to the GM to determine, though. If she doesn't bring it up, don't worry about it.)

How well you succeed is measured in shifts. If your effort beats the difficulty number, you get a number of shifts equal to the margin of success. If the difficulty rating is +3 and your effort is +6, the margin is 3 so you get three shifts.

The number of shifts you get is called your effect. The higher your effect, the better you did. If the effort results in three or more shifts, it generates spin. Spin has different effects in different situation, but it's most important in conflicts.

Sometimes you'll want to spend some of these shifts to accomplish something special. In that case, reduce your effect by the number of shifts that you're spending. See page 164 for details. But usually you just use them to say how well you succeeded at the thing you were trying to do.

And if you're competing against an opponent, it's easy. Best effect wins.

Stress

When bad things happen to characters—such as injury, embarrassment, or fright—they take stress. If your objective is harming someone else (physically or otherwise), stress is how we represent it in the game. Stress comes in three varieties: Health, Composure, and Reputation. The more points of stress you take, the worse off you are. The rules on page 95 desribe how to calculate your starting stress.

For example, let's say you're in a fistfight with a couple of enemies. Your effort (the total of your roll, your skill rating, and any modifiers) is +6, while theirs is only +3. The GM tells you that you can spend a shift to knock one of them down a short flight of stairs and out of the nearby area. You decide to do that, and put the other two shifts toward dealing damage. The goon takes 2 points of Health stress and is knocked down the stairs. If something has a Weapon rating (like "Weap-

on 1"), it does additional stress. If something has an Armor rating (like "Armor 1"), it absorbs stress.

Taking stress is bad. If you take enough of it, you're Taken Out, or removed from the story for at least a while. You could be dead, unconscious, disgraced, fleeing in panic, or whatever is appropriate for the attack that took you out. Within that context, the attacker gets to choose your fate.

Given a few minutes of respite, stress goes away on its own. When you don't have that luxury, there is another way to reduce stress: by taking consequences. More rules about stress are listed on page 170.

Consequences

Consequences are longer-lasting effects that can be as insignificant as being winded or off-balance or as life changing as losing a limb or being ostracized from polite society.

You can reduce incoming stress by taking a consequence. A Trivial consequence reduces stress by 2, a Moderate consequence reduces stress by 4, and a Severe consequence reduces stress by 6.

Consequences are like aspects that are negative (see the Aspects section for more on aspects). You don't want consequences, but sometimes they're your only chance to stay on your feet. But you can take only so many consequences.

You can also choose to make a concession instead of taking a consequence. This is essentially you taking yourself out, but according to your terms.

When you see a write-up for a person, animal, or vehicle in this book, the more stress boxes , the more resilient that person, animal, or vehicle is.

Gifts and Fate Points

Gifts bend the rules a little where your character is concerned. You might have a Gift that gives you a special piece of equipment or that makes one of your aspects more powerful or that provides a little boost to some of your skills in the right circumstances. They're sort of a halfway point between aspects and skills, in that they have concrete mechanical effects, but it's up to you to define the specifics within the guidelines provided. Ev-

ery character has at least one Gift. We'll discuss them in the Gifts section on page 148.

Every player also has a store of Fate Points. Spend Fate Points to affect the events of the story in your favor; earn Fate Points by acting in accordance with one of your character's aspects in a way that puts you at a disadvantage. This back and forth of Fate Points— the "Fate Point economy"—is, like aspects, central to FATE. More information on how this works is in the Aspects section, page 96.

CHARACTER CREATION

This section deals with creating characters. See page 90 for a summary of the basic FATE rules.

If you're familiar with the FATE system, here's a quick rundown on how we handle skills and Refresh. This is a point-based iteration of FATE. You'll use skill points to buy skills, and Refresh points to buy everything else.

Characters start with a number of skill points and Refresh (the number of Fate Points he has at the start of each session) based on the power level of the game:

- Low power: 20 skill points and 6 refresh.
- Medium power: 25 skill points and 8 refresh.
- High power: 30 skill points and 10 refresh.

Refresh is also a currency in character creation—you'll spend it on Power Tiers (which we'll discuss later) and Gifts, which take the place of stunts found in many other FATE games.

Creating a character for Base Raiders occurs in six basic steps:

1. Pick an Archetype and Background, and define aspects for both those and your first Conviction.
2. Answer the Five Questions.
3. Buy Skills (Common, Unique, and Strange, as applicable).
4. Define five other aspects based on your answers to the Five Questions.
5. Buy Gifts (if desired; everyone gets one Gift for free).
6. Finalize details (stress tracks, Adjusted Refresh, etc.).

Note that this is only a recommended order—you may find it useful to switch it up, if that feels more comfortable. You'll also find that some of these steps are interconnected. For example, Unique and Strange skills often constrain your aspect choices, which is why aspects are listed after skills in the above list. So then! Let's get into it.

Archetypes

This broadly defines your character concept, whether you're a mutant, a genius inventor, or a dabbler in the black arts.

- Adept
- Alien
- Artificial Being
- Mutant
- Super-Genius
- Super Soldier
- Magical Being
- Magic User
- Adventurer
- Dual Power Sources

Each has a full description in the Archetypes section. Your choice of Archetype will guide one of your aspect choices later.

Background

Your background describes your character's place in the world and lifestyle. They are as follows:

- Normal Human
- Non-Human
- Heroic Connection
- Villainous Past

They are described in more detail in the Background section. One of your aspects will be determined by your choice of background.

The Five Questions

How does your character stand apart from the teeming masses? The five questions answers this by examining important parts of your character's history. Everything from early childhood to Ragnarok is considered. Think about how your character got to be the way she is.

1. Life Before Ragnarok: Who were you before all the heroes and villains disappeared?

2. Origin Story: How did you gain superpowers? Most base raiders choose to gain powers, although some were born with them. Very few raiders get their powers accidentally these days. Did you buy yours off the black market or did you find them on your own?

3. Joining the Movement: Raiding bases is incredibly dangerous and highly illegal. Why do you put your life on the line? What drives you to risk everything and venture into abandoned trap-laden hideouts built by inhumanly powerful beings?

4. Darkest Moment: What is your worst failure? Did it cost lives? Who did you let down? What are the consequences of that moment?

5. Crossover Adventure : Who did you work with in your greatest adventure so far? What happened in the adventure? You should pick another player character as your associate and incorporate them into the adventure.

Each question will be used to create an aspect for your character, which will be described in more detail in the Define Aspects section.

Buy Skills

Skills describe what your character can do in the game, from disarming traps to negotiating with arms dealers. Three categories of skills exist: Common, Unique, and Strange skills.

Common skills are typical areas of training or experience, known by average people throughout the world.

Unique skills can represent occupations, lifestyles, areas of training, or any other collection of thematically connected abilities a normal human being might acquire. They're more specialized than Common skills, and a more concrete way to further distinguish your character.

Strange skills, on the other hand, transcend the abilities of the common man.

Unique and Strange skills—skills you design from the ground up—often cost quite a bit more than Common skills. Unique skills and Strange skills are detailed further in the Skills section on page 107.

Skills are rated at Average (+1), Fair (+2), Good

(+3), or Great (+4).

A character can't have more skills rated at one value than she has at the next lowest value. This is known as the Skill Pyramid. For example, if you have three Fair (+2) skills you can have no more than three Good (+3) skills, and you can't have a Great (+4) skill unless you already have at least one Good (+3) skill. Common skills cost a number of points equal to their rating, so a Fair (+2) skill costs 2 points

- Low power characters start with 20 skill points.
- Medium power characters start with 25 skill points.
- High power characters start with 30 skill points.

All skills are ranked on one of five Power Tiers:

- **Mundane** -0 refresh
- **Extraordinary** -1 Refresh
- **Superhuman** -2 Refresh
- **Ascendant** -4 Refresh
- **Godlike** -6 Refresh

By default, every skill starts out in the Mundane Tier— the realm of the ordinary human being. All other Power Tiers represent commensurately greater increases in ability and effectiveness.

Improving a skill's Power Tier is detailed further in the Skills section on page 108.

The Adjective Ladder	
+10	Divine
+9	Mythic
+8	Legendary
+7	Epic
+6	Fantastic
+5	Superb
+4	Great
+3	Good
+2	Fair
+1	Average
+0	Mediocre
-1	Poor
-2	Terrible

SKILLS: HOW GOOD IS GOOD?

Here's a general idea of what the five skill ranks can mean for your character:

Mediocre (+0): A lack of training or talent.

Average (+1): Apprentice training or considerable talent.

Fair (+2): Journeyman or "professional" training, or an incredible degree of talent.

Good (+3): Veteran or master-level training, or a combination of impressive talent and extensive training.

Great (+4): Nearly unmatched ability.

These benchmarks only apply when comparing skills of the same Power Tier. See the Skills section for more detail.

Define Aspects

Skills are what your character can do, but aspects are who she is. In addition to an Archetype aspect, a Background aspect, and a Conviction aspect, your character has five other personal aspects that derive from the Five Questions.

Initially, these have no category or restrictions on their definition. We refer to them as Free aspects. However, your Unique or Strange skills may change one or more of these Free aspects into Complication or Conviction aspects. All sorts of aspects are explained further in the Aspects section.

To define your aspects, go back to your answers to the Five Questions. For each question, come up with an aspect related to the answer. If some of your Free aspects have been converted as part of any Unique or Strange skills you have, include these accordingly.

You'll get more out of your aspects if they cover many different facets of your character's life and personality, rather than focusing on just one or two.

For example, if all of your aspects relate to your career as a scientist, they're unlikely to be of much use unless you're doing something with science.

The Aspects section on page 96 has more advice on creating effective aspects, along with some examples.

Buy Gifts

Gifts are special little rules-bending features of your character, such as conferring a small bonus to a skill in a limited circumstance, giving you a special piece of equipment or sidekick, or letting you use one skill in place of another.

There are six Gifts: Companion, Impact, Signature Aspect, Skilled, and Theme. Everyone starts with one Gift for free; buying more is purely optional.

Gifts are described in more detail in the Gifts section, page 148.

Refine Details

Every character has three stress tracks: Health, Composure, and Reputation. These represent how much physical, mental, or social abuse you can take before things start to get bad for you.

By default, each of these stress tracks has three boxes. Certain skills can add more boxes to these stress tracks if the skills are rated high enough. The more boxes in the track, the more resilient to that type of stress you are.

You can find out more about how stress tracks work on page 170 in the Conflict section.

Consequences are when things start to get bad for you. These come in three degrees of severity (Trivial, Moderate, and Severe) and three different scopes (Physical, Mental, and Social).

By default, every character can take one consequence of each degree, regardless of its scope. Certain skills in a higher Power Tier can let a character take additional consequences, as discussed in the Skills section.

See page 171 in the Conflict section for more on how consequences work.

ASPECTS

Aspects are a major part of the FATE system. Odds are, anything of importance in the story is going to be described in terms of its aspects.

Potential aspects include relationships, backgrounds, beliefs, secrets, catchphrases, descriptions—anything that paints a picture of a character, a scene, a city, or just about any other part of the story.

The most frequently encountered are Personal aspects, Scene aspects and Campaign aspects, but there are other types as well.

Personal Aspects

These are aspects that belong to your character, most of which are defined during character creation. If skills are what you can do, then aspects are who you are. Personal aspects are divided into several different categories: Free, Archetype, Conviction, Complication, and Background.

By default, every character begins with eight aspects: one Archetype, one Conviction, one Background and five Free aspects. Depending on character creation choices, some characters may have to replace one or more Free aspects with Complication or Conviction aspects.

Free: Anything you want. Free aspects have no restrictions on how they're defined.

Archetype: A brief phrase that describes your character's basic concept and relates to your Archetype. The Archetypes chapter has a list of example aspects for each Archetype.

Conviction: A powerful driving force in the character's life: a sense of honor or duty, a tie to family or faith, a taste for debauchery, or uncovering forbidden secrets. A Conviction can also be one in the rightness of a relationship: an absolute faith in one's True Love, or an unremitting hatred of an enemy. Most of all, a Conviction must be driving. It must demand action. Compelling a Conviction aspect works a little differently than normal; see page 97, "How Aspects Work," for a proper explanation. Every character has at least one Conviction aspect.

Complication: A Drawback reflecting how a Unique or Strange skill has complicated the character's life, such as "Criminal Past," "Lonely At The Top," or "I'm not an animal—I'm a human being!" More information on Complication aspects can be found in Extras and Drawbacks.

Background: A brief phrase that describes your role within your chosen background.

Scene Aspects

These are just what it says: aspects that describe a scene instead of a character. Unlike Personal aspects, there's no default number of aspects a scene must have. Locations the GM expects will be important to the story tend to have two or three, if not more, and it's usually pretty simple to come up with scene aspects on the fly. The GM might even solicit suggestions from the players.

The GM should let the players know all of a scene's obvious aspects, and remain open to adding more as seems appropriate. Players can also create or discover scene aspects using skills. Scene aspects are free to use once per scene; see below for more information. Scene aspects can be thought of in four broad categories.

Environment: Lighting, atmosphere, etc.—aspects that represent the (usually diminished) ability of those within the scene to perceive things.

Mood: Aspects that represent the attitudes of a crowd of people.

Hazard: Conditions which are likely to damage or be a danger to people in the scene. This could be anything from "On Fire!" to "Radioactive" to "Malfunctioning Industrial Laser."

Scenery: Other features of the scene, such as "Trophy Room of Defeated Super villains" or "Huge Chunks of Rubble."

Campaign Aspects

These aspects reflect campaign-spanning features of the chosen setting. These aspects depend on the nature of the campaign and are chosen collaboratively by the GM and players. See page 157 for rules on defining these aspects.

Other Types of Aspects

Objects: Tools, weapons, furniture, you name it—anything can have an aspect. Keep in mind, though, that aspects represent narrative importance. Don't waste your time giving every crate or sliding door an aspect unless you expect them to be individually important to the story. Exploding red barrels are usually not important to the story.

People: NPCs often have aspects, whether planned or impromptu. Aspects are an easy way to make supporting players in a story distinctive without going through a lot of trouble, especially if you want those noticeable traits to be mechanically exploitable by the players. NPCs might even be represented wholly by an aspect, such as "Helpful Clerk" or "Angry Mob."

Personal Aspects: Good, Better, Best

Aspects are a major source of flavor for your character, and the first thing the GM will look at when she figures out what kind of adventure/trouble she'll throw at you next. They tell the GM and your fellow players who you are. So when you think of an idea for an aspect, don't stop there—crank it up a notch. Make it more dramatic, more flavorful. Then crank it up again until it really pops.

If you can think of three situations in which you can imagine using the aspect in play, both in your favor and against, then you're on the right track. The more flavorful the aspect, the greater the variety of circumstances it can apply to—whether invoked or compelled—and the more fun your character will be to play.

Good	Better	Best
Strong	Gym Rat	King Swole
Gunfighter	Trained Shooter	Delta Force Vet
Academic	Tenured Professor	Cited on Wikipedia
Occultist	Ghost Hunter	R/Ghosts/ Mod

HOW ASPECTS WORK

First, pick an aspect relevant to the situation at hand. Next, ask yourself how it's relevant. Is it helping you or hindering you? If it's helping, you'll invoke it: You'll spend a Fate Point and receive a benefit in return (or tag it to receive a benefit for free, if appropriate). If it's a hindrance, it's a compel: You'll receive a Fate Point from the GM in exchange for being saddled with some sort of setback or additional trouble. No aspect can be used (invoked, tagged, or compelled) more than once per exchange. For example, if you invoke an aspect for a roll, it can't also be tagged or compelled (or invoked again) until the exchange is over.

There are a couple other ways aspects can be used, as well; everything is covered in the summary below.

Invoke

What it means: Contradicting the dice using an aspect as justification. This could mean citing a personal aspect as a reason you must've done better than the dice indicated ("I'm the last human from a parallel zombie infested earth! There's no way I would be afraid of a single ghoul!'") or taking advantage of the terrain, the environment, another character's weakness, and so on. "He'll have a hard time shooting me through all these 'Crates and Barrels' I'm hiding behind. And he's going to have an even harder time shooting me with that 'Broken Hand' of his."

When to do it: After the roll.

How to do it: Work the aspect into the narrative, pay the cost, and choose your benefit. If your interpretation of the aspect crosses over into logical contortionism ("Clearly, the time I've spent as a 'Mud-Covered Pig Farmer' has meant spending a lot of time in pens and barns, which has given me an understanding of wooden structures deep enough to find a secret door in this hallway.") The GM may (and probably should) reject its use.

Benefit: +2 bonus or reroll if invoking one of your personal aspects, or +2 bonus if invoking any other aspect.

Cost: Fate Point.

Tag

What it means: Using an aspect that's been discovered or created within the scene. The aspect must have been discovered or created via a skill roll or the expenditure of a Fate Point. See Aspect Declarations, Assessments, and Maneuvers for more on how new aspects are created or discovered.

When to do it: After the roll.

How to do it: Work the aspect into the narrative, pay the cost, and receive the benefit. As with invoking, if your interpretation of the aspect strains credulity, the GM may reject it.

Benefit: +2 bonus.

Cost: None—the first time. If the aspect sticks around longer than that, subsequent invocations require a Fate Point.

Compel

What it means: Obeying your nature—you are literally "compelled" to role play one of your aspects in such a way that gets you in trouble (but see also external compels, below). This is key: If things aren't worse for your character after the compel than they were before it, it's not a valid compel. Running away from a fight because you want to get back to your "Wife and Kids" isn't worthy of a compel; rushing into a burning building to save your "Wife and Kids" definitely is.

Aspects that are extrinsic to your character, such as scene or world aspects, can be compelled as well, in appropriate circumstances.

When to compel: Either you or the GM can compel one of your character's aspects whenever it's dramatically or narratively appropriate.

How to compel: As the GM, offer the player a Fate Point and suggest that the aspect you're compelling should complicate their life right about now. Sometimes the compel suggests a clear course of action, such as compelling "I Can Take 'Em!" when the player is debating whether to fight or run.

Other times, the exact nature of the compel is left entirely up to the player—for example, compelling the aspect "Unpredictable Luck" in nearly any situation. In no event should the GM dictate to the player what the character is going to do. The player can either accept the Fate Point and go along with the compel, or pay a Fate Point to refuse it—the price of going against your own nature.

Don't look at it as being blackmailed by the GM, because that's not what it is. It's you, the player, making full use of the aspect, probably one you chose, to generate some Fate Points.

Players compelling players: In addition, as a player you can suggest that the GM compel another PC's aspect, but it's the GM who gives that player a Fate Point, not you. (In general, we don't want to foster the idea that one player is able to control another player's character.) A player can, however, directly compel an NPC's aspect, in which case they give the GM a Fate Point and the GM reserves it for later use by that NPC.

The character must have knowledge of the aspect before it can be compelled (see Aspect Declarations, Assessments, and Maneuvers for details on how this works). The more Fate Points the NPC accrues—that is, the more interest the players show in them—the more "real" or important they become in the story. A quick-thinking GM can use this to the story's advantage by turning an initially insignificant character into a major NPC—maybe even the villain of the story, or a valuable ally.

The self-compel: Normally, there's a lot going on in the GM's head, which means that she might miss the opportunity to compel one of your aspects that you think ought to be compelled, or to notice that you've obeyed one of your aspects in a way that's worthy of a Fate Point. In these cases, feel free to hold out your open palm and say something along the lines of "I want to self-compel this aspect." or "Losing my quarry to chat up the ladies—isn't that just the sort of thing a 'Sucker for a Pretty Face' would do in this situation?"

How blatant you might have to be about this depends on your GM and your group. Regardless, don't shy away from the self-compel. You chose your aspects—you should be able to use them to your advantage. That includes milking them for Fate Points when the opportunity arises.

The external compel: Sometimes a compel doesn't represent a choice your character is making in the story, but a choice the player makes to worsen the situation for the character in a way that's related to an

aspect. It's not the character that's causing the problem—it's the world around him.

For example, the GM could compel your "Repentant Ex-Convict" aspect to have your character picked up as part of a murder investigation. Your character isn't taking some sort of action something that's encouraging the police to interfere with his life, but it's happening to him all the same.

External compels can be refused, just like any other compel, but this usually carries with it ramifications of some sort in terms of the story. Maybe the police still question you, only to release you soon after—but the murder they're investigating still took place and is potentially an important part of the story.

Escalation: If a player refuses a compel, the GM can then up the stakes by offering a second Fate Point. If the player accepts, he gets two Fate Points instead of one; if he refuses, he must now pay two Fate Points. In the latter case, the GM can offer a third Fate Point, but that's where it ends: Escalating a compel beyond three Fate Points is ill-advised.

Escalation should be used sparingly, and only at times of high drama—compels that get right to the heart of a character's psyche, that put what matters most to that character on the line.

Compelling Convictions: As discussed earlier, Conviction aspects represent a character's most dearly held beliefs and motivations. Because of this, a Conviction aspect compel starts out at two Fate Points instead of just one. Likewise, the player must pay two Fate Points to refuse the compel. The GM can then escalate to three Fate Points, but can go no further than that.

Compelling Major Complications: Like Convictions, Major Complication aspect compels start at two Fate Points rather than just one; it costs two Fate Points to refuse the compel; and the GM can escalate up to 3. Benefit: Earn a Fate Point.

Cost: Describe how the chosen aspect complicates the situation or gets you in trouble.

Invoking/Tagging for Effect

What it means: Invoking or tagging an aspect "for effect" skirts the usual mechanical benefits in favor of directly affecting the narrative in a manner consistent with the aspect. In a way, it's like the opposite of compelling an aspect: Instead of accepting a Fate Point in exchange for getting yourself into more trouble, you pay a Fate Point to make something beneficial happen.

For example, you might invoke the aspect "King of the Otaku" for effect to say that you have online friends all over the world, even ones with access to Moscow State University's occult archives.

When to do it: Because this use of an aspect isn't tied to a dice roll, the players or the GM can invoke or tag for effect whenever it makes sense. Generally speaking, the GM won't be doing a lot of invoking or tagging for effect.

If the GM wants something in the story to happen, she can usually just make it happen.

How to do it: Explain the effect you want the aspect to provide and spend a Fate Point to make it happen. If the GM doesn't think that the desired effect can reasonably be had from the aspect in question, she can cancel the whole thing.

Archetype: The character's Archetype aspect can be invoked for effect to expand what a skill can do. The player can either replace a Unique or Strange skill's trapping with another trapping or add a trapping or Extra to a Unique or Strange skill for one roll. This lets the character pull off stunts on the fly without having to pay characters points for every possible permutation of a given skill.

You could suddenly throw your sword at an enemy, use your wings to make yourself look more menacing, or call on your social connections to round up some mercenaries. Archetype aspects are quite versatile as a result.

There are limitations on this use of the Archetype aspect, however. The affected skill must be connected to the Archetype aspect in some way, and it must make sense in the context of the aspect.

For example, a character with the Archetype aspect "Rainbow Wizard" could add the Spray Extra to a trapping of his Rainbow Projection skill to allow him to attack multiple targets at once.

Benefit: Introduce a minor detail into the story or expand a Unique or Strange skill's capabilities.

Cost: Fate Point.

Aspect Declarations, Assessments, and Maneuvers

Aspects on a character sheet or pre-determined by the GM are hardly the only ones possible in a game. Players have the ability to create aspects during the course of play by using their characters' skills and abilities, thus introducing entirely new elements and ideas into the story. This is referred to as declaring an aspect. Likewise, players can discover aspects initially hidden from them, such as those belonging to an NPC. Sussing out aspects like this generally takes a fair bit of time. This is referred to as assessing an aspect. Players can also create aspects that represent temporary advantages resulting from positioning, finesse, or similar prowess; these are referred to as aspect maneuvers.

Aspect Declarations

Typically, this is a quick, in-the-moment affair achieved through a character's knowledge or powers of perception. Stumbling upon a secret door, noticing someone's telltale facial tic, and spotting a weak point in an automaton's armor are all good examples of aspect declaration. These may sound like they're simply finding something that already exists in the GM's notes, but in reality the players are coming up with these entirely on their own.

You could easily replace the words "stumbling upon," "noticing," and "spotting" above with the phrase "creating in the story." If it's something the GM intended from the get-go, that's fine too—but the power of the declaration is that you, the player, get to add something new into the narrative.

What it means: You've "discovered" something of note in the scene that you can use to your advantage.
How to do it: There are two ways to declare an aspect. The first is to use an appropriate skill (see Skills), rolling either against a target number set by the GM or an opponent's skill roll. Nearly any skill can be used to declare an aspect, if it's within reason, and more than one skill might apply to the task at hand.

For example, you might use Firearms to determine where an unusual triple barreled pistol was made (your knowledge of the pistol's origins derives from your hands-on experience with a wide variety of pistols), or you might use Academics (instead of practical experience with weaponry, you've read quite a bit about them), or maybe even Contacts (you don't have a clue, but you know a guy who's an expert).

The skill you use should color the aspect you declare. The other way to declare an aspect is to spend a Fate Point—no roll required. This is more reliable, but obviously more costly.
Difficulty: If no one's opposing the attempt to declare an aspect, then the difficulty of the task depends on the answers to three questions:
—Is the aspect interesting?
—Would it be even more interesting if the aspect is misleading?
—Does the aspect provide a story hook or clear course of action?
Start with a difficulty of +0, and increase it by +2 for each time the answer to one of these questions is "No." Basically, we don't need aspects that are dull, shallow, and vague—the more entertaining the aspect will be for story purposes, the easier it is to declare. Of course, if the proposed aspect is just beyond the pale, like "All Things Colored Purple Are Alive," the GM's within her rights to deny it altogether. It may be interesting, interestingly misleading, and provide a weird direction for the story, but it also stretches the verisimilitude of the game world to the breaking point (for most groups, that is—there are certainly exceptions).
Removing aspects: A declaration can also be made to remove an aspect that someone else has placed someone or something in the scene. In this case, the difficulty of the roll is the effect on the skill roll that brought it into existence. (If you don't remember, or if the declaration was made by spending a Fate Point, set the difficulty at +3.)
Duration: As long as circumstances make it reasonable for the aspect to stick around, it sticks around. This means other characters can take advantage of the aspect later in the scene or in future scenes. For example, if you declare that a pier has "Weak Moorings," that aspect persists as long as the pier does (or until someone fixes the moorings).
Cost: A successful skill roll or a Fate Point.

Aspect Assessments

Whereas declaring aspects can be as simple as merely noticing something unusual, assessments are more time-consuming. Instead of creating new aspects, they're basically requests for the GM to tell you a pre-existing aspect that's currently hidden from you. Examples of aspect assessment include conducting Internet research, engaging someone in a probing conversation, or casing a building.

What it means: You've put sustained effort into uncovering an important and useful fact of some kind.

How to do it: Roll an appropriate skill against a target number set by the GM, or by an opponent's skill roll, if you're assessing an aspect on a character.

Difficulty: Under most circumstances, the difficulty for an assessment is +0—as long as the skill being used is rated at +1 or better, the attempt is likely to succeed. If the assessment attempt is being opposed, the difficulty is the opposition's skill roll. For example, trying to discover a character's Conviction is a matter of your conversational skills pitted against their self-control.

Duration: Because assessed aspects are preexisting, once you discover them they stick around for the duration of the story, or until the person, place, or thing to which they're attached is no longer part of it.

Benefit: The GM tells you an existing aspect, which can be used once for free. The skill roll you make is your up-front investment in the aspect.

Cost: A successful skill roll.

Aspect Maneuvers

An aspect maneuver is an attempt to change a conflict in your favor without directly damaging your opponent. You might knock your foe "Off-Balance," position yourself for a "Sneak Attack," flash a light in their eyes to render them "Momentarily Blinded," lure them into getting "Lost in a Meandering Story" during a long conversation, flirt with their wife to make them "Enraged By Jealousy"—the list goes on.

Just about anything you want to do in a conflict that doesn't result in dealing stress to your opponent is an aspect maneuver. The aspect created may be fleeting, or it may stick around for a while. For more informa-

tion on aspect maneuvers, see Conflicts.

What it means: You've managed to gain a temporary advantage over the opposition.

How to do it: Make an opposed skill roll against your opponent. Any skill can be used to maneuver if the circumstances are right; it's up to you and the GM to decide what's appropriate.

Duration: Compare your roll against your opponent's. At two or fewer shifts, the aspect is fragile—after one free tag, it goes away. At three or more, it lasts for the rest of the scene, or until the target removes it.

Removing aspects: A maneuver can remove an aspect the same way a declaration can; see Aspect Declarations for more.

Benefit: You get to put an aspect on your opponent or yourself to help turn the conflict in your favor. Alternately, you remove an aspect from yourself.

Cost: A successful opposed skill roll.
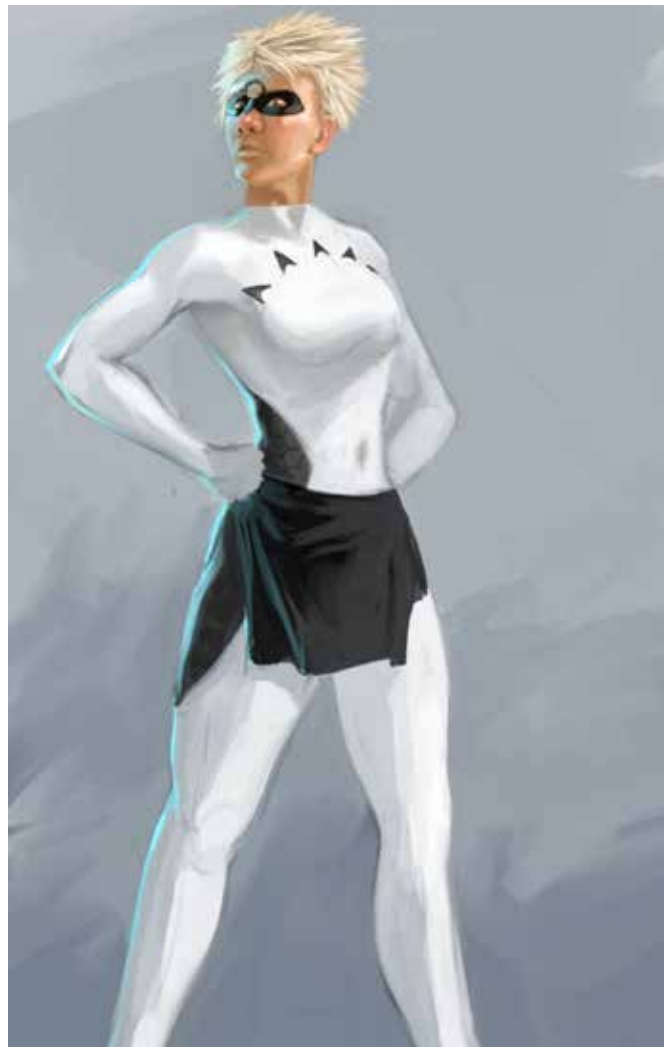
BACKGROUNDS

Normal Human: You are one of the teeming billions of standard baseline humans. Before you became a base raider, you had nothing to do with superpowers, heroes, or villains.

Non-Human: Even though you are a sapient being, you are not allowed in mainstream human society. You could be an alien, a magical being, a robot, or a human-born mutant who looks too monstrous to pass. Governments persecute you and your kind, so you are forced to desperate measures to survive. Measures like base raiding.

Heroic Connection: Before Ragnarok , you had a connection to a superhero or a team of heroes like the Ideal. Perhaps you had a family member who was secretly a hero and you knew their identity, even helped them when possible. Or you could be a robot assistant built by a kind super-scientist.

You might have even been the low-powered sidekick of a famous hero who was left behind in Ragnarok. Your inside knowledge is invaluable, but it comes at a price. Enemies of your missing superhero friends may take out their anger on you. Spies may know about you and try to learn what you know, through any means possible.

Villainous Past: You weren't a major super villain but you have close ties to the super villain underground. You might have been a costumed henchman or a known associate of a super villain.

Maybe you fenced stolen goods for a few super villains. No matter what the exact story was, you learned some of the inside gossip of the underground. You might even know where some of the bodies are buried. Of course, you can't lead that kind of life free of consequence.

Law enforcement probably knows something about you and you can be sure they'll be very interested in you if they find out about your occupation of base raiding. Every super villain racks up quite a few enemies, and some of them, especially the criminal syndicates, are still around and eager to pay you back, now that your scary boss is gone.

ARCHETYPES

Adept

Requirements: Physical or mental ability

Description: Through mediation, secret martial arts, and other forms of esoteric self-improvement, a normal character can transcend their limitations. Certain martial arts have always granted superhuman abilities, but they have been tightly guarded by secret societies and powerful magical beings, until Ragnarok. After the event, certain scrolls revealing some of these secrets were made public on the Internet. Dojos made up of these self-taught adepts have formed to teach new students and improve their technique. Ancestor spirits have sought out descendants to impart their secrets as well.

Example Aspects:

Student of the Forgotten Crane

Self-Taught Yamagata Ninja

Master of the Blood Dojo Tournament

Invoke When: Calling on your training, summoning your willpower to overcome pain, identify the fighting style of another adept.

Compel to: Obey your sensei's commands, no matter what ; belittle those that rely on external weapons or power sources; refuse to use weapons or techniques outside of your martial art.

Adventurer

Requirements: None.

Description: You have no 'real' superpowers, other than your own training and experience. You might have a gadget or two stolen from a base or purchased from the black market, but you barely know how to use it, let alone repair it. Because you don't rely on superpowers, you don't fall victim to overconfidence and you fall under the radar of law enforcement and rival base raiders.

Of course, base raiding is incredibly dangerous for people that lack superpowers, so perhaps gaining a power or two later on might not be a bad idea. Hopefully, you can find something in a base that will help.

Example Aspects:
"Why am I the only sensible one here?"
"Tougher than any juiced-up wannabe villain!"
"The only power I need is my angst ."

Invoke when: Dealing with normal humans in a normal environment, using common sense in an absurd situation, fighting a superpowered foe that underestimates you.

Compel to: Be easily dismissed by superpowered characters, viewed as a traitor by other humans for working with superpowered characters, wrongly accused of having superpowers but hiding them.

Alien

Requirements: None.
Description: Aside from the three major alien invasions, thousands of extraterrestrials representing hundreds of unique species live on Earth. Many are there by accident, the result of an errant FTL jump or a transdimensional teleportation gone awry. Others are explorers or scholars studying the planet. Some were born on Earth, the second or even third generation immigrants to the planet, their ancestors moving to Earth to survive a calamity in their home world. Whatever the cause, you are not human. You may be close to human in most ways and you may even look very similar but biologically you are a distinct species from *Homo Sapiens*. As a result, you have few, if any, legal rights. You cannot hold a job or own property. Survival is a constant struggle. Your powers may be inherent, but not necessarily. Some aliens have experimented on themselves to get superpowers, just like human base raiders.
Example Aspects:
    Veteran of a Failed Invasion Fleet
    Last Survivor of My Species
    Great Space Pilot, but Terrible at Landings.
Invoke when: Using an ability related to your extraterrestrial origin, deciphering an alien script, negotiating with another alien.
Compel to: Be unfamiliar with the nuances of contemporary society, come to the aid of one of your kind, put yourself at a disadvantage in an effort to "fit in."

Artificial Being

Requirements: You must have at least at least one Strange skill connected to being a construct.
Description: You were built with high technology or forged through magic and were not born. You could be a human-like android, a metallic robot, a mystical golem, or one of innumerable other types of artificial beings. Your relationship with your creator is core to your identity. Whether your creator was abusive or kind, you were not made idly. You were built for a purpose and whether you fulfill that purpose is important. Some constructs rebel and escape from their creators or even kill them, while others are able to leave peacefully and a lucky few even remain on good terms with their creator. Regardless, you are independent now, and surviving in a world where you are treated as an object, not as a person, is difficult to say the least. Fortunately, most artificial beings need little to survive and can usually easily upgrade or modify themselves.
Example Aspects:
    Robotic Butler
    Failed Assassin Prototype
    Forged from the Iron of Hell
    Designer Homunculus
Invoke when: Sustaining damage that would kill a biological being; intimidating others with Uncanny Valley creepiness; not needing air, food, water, or other biological necessities
Compel to: Not understand what love or other emotions are, conceal true nature to humans , need to flee from neo-Luddite mobs, be treated as an object by law enforcement, suitable for seizure and destruction.

Dual Power Sources

Requirements: Pick two other archetypes and fulfill both requirements.
Description: Getting superpowers from only one source is a bit foolish to you. Instead, you've gained superpowers from two distinct sources. Perhaps you were born as a mutant or alien and had innate abilities but then went ahead and tried super soldier drugs. Or you're a super-genius who mastered technology and magic. You could have gotten two sets of superpowers

from the same power source—like using two unique super soldier processes on yourself. Even if someone negates one set of superpowers, you can always use your secondary powers on them. On the downside, you haven't had time to fully master any particular power, and mixing distinct power sources produces unique side effects. Most raiders who get powers from multiple sources become heavily involved in the underground empowerment movement, learning how to find black market dealers, talking shop with other DIY superpower enthusiasts, and avoiding law enforcement agents on the hunt for superpower contraband.

Example Aspects:

Bionic Wizard

Golem Gadgeteer

College-Aged Mutant Ninja

Invoke when: Analyzing and understanding other superpowered beings, dealing with black market superpowers dealers, upgrading one's own abilities

Compel to: Succumb to side effects from superpowers complications, misuse powers from lack of training and experience, be outed as a member of the empowerment movement to the authorities.

Magic User

Requirements: Choose one of the following: One of your Conviction aspects becomes your Obsession OR take a Taint of Magic aspect - see the sidebar for details. See page 140 for more information on the requirements for Ritual and Spell magic.

Description: Magic used to be the domain of a small elite group of occultists, priests, and obsessive scholars but with the democratization of information, nearly anyone can learn to use at least some minor magic, but very few choose to learn.

Still, where there was once only a few dozen or hundred magic users in the world, now there are thousands active now. Most find a scanned copy of a mystical tome online and use it to learn some basics, although others are lucky enough to be taught by a more experienced sorcerer. Either way, the novice magic user has to be careful about using her newfound powers. Not only do governments and religious leaders find the use of magic deplorable, but mystical beings

often hate and fear wizards. Many of these beings assume sorcerers only want to bind and enslave them.

Aside from the numerous enemies all magic users have, they must be aware of the cost of their power. Old school wizards are obsessive about the dark arts, neglecting all other concerns for the sake of improving their mastery of the craft. New magic users may not be as dedicated but their lack of care comes at a price - imperfect knowledge of magic leads to drastic side effects. Eventually a spell or ritual misfires and forever scars or traumatizes the novice caster.

Special Rules: The Taint Of Magic

Magic requires focus and dedication to use. Most magic users become obsessives, devoting all of their time to perfecting their craft. These magic users gain an obsession aspect. An Obsession aspect is like a Conviction, only stronger. More than a belief, it's an all-consuming need that never fully leaves your mind.

Like Convictions and Major Complications, when compelling an Obsession aspect the GM must start with an offer of two Fate Points instead of one. When invoking your Obsession aspect for a bonus or to re-roll, you may also choose to take any amount of Composure stress. If you do, you gain an additional bonus to your roll equal to the stress taken. This stress bypasses any and all defenses, but may be reduced with Mental Consequences.

For example, let's say you roll Arcana and spend a Fate Point to invoke your Obsession aspect for a +2 bonus. Even so, you're still three points short of your goal, so instead of invoking two more aspects for two more Fate Points, you decide to take three points of Composure stress in exchange for a +3 bonus.

The less dedicated magic users do not have to take an obsession aspect, but they invariably make mistakes as they learn sorcery. As a result, they gain a Taint of Magic aspect. This is a negative aspect caused by a flawed spell or ritual they attempted to cast at some point in the past. It can be somewhat mundane in nature, like a missing eye but this Taint cannot be healed or fixed by conventional methods. Even installing a cybernetic eye to replace the missing eye will not work - something will go wrong.

Examples: Haunted by a Dead Relative, Bane of Electronic Devices, Harmed by Cold Iron, Severed Left Hand Out for Revenge, Drives Animals to Fear or Hate.

Like Convictions and Major Complications, when

compelling a Taint of Magic, the GM must start with an offer of two Fate Points instead of one. If a Taint of Magic is compelled when the character uses a spell or a ritual, he may gain three Fate Points instead of one. A Taint of Magic cannot be invoked to help you perform ritual or spell magic but you may choose to suffer mental, composure, or physical stress to gain a bonus when using magic equal to the amount of points of stress taken.

Example Aspects:

Moderator of Alt.Magic.Real.Necronomicon

"The voices in my head are real/bound spirits."

Real Wizards Wear Fedoras

Invoke when: Casting spells or enacting rituals, countering or studying the magic of other sorcerers, knowing esoteric occult lore.

Compel to: Incur the wrath of a religious leader or magical being, miscalculate the effects of a spell, put others in danger to gain more mystical power.

Magical Being

Requirements: Your Strange skills must be tied to your mystical heritage.

Description: Magic courses through your veins, marking you as a being of mystical power. Due to the many dimensional portals and gates, thousands of magical beings walk the earth. You could be a descendant of an ancient god or demi-god, half-human and half-divine power, or you could be a monster of legend or a spirit given physical form.

You are immortal but can die from violence, like a mortal. Humans are lesser beings, but wizards and other magic users are to be feared. They can bind and enslave beings like yourself. Many such beings have suffered this fate, as arrogant wizards view them as nothing but pawns and minions.

Example Aspects:

Son of Peracles

Half-Gorgon, Half-Orc, All Man

Shoggoth and Proud of It

Invoke when: Impressing the mortals with your powers, consorting with other magical beings, recalling historical trivia from your long years on Earth (or beyond).

Compel to: Cross over from "impressive" to "ar-

rogant," be targeted by ambitious magic users, have to face vigilante 'monster slayers' who seek to kill all magical beings.

Mutant

Requirements: Physical or mental ability. In addition, at least one of your Strange skills must come with a Complication aspect reflecting your mutation.

Description: A small but slowly increasing segment of the population are born as mutants. Most of these mutants have relatively minor differences to baseline humans and few if any significant powers. They can choose to live as normal humans, keeping their true nature secret.

Some mutants are not so fortunate, born with obvious traits like blue skin or feathered wings. These mutants often have more powerful abilities but face discrimination and prejudice at the hands of the ignorant masses. Now that no superheroes are around to defend persecuted mutants, many of them have gone underground and raid bases to support themselves.

Example Aspects:

"I'm not a monster—I'm a human being!"

"Blue skin isn't just a phase, Dad!"

"Say one word about my goat legs, I dare you."

Invoke when: Scaring off the ignorant, using one of your mutant abilities, relating with other mutants.

Compel to: Be subjected to the scorn, persecution and deep-seated prejudice of a frightened populace, accidentally frighten off a would-be friend, finally succumb to the rage that's been slowly building inside you your entire life.

Super-Genius

Requirements: Any Strange skills representing the Super-Genius' inventions must have the Focus Flaw.

Description: You are an inventor—a brilliant scientist and engineer. You have mastered a dozen fields of study in the time it would take a normal person to comprehend one. Your intelligence may be the result of a subtle mutation, experimentation with super soldier drugs, or natural brilliance. No matter how you got your smarts, you've used them to build equipment far

more advanced than anything on the market today.

People as smart as you tend to be thrown in prison or forced to work for the government but you've taken to base raiding to remain free. Base raiding is also necessary to continue your work.

The superheroes and villains had the best toys and you want to play with them. There's also the problem of acquiring certain raw materials. Stores don't sell weapons-grade uranium.

Example Aspects:

King of the Otaku

DIY Roboticist

The Man Who Tried to Patent a Supernova Inducer

Invoke When: Analyzing or testing strange machines or devices, using techno-babble to confuse or persuade someone, repairing your machines.

Compel to: Disregard the safety of yourself or others when testing a new machine, push the shiny red button, condescend to lesser intellects.

Super Soldier

Requirements: None, but at least one Strange skill must come with a Complication reflecting the nature of the process you took to gain superpowers.

Description: You have been modified by one of the many processes to create super soldiers. Hundreds of such processes have been created since the first public sighting of a superhuman. Most rely on science and technology and involve powerful drugs, although some mystical means to create the ultimate warrior have been documented.

After Ragnarok, many of these techniques appeared on the black market and on the Internet, which gave anyone willing to risk their life a shot at gaining superpowers. Look at chapter 6 for details on common super soldier drugs and processes.

Example Aspects:

Homemade Bionic Arms

Self-Administered Krutov Protocol and Lived to Tell the Tale

Mixed Peak Performer and Chimera (Crocodile)

Invoke when: Using your modifications to exceed the limits of normal human ability, knowing details about super soldier processes that made you what you are.

Compel to: Get in trouble with the authorities for using super soldier drugs, encounter difficulty relating to "natural" humans, suffer painful side effects.

SKILLS

Considered on the most basic level, skills represent what your character can do. Skills are rated on the Adjective Ladder or numerically (as you prefer—some people like words, some people like numbers), with higher ratings being better.

When you roll dice, you'll almost always add a Skill rating to their total. Nearly every action that the character might undertake is covered by his skills. If he doesn't have a skill on his sheet, either because the player didn't take it or the skill itself doesn't exist, it is assumed to default to Mediocre (+0).

Skills are not a straight measure of "My guy's better than your guy." Rather, skills are methods of resolving conflicts and finding answers to problems. Your skills are a way of telling the GM, "This is the sort of thing I'd like to be doing in the game." The higher your rating with a particular skill is, the better your character will be at solving problems using that skill, and the more opportunities he'll have to use it.

For example, say your character is a mixed martial arts fighter. If you give him Great (+4) Unarmed, he'll be very good at punching people in the face, and a lot of his scenes will center on physical conflicts. On the other hand, if you give him Average (+1) Unarmed and Great (+4) Deceit, he's no less a champion—but he's less defined by his fighting career and abilities than by his capacity to deceive others. You can expect him to do a lot more talking than fighting

Skills are made up of bundles of skill applications we call trappings. A trapping is something you can do with a skill, such as using your Shooting skill to shoot someone or leaping from rooftop to rooftop with Athletics. In most FATE games, these trappings are often more implicit than explicit, but in Base Raiders they're treated more concretely and take on additional importance. Here, skills are defined by their trappings, for reasons that will soon become apparent. For a full list of trappings, see the Trappings section.

Common, Unique, and Strange Skills

Skills come in three basic varieties: Common skills, Unique skills, and Strange skills.

The Common skill list is a group of pre-defined skills, such as Deceit, Academics, or Investigation. Their trappings are set and immutable: All instances of Academics, from character to character, have the same trappings and work the same way, as do all instances of Empathy, Stealth, Contacting, and every other Common skill.

In other words, this is more or less the skill list you might find in any game powered by FATE.

Unique skills are designed and named by the player—collections of hand-picked trappings grouped together to represent an occupation, a lifestyle, a broad area of training or aptitude, or some other thematically linked set of abilities. Every trapping within a Unique skill must fit its collections of hand-picked trappings grouped together to represent an occupation, a lifestyle, a broad area of training or aptitude, or some other thematically linked set of abilities.

Every trapping within a Unique skill must fit its theme. For example, a Unique skill called Black Market Doctor could encompass medical training and knowledge, connections within the underground, and personal wealth, but not piloting a giant robot, dodging bullets, or punching guys in the face. That's not to say that the character can't do those things—only that since they aren't reasonably part of being a Black Market Doctor, they can't be included in that particular Unique skill.

Taking a Unique skill lets you turn one of your Free aspects into an associated Complication aspect, to reflect how the part of the character's life represented by the skill has complicated her life, or a Conviction aspect, to reflect how it has informed or affected her beliefs. These aspects are a way of reinforcing the connection between who your character is and what your character can do. Plus, they lower the Unique skill's cost. A Unique skill's Power Tier can be either Mundane or Extraordinary; see below for more on Power Tiers.

Strange skills, unlike Common skills and Unique skills, confer powers and abilities beyond those of normal human beings. Like Unique skills, most Strange skills are composed of trappings selected by the player, but generally themed around some sort of capability manifested by the Strangeness.

What makes a Strange skill? Strange skills let you do things far beyond the ken of ordinary mortals, such as shooting energy beams out of your eyes, throwing a city bus through a skyscraper, reading a terrorist's mind, summoning demonic allies—in other words, superpowers.

Anyone can have a Unique skill, but only beings with a superpower source can have Strange skills. This includes any Common skill of Superhuman Tier or greater. Every Strange skill must come with at least one Drawback, which imposes a limitation of sort in exchange for a skill point discount; see Extras and Drawbacks for more on these.

Combining Skills

Sometimes the character needs to perform a task that really requires using two or more skills at once. You never know when a character is going to need to throw a grenade while balancing on a precariously balanced steel girder or pilot a spaceship while hacking a satellite.

In those situations, the GM calls for a roll based on the main skill being used (the primary thrust of the action), but modified by a second skill. If the second skill is of greater value than the first, it grants a +1 bonus to the roll; if the second skill is of a lesser value, it applies a -1 penalty to the roll.

When the second skill can only help the first, which is to say it can only provide a bonus, it complements the skill. A complementing skill never applies a -1, even if it's lower than the primary skill. This usually happens when the character has the option of using the secondary skill, but doesn't have to bring it to bear.

If the secondary skill comes into play only to hold the primary skill back, it limits the skill, meaning it can only provide a penalty or nothing at all. A limiting skill never applies a +1, even if it's higher than the primary skill. Often skills like Endurance or Resolve are limiting skills—as you get more tired, you won't get better, but if you're resolute, you may not get worse.

Power Tiers

The Power Tiers
Godlike (G)
Ascendant (A)
Superhuman (S)
Extraordinary (E)
Mundane

The significant differences in scale between the effectiveness of ordinary human abilities and those of the most powerful superhumans are represented by Power Tiers.

A skill in the Mundane Tier is as effective as the efforts of an ordinary human being. In this Tier, a Great (+4) Athletics rating puts you among the ranks of the finest real-world athletes. A magical, Mundane Tier ability to conceal your identity will give you a disguise as convincing as one that could be achieved through conventional means.

If a skill's Tier surpasses the Mundane Tier, so does its effectiveness relative to the realm of "normal" human ability. This could be due to a lifetime of intense focus, or an uncanny talent. With an Athletics skill of Great (+4) in the Extraordinary Tier, you are a suspiciously exceptional athlete. You routinely run, jump, and climb with an ease and agility that the common man simply can't match, and even your worst efforts often exceed those of professional athletes whose skills rank in the Mundane Tier. A sorcerous disguise in the Extraordinary Tier is often convincing enough to fool the target's spouse for weeks on end.

Above the Extraordinary Tier—through the Superhuman, Ascendant, and Godlike Tiers—these increases in effectiveness only become more pronounced. If you possess an Athletics skill in the Godlike Tier, running up one side of Everest and down the other, or leaping across the Atlantic, is routine business. If you can cloak yourself in a Godlike Tier disguise, odds are good that you're descended from (or are) one of the world's trickster gods.

The Tier of a skill, if not Mundane, is indicated by an initial in parentheses after the skill's name—(E) for Extraordinary, (S) for Superhuman, and so on. If a skill—any skill, including Common skills—is in the Su-

BUT I DON'T LIKE FUDGE DICE!

Some versions of FATE eschew Fudge dice in favor of d6-d6 (a positive d6 roll minus a negative d6 roll). If you prefer that, instead of replacing a Fudge die with a d6 for a Power Tier, roll an extra d6. For example, an Extraordinary Tier skill vs. a Mundane Tier skill would mean rolling 2d6-d6 instead of 3dF+1d6.

Be warned, though: Despite the fact that 3dF+1d6 and 2d6-1d6 have the same average (3.5), their high and low ranges vary significantly. The worst you can roll on 3dF+1d6 is -2 and the best is +9, while the worst you can roll with 2d6-d6 is -4 and the best is +11. This discrepancy only becomes more pronounced as the difference between Power Tiers increases. You should be aware of the tendency of the dice to become increasingly dominant if you're rolling regular dice rather than Fudge dice.

Another option is to use d6-d6 and just add +3 for each Tier of difference. This lacks a bit of the random factor and puts even more emphasis on Power Tiers if that's what you prefer.

perhuman, Ascendant, or Godlike Tiers, it's automatically a Strange skill.

When you face off against an opponent, first compare the Tiers of the skills you're using. If they're the same, such as Mundane vs. Mundane or Superhuman vs. Superhuman, each of you rolls 4dF and adds your skill rating, as normal. If they're different, whoever has the higher-Tier skill replaces one Fudge die with a six-sided die for each Tier of difference. For example, if you're attacking with Good (+3) Fisticuffs (E) and your opponent is defending with Fair (+2) Athletics, you'll roll 3dF+1d6+3 and your opponent will roll 4dF+2. If your Fisticuffs were Superhuman instead of Extraordinary, you'd roll 2dF+2d6+3, while your opponent would still roll 4dF+2. If both of you were using skills of the same Tier, regardless of what that Tier were, you'd both roll 4dF and add your skill rating.

This method naturally gives the upper hand to whoever has the higher-Tier skill, but if there's only one Tier of difference, it's not an overwhelming advantage. There's still the very real possibility of rolling —+1 on 3dF+1d6, after all. Anything greater than a single Tier of difference and the higher-Tier skill is virtually guaranteed to win. Consider that rolling 2dF+2d6 yields a minimum result of +0, and that's not even taking into account the skill rating itself—in the worst case scenario, a Superhuman skill pitted against a Mundane skill will always achieve a positive result. And that Mundane skill has no chance whatsoever against a God-like skill. As it should be.

If a skill's Power Tier measures its effectiveness relative to that of the common man, your skill rating measures how it ranks against comparable skills in that Tier. For example, if you have Average (+1) Might (S), you're far stronger than the average person, but compared to others with Might (S), you're on the lower end of the scale.

Each Power Tier reduces your Refresh. See Power Tier and Refresh, page 112.

Invulnerability and Weakness

Some characters are especially resistant to certain types of attacks, like mindless robots that don't scare easily, or are especially vulnerable to certain other types of attacks, such as a werewolf's vulnerability to silver. These are handled in the game with limited Power Tier adjustments called Invulnerability and Weakness.

An Invulnerability improves your defenses against a narrow category of attacks by upgrading the effective Power Tier of your defense. This applies to any defensive skill you might bring to bear against the specified attack. A Minor Invulnerability provides a two-Tier upgrade (from Mundane to Superhuman, Extraordinary to Ascendant, Superhuman to Godlike, and so on), while a Major Invulnerability grants a four-Tier upgrade. Acceptable "narrow categories" must be consistent with the character's Archetype, and include things like fire (for a creature composed of volcanic rock), bludgeons (for a mutant with an especially stretchy body), and

mind-affecting attacks (for an especially disciplined psychic).

Alternately, the Invulnerability can be more broad, covering all physical attacks or all mental attacks, but this comes with certain repercussions. For one, it doubles the cost of the Invulnerability (see below). Secondly, the player has to decide if the Invulnerability is constantly active or must be consciously activated by the character. If the latter, it requires an Action on the character's turn (see the Conflicts section in Chapter 8: Running The Game) to activate or deactivate. This effectively means that it can't be switched on as an immediate reaction to a threat, but is a matter of conscious effort on the part of the character. Thirdly, while the Invulnerability is active, the character loses the ability to interact with the world within the bounds of the Invulnerability's scope. For example, a ghostly character with an Invulnerability to all physical attacks isn't able to physically affect the world—he can't move or pick up objects, deal Health stress to corporeal enemies, and so on. A character with an Invulnerability to all mental attacks lacks the capacity to reason or think independently. He's less a "character" than one of those mindless robotic drones mentioned above. Obviously, this is incongruous with being a player character, which demands independent reasoning and decision-making. Likewise, the only creatures Invulnerable to social attacks don't get invited to parties anyway, so this too is inappropriate for PCs.

A Weakness is just the opposite: a category of attacks against which the effective Power Tier of the character's defenses is downgraded by two Tiers (a Minor Weakness) or four Tiers (a Major Weakness). Werewolves are weak against silver. The fire elemental is Weak against water. Vampires have a Major Weakness against sunlight. However, instead of carrying a cost, in exchange for this chink in your armor your Weakness provides a cost rebate, as indicated on page 114. Note that the rebate provided isn't a function of how common or rare your Weakness is—it's just about how much you want it to affect you. A GM who constantly presents antagonists with knowledge of your Weakness and the means to exploit it is doing both you and the story a disservice. It's not that it should never come up—of course it should—but a hero facing an identical challenge time and again makes for a dull narrative.

As the GM, be judicious with how regularly you bring a character's Weakness into play. It should be a spice, not the main course. As the player, don't give your character a Weakness if you don't want to see your character trounced now and then by someone with the means and knowledge to exploit it.

Tier Benefits

Many trappings can confer an additional benefit if their skill is in the Extraordinary Tier or above. This is called a Tier Benefit. For example, the Stress Capacity trapping's Tier Benefit in the Extraordinary Tier is Armor 1 against stress of the trapping's scope (Health, Composure, or Reputation). The number of Tier Benefits a single skill provides cannot exceed its skill rating. These Tier Benefits are chosen when the skill's Power Tier is determined, and remain "locked in" thereafter. For instance, the Physical Force, Stress Capacity, and Leap trappings all come with Tier Benefits. If you put all three of them in a Fair (+2) skill, you'll have to pick which two Tier Benefits the character will actually receive and be able to use. Later on, if you're able to increase that skill's rating to Good (+3), you can add the third Tier Benefit to the character.

Trappings

Here is a list of all the skill trappings, each with a brief description. They're grouped into loose categories— Offense, Defense, etc.—according to the basic function they serve. (Trappings marked with a + symbol have Tier Benefits.)

OFFENSE

Causing harm.
Influence: Libel, slander, and public defamation. Deals Reputation stress and Social consequences.
Menace: Frighten and threaten. Deals Composure stress and Mental consequences.

Shoot: Attack at range (defaults to 1 zone). Deals Health stress and Physical consequences.

Strike: Attack in melee. Deals Health stress and Physical consequences.

DEFENSE

Sidestepping harm.
Dodge: Avoid melee or ranged attacks.
Esteem: Defend against social attacks.
Parry: Defend against melee attacks.
Resist Damage: Defense against Physical attacks through sheer toughness.
Stress Capacity [Scope]+: Adds boxes to the chosen scope's stress track (Health, Mental, or Reputation).
Willpower: Defense against Mental attacks such as fear or psychic domination.

MOBILITY

Getting from here to there.
Climb: Move on vertical surfaces.
Leap+: Jump.
Move+: Cover ground (on foot, by default).

SOCIAL

War by other means.

Conversation: Improve someone's attitude toward you.
Convince: Talk someone into (or out of) a course of action.
Inspire: Alter the mood of a group of people in a manner consistent with the skill's theme.
Networking+: Making use of your social circles to glean information and separate rumors from fact.

PERCEPTION

Making sense of it all.
Examine: Prolonged, active perception of an area.
Initiative [Scope]: Determines order of actions in the chosen scope (Physical, Mental, or Social).
Insight+: Assess someone's aspects.
Notice+: Quick, passive perception of your surroundings.

TECHNICAL

Applying what you know.

Craft+: Create permanent works of art or technology.

Dismantle: Take apart machines or other technological devices using your own scientific or mechanical know-how.

Information: Call on expert knowledge appropriate to the skill's theme.

Languages+: Read and write additional languages.

Repair: Fix things of a mechanical or technological nature.

Research: Make use of a Workspace to deepen your understanding of a topic.

Treatment [Scope]+: Clear stress and remove consequences in the chosen scope (Physical, Mental, or Social).

Workspace+: A physical location to conduct research, experiments, or similar work, such as a library, workshop, or laboratory.

SUBTERFUGE

Acting with secrecy.

Dexterity+: Sleight of hand and manual finesse.

Disguise+: Look and sound like someone else.

Guile: Lie, misdirect, and mislead people, and get away with it.

Security: Bypass security measures such as tripwires and locks.

Stealth: Move silently and remain unseen.

GENERAL

Collecting a miscellany of trappings.

Environment [Type]: Survive and thrive in the chosen environment type.

Minions: Gain access to servitors, underlings, henchmen, or some other type of faceless helpers.

Physical Force+: Apply force to objects in a manner appropriate to the skill's theme.

Transport: Ride animals or operate vehicles.

Variable [Frequency]: A trapping that can be defined as any other trapping once per scene or once per session.

Wealth: Access to personal assets.

Putting It Together

Skills of all stripes are purchased using skill points. A common skill's cost in skill points is equal to its rating (+1 to +4), regardless of how many trappings it might have. To figure out the cost of a Unique or Strange skill, you'll use the Skill Trapping Diagram on the next page.
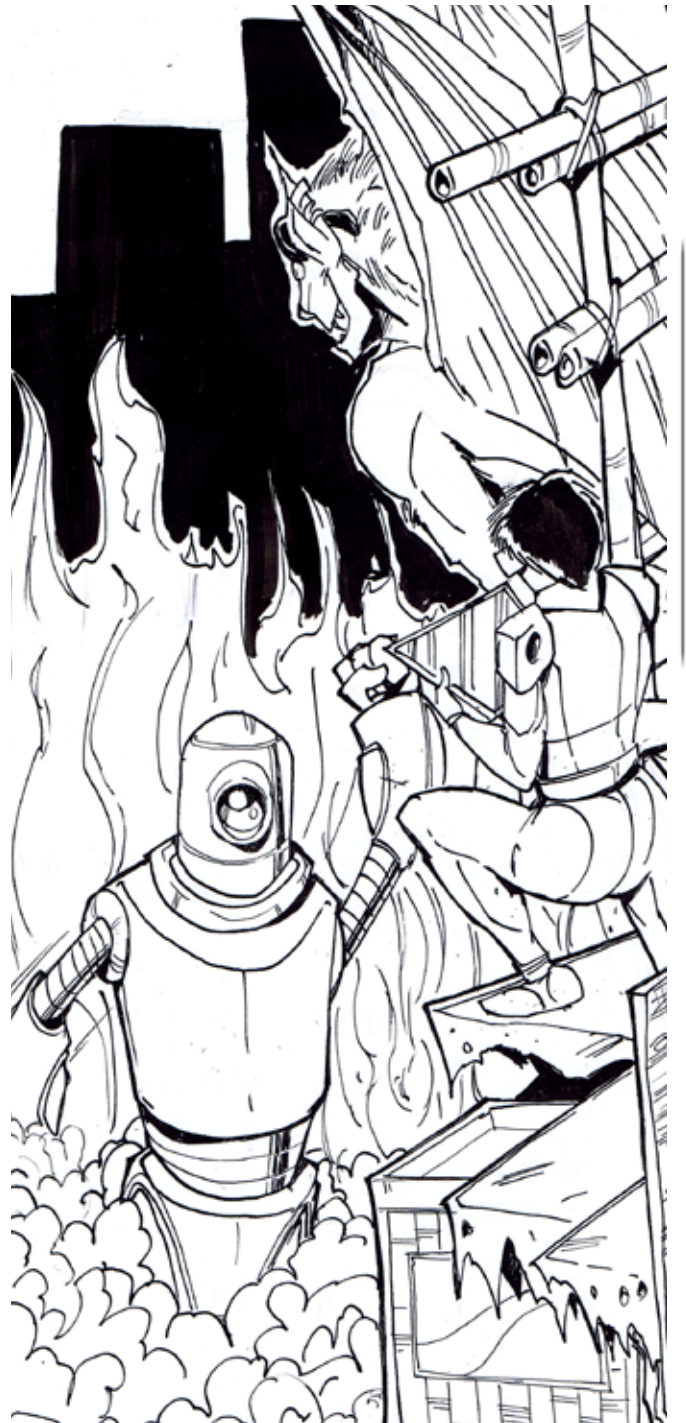
As you can see, the diagram consists of boxes and lines. Each box is labeled with a trapping name, with either solid or dotted borders. Many of these boxes are connected by lines, whether thin, thick, or dotted. We'll refer to these connected boxes as chains.

Start by choosing a trapping for the skill. This can be anywhere in the diagram. If the trapping has a solid border, it costs 1 skill point; if it's dotted, it's 2 skill points.

Then find the next trapping you want to include in the skill. If it's in a chain with the first trapping, you'll have to cross one or more lines and possibly skip over some boxes to get to it. A thin line costs 1 point to cross and a dotted line costs 2 points to cross, but crossing a thick line is free. If there's a box in the way for a trapping you don't want to add to the skill, you can skip it for free. If getting to a trapping would mean crossing four or more points' worth of lines, just pay four points plus the cost of the new trapping.

For example, if you're starting with Physical Force, crossing the three thin lines and one dotted line between it and Dexterity would only cost 4 skill points, not 5. Likewise, skipping the trappings in between—Leap, Move, and Stealth—wouldn't cost anything. Crossing the same line multiple times doesn't cost additional points.

If the additional trapping isn't chained to a trapping the skill already has, you'll just pay for the trapping itself. For example, adding the Languages trapping to a skill always costs only 1 point.

The only exceptions are with Unique skills. If you're building a Unique skill, the Information and Networking trappings are free to add. You'll still have to pay for crossing lines in the chain, if any, but the trappings themselves are complimentary.

Extras increase this total; Drawbacks reduce it. See Extras and Drawbacks for details.

Add up all the skill points you've spent on lines and boxes, then subtract any discounts from Drawbacks. That's the Unique or Strange skill's total cost.

For example, let's say you're creating a Unique skill rated at Good (+3) called Internet Guru, with the following trappings: Information, Research, Languages, Wealth, Esteem, and Networking. This means that you can use Internet Guru to be well-educated, know how to research online, speak multiple languages, draw an income, defend your public reputation, and leverage your Internet connections to your advantage.

Looking at the Skill Trapping Diagram, you decide to start with Networking. It's chained to Wealth by a thin line, which will cost 1 point to cross, and Wealth has a solid border, which will cost 1 point to add. It's the same story with Esteem: 1 point to cross the thin line, and another point to add it to the skill.

Languages isn't connected to anything, so it'll only cost 1 point to add. Information is free to add, since this is a Unique skill, but it's connected to Research (a solid box) by a thin line, so crossing to and adding it will cost 2 more points. So far that's a total of 6 skill points (not including Networking, which, like Information, is free to add).

To reduce the cost a bit, you choose to throw in a Minor Complication aspect of "Too Smart for His Own Good," which lowers the skill point cost for the trappings down to 5. Adding that to the skill's rating of Good (+3) gives you a total of cost you 8 points: 6 + 3 - 1 = 8.

There's only one universal restriction on how Unique and Strange skills are built: All trappings in the skill must fit the skill's theme. No exceptions.

POWER TIER AND REFRESH

The skill's Power Tier reduces your Refresh, as indicated below.

Mundane Tier: -0 Refresh
Extraordinary Tier: -1 Refresh
Superhuman Tier: -2 Refresh
Ascendant Tier: -4 Refresh
Godlike Tier: -6 Refresh

Again, if the skill doesn't derive from a character's Strangeness, it can't exceed the Extraordinary Tier.

Returning to the Internet Guru example above, let's make the character one of the world's most popular lecturers and essayists. His speeches get millions of views online and his blog is regularly quoted by major news networks. Instead of a Mundane Tier skill, it's now an Extraordinary Tier skill (-1 Refresh). Assuming

Skill Trapping Diagram
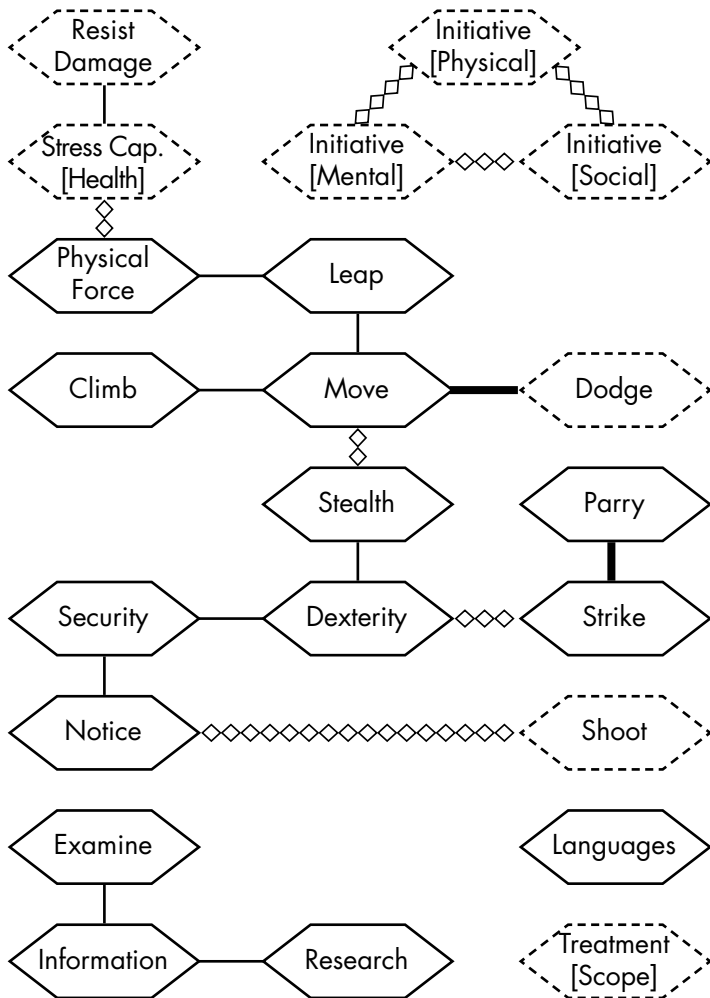
How to Use This:

Pick a trapping for the skill to use as a starting point, and pay skill points to add it to the skill. Follow the lines to get to other trappings. The more lines you have to cross to get to the next trapping, the more expensive it is.

A thin line costs 1 skill point to cross, a dotted line costs 2 skill points, and a thick line costs no points. A trapping with a solid border costs 1 point to add to a skill, while one with a dotted border costs 2 points to add. If adding a trapping would mean spending 4 or more skill points on crossing lines, it only costs 4 points to get there, plus the cost of adding the trapping itself (e.g., to go from Physical Force to Dexterity costs 4 points, but you still have to pay another point to actually add Dexterity to the skill).

If a trapping isn't connected by lines to any other trappings already in the skill, it doesn't cost anything extra to add. For example, Languages and Environment always only cost 1 point each, regardless of what other trappings the skill already has. Add the skill rating and apply Extras and Drawbacks for the total cost.
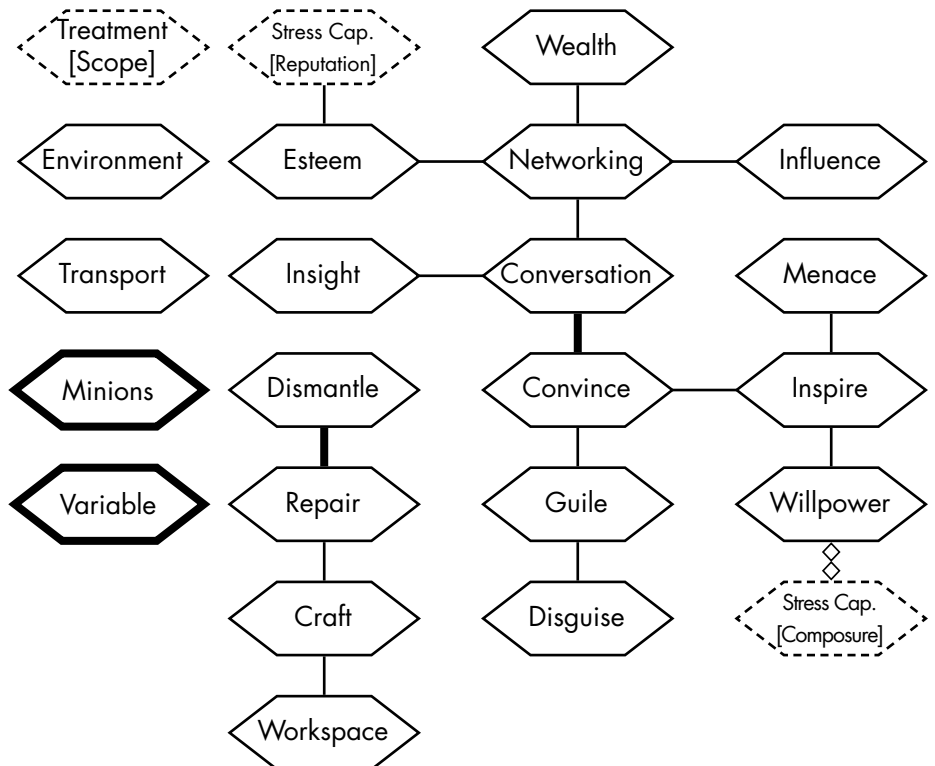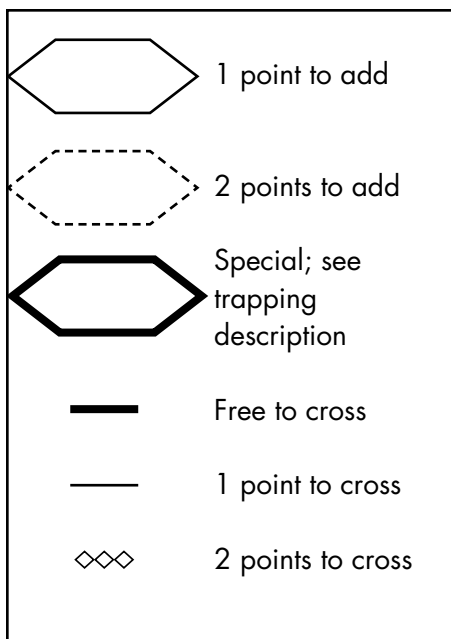
the game is a medium power campaign, the character's Refresh would be reduced from its default starting value of 8 down to 7.

Let's try a Strange skill now. Maybe our guru took some super soldier drug that boosted his strength and resilience. Judging by the trapping summaries, this sounds like Physical Force, Resist Damage, and Stress Capacity [Health]. On the diagram, we'll start with Resist Damage, for 2 skill points. That's chained to Stress Capacity [Health] by a thin line, which means 1 point to cross; Stress Capacity [Health] has a dotted border, so it'll cost another 2 points to add.

So far we're at 5 skill points. Crossing the dotted line to Physical Force costs 2 points, and then adding it costs one more, so our new total is 8 skill points. We need a Drawback to go with that. Maybe accessing this ability means the good professor has physically transform into a purple skinned monster—that sounds fun.

We give him a Drawback of Minor Transform, which lowers the cost of the skill by 1 point (it also means he has to replace one of his aspects with something more appropriate when he transforms, like swapping out "World Famous Internet Guru" for "Terrifying Hulking Brute").

Add to that the skill's rating of Good (+3), and the total skill point cost is 10. To make his strength and toughness truly impressive, we spend 2 Refresh to put that skill in the Superhuman Tier.

Invulnerabilities and Weaknesses also affect your Refresh:

Minor Invulnerability [Narrow Category]: -1 Refresh	
Major Invulnerability [Narrow Category]: -2 Refresh	
Minor Invulnerability [Broad Category]: -2 Refresh	
Major Invulnerability [Broad Category]: -4 Refresh	
Minor Weakness: +1 Refresh	
Major Weakness: +2 Refresh	

Skill Summary

1. What do you want the skill to do? This is the skill's theme.
2. Does the skill represent some sort of supernatural power?

- Yes: It's a Strange skill. Continue to step 3.
- No: It's not a Strange skill. Continue to step 3.

3. Is what you want the skill to do adequately represented by a common skill?

- Yes: Just use the common skill instead of building one. Skip to step 5.
- No: You'll build a skill. Continue to step 4.

4. Go to the Skill Trapping Diagram. Follow the instructions given earlier to add trappings to the skill.

- Every trapping you add to the skill must be appropriate to its theme.
- If it's a Unique skill, Information and Networking are free to add (except for crossing lines).

5. Apply Extras to the skill's trappings, as desired.

- Extras increase the skill's cost.

6. Apply Drawbacks to the skill, as desired.

- Drawbacks decrease the skill's cost. The minimum cost of a skill is its rating.
- Every Strange skill has to have at least one Drawback. (See step 8.)
- Common skills in the Mundane Tier cannot have Drawbacks.
- Unique skills in the Extraordinary Tier or above must have either a Conviction aspect or a Complication aspect. This is optional for Unique skills in the Mundane Tier. (See step 8.)

7. Determine the new total cost of the skill and pay skill points for it.

8. Set the skill's Power Tier and pay Refresh for it.

- If the skill's Power Tier is Superhuman or higher, it's automatically a Strange skill. Go back to step 6, if necessary.
- If it's a Strange skill, the Power Tier can be as high as Godlike.
- If it's a Unique skill, the Power Tier can be either Mundane or Extraordinary.

THE COMMON SKILLS

Here's how the common skills are defined using this method. Beneath the name of each is its theme(s) (in italics) and associated trappings. The skill point cost of a common skill is always equal to its skill rating.

ACADEMICS

Broad-based formal education
Information, Research, Languages

ALERTNESS

Reflexive awareness
Notice, Initiative [Physical]

ARCANA

Knowledge of and proficiency with mystical practices
Information, Networking, Research

ART

Artistic knowledge and ability
Craft, Repair, Information, Inspire, Networking

ATHLETICS

Physical fitness and mobility
Climb, Dodge, Leap, Move, Move + Unusual: Swimming

BUREAUCRACY

Corporate and political etiquette and finesse
Networking, Information, Convince, Influence, Esteem

BURGLARY

Breaking and entering
Examine, Security, Information

COMPUTERS

Hacking, programming, networking, and contacts
Examine, Information, Research, Networking

CONTACTING

Social circles, rumors and gossip
Esteem, Networking, Influence, Initiative [Social], Treatment [Social]

DECEIT

Deceptive speech or appearance, sleight of hand
Guile, Disguise, Dexterity

DRIVE

Ground vehicle operation and knowledge
Transport, Information

EMPATHY

Ability to assess and understand people
Insight, Initiative [Mental], Treatment [Mental]

ENDURANCE

Physical stamina and toughness
Stress Capacity [Health]

INTIMIDATION

Forceful persuasion
Menace, Initiative [Mental]

INVESTIGATION

Active perception
Examine, Information

MELEE WEAPONS

Proficiency with hand-to-hand weapons of all kinds
Strike, Strike + Range, Parry, Information

MIGHT

Muscular strength
Physical Force

PILOT

Flying or sailing vehicle operation and knowledge
Transport, Information

PRESENCE

Charisma, friendly persuasion, force of personality
Conversation, Convince, Inspire, Stress Capacity [Reputation]

RESOLVE

Mental fortitude, self-discipline
Willpower, Stress Capacity [Composure], Initiative [Mental]

RESOURCES

Access to personal assets
Wealth

SCIENCE

Formal education in theoretical and applied sciences
Craft, Information, Research, Treatment [Physical]

SHOOTING

Proficiency with firearms and projectile weapons
Shoot + Range, Information

STEALTH

Moving silently, hiding
Stealth

SURVIVAL

Remaining safe and fed in dangerous environments
Information, Environment [Wilderness], Treatment [Physical]

TECHNOLOGY

Building, modifying, and repairing machines
Craft, Repair, Dismantle, Information

UNARMED

Hand to hand combat and martial arts
Strike, Parry, Information

TRAPPING DESCRIPTIONS

The trappings listed below are in the following format:

NAME

Description and rules.
Theme: The trapping must be appropriate to this theme.
Tier Benefits: Special benefits available if the skill's Power Tier is above Mundane. A single skill can confer a number of these, chosen when the skill's Power Tier is purchased, equal to its skill rating.

CLIMB

Use Climb to determine how quickly or well a character can navigate movement on a vertical surface. However, not every encounter with a wall, tree, or fence is going to necessitate a skill roll. If failure isn't interesting, don't bother: Either the character can climb it, if that's what would make the story more interesting, or he can't, if it's just impossible.

Generally speaking, physical barriers are fairly meaningless, story-wise, unless another conflict is imminent (or ongoing). The barrier itself should be something that complicates the scene, but usually shouldn't be its focus. Instead of requiring a skill roll, assign the barrier a border value to increase the cost of passing from one zone (the bottom) to another (the top). If the border value is equal to or less than the rating of the skill with this trapping, the character can cross it freely. Otherwise, the character takes the difference as a penalty to his next action.

For example, a character needs to climb a wall to disable a ticking time-bomb on the roof. The character's Athletic skill (which includes the Climb trapping) is Good (+3), while the border value of the wall is 4. This means the character will take a -1 penalty to his bomb-disabling skill roll.

In the event that a roll is necessary—that is, if failing to make the climb would be just as interesting as mak-

ing it— then the base difficult depends on the height of the climb. This is further complicated by factors such as visibility, slipperiness, and distractions, which penalize the roll.

Climbing Modifiers			
Mod.	Slipperiness	Visibility	Distractions
-1	Wet, slick	Darkness, rain	Non-threatening
-2	Completely smooth	Pitch black	Threatening

Climbing Height Modifiers		
Height	Difficulty	Notes
Short	Fair (+2)	10' to 20'
Medium	Great (+4)	20' to 40'
Long	Great (+4) (E)	40' to 100'
Extreme	Great (+4) (S)	Is that a house?

These modifiers are cumulative by category. For example, climbing a 15' wall (+2 difficulty) at night (-1) in the rain (-1) while being shot at from below (-2) would have a total difficulty of Fair (+2) but a penalty of -4 to the roll. The interesting consequence of failure here, obviously, would be having to engage with those unpleasant gunmen below.

Shifts can also be spent to climb faster at a rate of 1 shift per step on the Time Table (see Time and Space), to a maximum of 4 steps.

Theme: Movement or athleticism.

CONVERSATION

The Conversation trapping covers friendly social interaction, especially if that interaction involves making a good impression on someone else. It's also the "default" social trapping, for those times when whatever the player's trying to do doesn't fall neatly into any other trapping.

The primary function of Conversation is to make a good first impression on someone else, improve their attitude toward you, or gain a temporary social advantage over them with an aspect maneuver.

By default, an NPC's initial reaction toward a character will be mildly negative, neutral, or mildly posi-tive. Stronger attitudes, such as love, hate, friendliness, respect, and so on, generally result from deeper, pre-existing knowledge of the character, and are unlikely to change dramatically in a first meeting. If the GM's uncertain about which of these applies, roll a Fudge die: - for mildly negative, 0 for neutral, and + for mildly positive.

If the player doesn't want to accept this reaction roll, she can attempt to turn on the charm and improve upon it. Make an opposed skill roll; if the rating of the NPC's relevant skill is unknown, it defaults to Medio-cre. A successful roll in either the character's favor or the NPC's favor adjusts the NPC's attitude; a successful roll with spin adjusts it even further, as shown on the next page.

Hostile: The NPC actively wants to harm the char-acter, physically, socially, or otherwise.

Negative: The NPC is suspicious of the character and will not help him.

Neutral: If offered an incentive, the NPC can be convinced to help the character.

Positive: The NPC will go slightly out of his way to help the character. With incentive, the NPC may risk himself to help in a passive manner, such as "forget-ting" to have the character sign in, turning a blind eye at an important moment, or the like.

Friendly: The NPC will inconvenience himself to help the character. With incentive, the NPC may risk himself to help in an active manner, such as distracting a pursuer, discreetly slipping the character a sought-af-ter key, and so on.

Aspect: The winner gets to declare a sticky as-pect on the NPC to emphasize his super-Friendly or ultra-Hostile attitude, as appropriate.

It's important to consider the potential consequenc-es of an NPC's reactions to characters. Maybe they'll give them a little extra help that could translate into a bonus on a skill check, or maybe, if their reaction is Hostile, they'll turn up later as an enemy—possibly a significant one.

Theme: Social prowess, persuasion, diplomacy.

CONVINCE

A skill with the Convince trapping can be used to talk someone else into (or out of) taking action. This is es-sentially a Mental conflict, but it shouldn't be a poor

Conversation Skill Test - In the PC's Favor			In the NPC's Favor	
Initial Attitude	Success	Spin	Success	Spin
Hostile	Negative	Neutral	–	Aspect
Negative	Neutral	Positive	Hostile	Aspect
Neutral	Positive	Friendly	Negative	Hostile
Positive	Friendly	Aspect	Neutral	Negative
Friendly	–	Aspect	–	–

man's mind control (though with the Psychic Extra, it can be used for actual mind control; see the Psychic Extra description for details). With a solid argument or proper incentive, a person can be convinced to do something they might do anyway, but successful use of the skill can't make someone, say, leap off a cliff to their death, or give the character all of their worldly possessions, or suddenly turn on their master after a lifetime of unwavering loyal servitude. However, convincing someone to talk instead of fight, to part with a few bucks, or grant you an audience with the President are all within reason, given the right circumstances.

The skill can be used as part of a quick contest to sway the opinion of a minor NPC, or an extended contest, complete with Composure stress and Mental consequences, until one party acquiesces by being Taken Out or making a concession. If the contest is actually two parties trying to influence a third party, such as a public debate, it could be an extended contest (see the Doing Things section in Chapter 8). It's up to the GM and players to frame the conflict in whatever way makes the most sense.

Compare this trapping with both Conversation and Guile. If the skill is about being well-liked and making friends everywhere you go, take the Conversation trapping. If it's about tricking people into liking or believing you based on half-truths (or worse), the Guile trapping is your best bet. But if the skill's theme involves being diplomatic or persuasive, use this trapping.
Theme: Force of personality, diplomacy.

CRAFT+

With this trapping, the skill can be used to create permanent, physical works consistent with the skill's theme. This includes building mechanical or electronic devices, painting portraits, writing fiction, constructing a keytar, and any other task whose end result is the cre-

ation of something new. Most of the time, this is something that requires the proper tools, materials, and time more than it does a skill roll, simply because sitting around in a workshop or studio creating stuff generally lacks tension and conflict. You set that workshop on fire, though, or surround that studio with two-dozen angry zombies, and it's a whole other story.

"The proper tools and materials" usually means having access to a proper facility (see the Workspace trapping). The rating of the facility needed is based on the quality of the work to be created or the cost of its materials (see the Wealth trapping), as appropriate to the work. For example, crafting an intricate piece of Strange technology like a plasma cannon would be an expensive endeavor requiring costly tools and materials, so the quality of the Workspace would be commensurate with its cost. Composing a soul-shattering essay about the true nature of reality, however, has no appreciable cost in materials, so the difficulty would be judged according to its desired quality (which, one would hope, would be high). A character who needs but lacks a sufficient facility to complete his work must either acquire one or borrow one from someone else.

The default time required is A Day (see the Time Table in Time and Space, page 318), plus a number of steps up on the Time Table equal to the device's quality. If the rating of the skill with this trapping is less than the device's quality, increase the time required by +1 step on the Time Table for every point of difference.

Of course, this process can be sped up with a skill roll, at a rate of 1 step on the Time Table per shift spent, to a maximum of 4 steps for 4 shifts.

Technological devices present some special challenges. Unless the device is a Strange skill with the Focus Flaw (see Extras and Drawbacks, page 135), its quality is equal to twice the number of its improvements; see the Equipment Gift.

The quality of a device represented by a skill is

equal to the skill's total cost in skill points (skill rating plus total trapping value, less Drawbacks), and its Power Tier is the same as the skill's. For example, crafting a Fair (+2) Personal Hover-Platform (E) with the Move trapping (1 point), an Extra of Unusual: Flight (+1 point), and the Minor Focus Drawback (-1 point) would be a task with a Good (+5) difficulty (2 + 1 + 1 − 1) in the Extraordinary Tier, which would require an Extraordinary Tier Workspace to attempt.

If the device is represented by multiple skills, make a separate roll for each one. For example, creating a suit of power armor represented by the Strange skills Good (+3) Exoskeleton (S) (4 points in trappings) and Fair (+2) Wings (E) (3 points in trappings) would be a task requiring two skill rolls: one with a difficulty of Epic (+7) (S) and another with a difficulty of (+5) (E).

Improvements made to an existing device generally don't last from session to session, so if you want to start play with a device, make it a Strange skill with the Focus Flaw, or buy one or more Equipment Gifts to reflect it. With that in mind, if the pacing of the game is such that the players have time to hang out in a workshop for a few days, that's probably a sign that the threat facing them isn't urgent enough.

When taking this trapping to represent artistic ability, consider whether the Inspire trapping would be more accurate. If the primary function of works you want to create is to impress onlookers, readers, or listeners, Inspire is probably a better choice. This trapping is best for artistic works whose utility goes beyond aesthetics, such as a clever forgery of a "lost" Michelangelo.

If the skill is in the Extraordinary Tier or above, it can be used, along with a sufficient Workspace (if appropriate), to craft works of the same Power Tier. The character must pay Fate Points equal to the Power Tier's Refresh cost—1 Fate Point for an Extraordinary Tier work, 2 for a Superhuman Tier work, and so on—in addition to whatever Fate Points the character might spend on invoking aspects as part of the crafting process. If the work comprises multiple skills, the Fate Point cost must be paid for each skill's Power Tier separately. These works last for the duration of the story or until destroyed or dismantled.

Theme: Any sort of creativity, such as artistic or mechanical aptitude.

Extraordinary Tier: Once per story, the player may spend a Fate Point to have the character spontaneously reveal a previously undisclosed work appropriate to the skill's theme or add an improvement to an existing piece of equipment for one scene. Treat this work as a piece of Equipment with two improvements (see Gifts, page 244).

Superhuman Tier: Once per session, the player may spend a Fate Point to give the character a theme-appropriate work (a piece of Equipment with two improvements, as above) or add two improvements to an existing piece of Equipment that last for one scene.

Ascendant Tier: The player may spend a Fate Point once per session to give the character a theme-appropriate work (a piece of equipment with three improvements) or add two improvements to an existing piece of Equipment that last for the rest of the session.

DEXTERITY+

A skill with the Dexterity trapping reflects the character's ability to pick pockets, palm small objects, perform magic tricks, and do nearly anything else that requires fine manual control. This makes Dexterity a pretty broad trapping, but enough of its applications are similar that it's just easier to collect them all under the same umbrella.

Attempting to pick a target's pocket, or steal something from the target without being noticed by the target, is an opposed skill roll. You suffer a -2 penalty on this roll.

Most other applications of Dexterity will entail rolling the skill, with the result setting the difficulty for an onlooker's skill roll to see where the key went, how the card trick works, what you did with his pocket watch, and so on.

Theme: Subterfuge, thievery, coordination.

Extraordinary Tier (or better): You may pay a Fate Point to use the Dexterity trapping of this skill as a free action.

DISGUISE+

A skill with the Disguise trapping lets the character appear to be someone other than herself. Use this skill in an opposed roll (usually using the Examine trapping) against any active attempts to penetrate the disguise. The extent of this trapping's effects is dependent upon

what is available, and won't normally hold up to intense scrutiny using investigation. In these cases, obtaining shifts on the opposing skill roll mean that the attempt at Disguise has failed. This takes time, though—generally a few minutes by default, and only once per scene. Casual inspection uses the Notice trapping against a target number equal to this skill's rating, but can be attempted as a free action once per scene.

Disguises generally hold up until the worst possible moment. The trick when dealing with disguises is less about when the opposition wins a roll and more about when the opposition is going to get close enough, and for long enough, to take a closer look with the Examine trapping. That's the trump card, and the way to play out tension in a scene with disguises is by making it clear such a roll may be lying in wait.

If the character is disguised as a particular person, the GM may assign some hefty bonuses (+1 to +4) to an attempt to penetrate the disguise by someone who actually knows the person he appears to be.

If it's appropriate to the skill's theme, this trapping can instead be applied to things other than people, such as disguising a machine as some other sort of machine, or creating an illusion out of thin air. See the Range and Unusual descriptions in Extras, page 136.
Theme: Deception, illusion, social artistry.
Extraordinary Tier: When disguised as someone else, you gain an additional aspect to represent the veracity of your performance. If the disguise isn't of anyone in particular—for example, a policeman, tradesman, or some other face in the crowd—choose an appropriate aspect that might be obvious to a casual onlooker. If the disguise is of a specific subject, and you've successfully assessed one of the subject's aspects, you gain that aspect (or one of them, if you've assessed more than one of their aspects) as long as you're disguised.
Superhuman Tier: As Extraordinary Tier, except you gain as many as two aspects.
Ascendant Tier: As Extraordinary Tier, except you gain as many as three aspects.
Godlike Tier: As Extraordinary Tier, except you gain as many as four aspects.

DISMANTLE

The opposite of the Craft trapping, the Dismantle trap-

ATTENTION, CONTROL FREAKS

You may notice there's no trapping called Control or Manipulate Elements or anything like that. So how do you make your fire-control guy? It's simple: Most "control" functions are just messing with aspects, and any skill can be used for an aspect declaration or maneuver.

Want to create fire? Use your Fire Control skill to declare an aspect of "On Fire." Want to make it bigger? An aspect maneuver will turn "On Fire" into "Raging Inferno." Want to put it out? Another aspect maneuver will remove it altogether.

Mind control works similarly; see the Psychic Extra description for details.

ping allows a skill to be used to "unmake" technological devices. Given time and tools, the skill can also topple virtually any trap, building or structure. In those circumstances, the character can use this trapping to deal damage to the target. By default, a device has 2 Health stress boxes; modify this by its quality as if it were a skill with the Stress Capacity trapping. A device "defends" against attacks using either its quality or the appropriate skill used by whoever is holding it, in the highest applicable Power Tier. See the Focus Flaw for more on this.

The Dismantle trapping can also be used to make assessments or declarations about a device or structure. These can be offensive or defensive, depending on what the character is trying to accomplish. An especially well-built or unusually designed device or structure can mean an increased difficulty number.

Indirect attacks against people are also possible, such as setting up a bridge to collapse when someone walks across it (in which case the targets take damage from the resulting fall—see Falling in Chapter 7: Running The Game). Large or complex devices or structures, such as buildings or safes, are more accurately treated as consequential or extended contests (see Chapter 7), especially if such a task is the focus of a

scene, session, or story.

All of the above applies to a methodical approach to destroying inanimate objects. For a quicker, brute-force approach, see the Physical Force trapping.
Theme: Technological aptitude.

DODGE

The skill offers defense against any physical attack, whether a punch, a sword, or a bullet.
Theme: Movement or perception.

ENVIRONMENT [TYPE]

A skill with the Environment trapping can be used to navigate and survive in the specified type of environment. Types can vary widely, but the most common are Wilderness (generally a temperate wilderness), for outdoorsy types, and Urban, for your average street urchin. As a Strange skill, the limits are even broader— things like Environment (Space) and Environment (Subterranean) aren't out of the question.

The skill is typically rolled against a difficulty number set by the GM to forage for food, hunt game, withstand hostile conditions, or scrounge for useful items such as herbs or the cast-off detritus of an uncaring metropolitan society. The difficulty for finding something is based off how likely it is to be found and how interesting it will be to use. The base likelihood depends on the environment and what's being looked for.

Difficulty	Likelihood	Example
+0	Likely	Wood or vine in a forest
+3	Possible	Strong wood in a swamp
+5	Unlikely	Wood in a desert
Additional +1	–	Each additional search criterion

Each qualifying criterion increases the difficulty by +1. Thus, if a character needs sticks in a forest, the difficulty is Mediocre (+0), but if he needs sticks of a certain size and strength (two criteria) the difficulty is Fair (+2). Trying to build something in the environment,

like a trap, is a use of the Craft trapping, but is modified by this skill.
Theme: Expertise in, experience with, or knowledge of the chosen environment.
Extraordinary Tier: The chosen Environment may be any type found on Earth that stretches the bounds of reality, such as parallel universe Earths or the Tunguska Dimensional Zone
Superhuman Tier (or better): The chosen Environment may be completely disconnected from Earth altogether, such as Mars, outer space, or an alternate plane of existence.

ESTEEM

The skill defends against social attacks, from slanderous rumors to embarrassing truths.
Theme: Popularity, standing in society.

EXAMINE

Examine is the trapping of sustained, intense study of a place, person, or thing. When searching for something specific, the difficulty of the skill roll should be kept at Mediocre (+0), with the shifts on the result being used as a yardstick for how long it takes to find the thing. The only exception to this is if the GM has a reason the thing in question shouldn't be found. In those situations, it's often better to just make the thing unfindable due to a critical missing piece that would "unlock" access to the otherwise unfindable objective. In these cases, don't even bother with the roll—rather, the GM should just put the character on the path to discovering that missing piece. This missing piece could be equipment, like a keycard, or the utterance of a magic password. Once that's in place, the difficulty should drop back to the usual level.

If characters are just searching an area for clues, the guidelines for Notice apply. Set the base difficulty at Mediocre (+0), and make sure that characters can find something. Once they do, the burden is on the GM to make sure that whatever they find suggests a distinct course of action.

As the GM, when in doubt about how difficult a piece of information is, aim low. The players' failure to find a clue should never derail the game. It may seem like it makes life less interesting if there is no challenge

in the skill roll, but this is one of those odd situations where that is not the case.

A lack of information is clearly frustrating to players, and if you have a player who really savors the challenge of figuring out clues, the challenge is usually less in finding the clues than in figuring out what they mean once they're found. And there's the rub: Clues don't come with explanations baked right in. Position your mystery in the clues they find, not in the clues they don't. Remember, unless there's something actually there to be found, no roll is necessary. The key is interpreting clues, not finding them.

The specifics of how this trapping works is highly dependent on context and the skill's theme. Regardless, a skill with the Examine trapping is especially well-suited to making appropriate declarations.

For example, as part of a skill themed around detective work, the character could assert minor details about a crime scene, then back them up with a successful roll.

Similarly, as part of a skill with an outdoor-survival theme, Examine could be used to track footprints. As a trapping in a skill called Mental Telepathy, it could be used in an opposed roll to read the subject's surface thoughts. And so on.

Theme: Sensory or extra-sensory perception.

GUILE

Use the Guile trapping to tell lies without getting caught. For simple deceptions, such as bluffing one's way past a guard, a simple opposed skill roll is all that is necessary. For deeper deceptions, like convincing someone of something they believe to be false, a mental conflict is appropriate, complete with attacks and Mental consequences that reflect the falsehood the target now believes.

Even the most persuasive lie can only suggest a course of action, not compel one. At best, a character can suggest that a given course of action is in the target's best interest, but even if that's convincing, some people still won't take the bait if it violates their convictions.

A skill with this trapping should never create behavior that is at odds with the basic nature of the target—an honest man won't be tricked into stealing, for example, though he may be tricked into holding stolen

goods if he has no reason to think they're stolen.

A successful lie puts the target in a position where his own nature forces the decision that the liar wanted him to make. Mechanically, this works by compelling or tagging the associated consequence. A pacifist won't kill, unless he feels he has to do so to protect something more important than his pacifism. As such, a skill with the Insight trapping is a natural complement to a skill with this trapping, to give the character an idea of how to spin things.

In any case, this is not a huge problem when the Guile trapping is used on NPCs, though under no circumstances should it become a poor man's mind control. When player characters are taken out by a Guile attack, however, it's important to remember that though they may believe something false to be true now, it should not change their essential nature.

Theme: Deception, subterfuge, social engineering.

INFLUENCE

Putting the Influence trapping on a skill enables it to be used for public attacks on a person's character—slander, libel, and all other modes of reputation-ruining. Influence attacks deal Reputation stress and Social consequences. In some respects, this trapping is very similar to the Networking trapping, in that both make use of rumors, gossip, and public perception to accomplish something. However, while Networking can be used to gather information and declare details and aspects, a skill with the Influence trapping is the character's ability to leverage her social connections to directly harm someone else's public image.

Theme: Social influence, status.

INFORMATION

This trapping lets the character answer questions related to the skill's theme. Sometimes this will mean making a skill roll to see how much information the GM is able to impart, but having the skill at all means the character is at least relatively well-versed enough in the subject matter to know something.

For example, the Academics skill has this trapping, which lets a character use it to learn information that could be gained from a formal education; a Unique skill called Underground with this trapping could be

used to gain information about people, places, things, or events related to the Underground.

When setting a difficulty for a Knowledge roll, the best yardstick is the obscurity of the knowledge sought as it relates to the relevant circle of society (i.e., if Academics, the circle will be scholars; in the case of the Underworld example above, the circle would be non-humans).

Note that despite these suggested difficulties and examples, if the GM decides that a piece of information simply can't be known, because it was never recorded or for whatever reason, not even a (+10) Academics effort can uncover it. That's what adventures are for.

Difficulty	Degree of Obscurity
Mediocre (+0)	Common knowledge ("Dr. Pangloss was a supervillain who disappeared in Ragnarok.")
Average (+1)	Widespread knowledge ("Dr. Pangloss' henchmen were a gang called the Hybrids.")
Fair (+2)	Specialized knowledge ("The Hybrids were street thugs genetically modified by Dr. Pangloss.")
Good (+3)	Esoteric knowledge ("The Hybrids had been augmented by cloned alien organs and implants.")
Great (+4)	Very esoteric knowledge ("The Hybrids are still alive and in hiding.")
Fantastic (+6)	Secret knowledge ("The Hybrids are raiding bases to find a cure.")
Legendary (+8) (E)	Private knowledge (The secret hideout of the Hybrids is in Chicago.")
Divine (+10) (S) or more	Lost knowledge ("The cure the Hybrids are looking for is in an underwater base known only to Dr. Pangloss")

Themes: Anything related to academia, the intellect, any sort of science, expertise, or formal education

INITIATIVE [SCOPE]

A skill with the Initiative trapping is used to determine order of actions in a conflict of the appropriate scope. When this trapping is purchased, choose one scope: Physical, Mental, or Social.

The highest-Tier skill with the Initiative trapping automatically acts first in a conflict of its scope. For example, if the conflict involves three characters with Initiative trappings in the Mundane Tier and one with an Initiative trapping in the Superhuman Tier, the Superhuman-Tier character will act first. In the case of multiple characters with an Initiative-trapping skill in the same Tier, make an opposed skill roll between them to determine who acts first

Theme: Sensory or extra-sensory perception of the appropriate scope.

INSIGHT+

Adding Insight to a skill lets the character use it to assess another character's aspects. This is an opposed roll vs. the Willpower trapping. Before the roll, the "attacker" states what sort of aspect she's looking for, usually by subject matter (an emotion, a relationship, the character's past, etc.). If the "attacker" gets 2 shifts or fewer, she learns an aspect of the defender's choice. If she gets 3 shifts or more, she learns the aspect that most closely matches the information she seeks. This process usually takes about Half an Hour (see the Time Table in Time and Space, page 163); by spending excess shifts, the character can reduce the time required at a rate of 1 step per shift spent (to a minimum of One Minute).

Theme: Social prowess, psychic ability.

Extraordinary Tier (or above): Mental attacks that would benefit from this skill's Insight trapping deal additional Composure stress—Weapon 1 [Composure] at Extraordinary Tier, Weapon 2 [Composure] at Superhuman Tier, and so on. This skill and the skill used to attack must be thematically related to receive this benefit. For example, a character with Empathy (S) would deal +2 Composure stress when using Intimidation.

INSPIRE

With this trapping, the skill can be used to have an emotional effect on a group of listeners. With a successful roll, the character can declare a scene aspect limited to the mood and emotional impact of his speech. The difficulty of the task starts at Good (+3) by default, and certain existing circumstances can act as penalties to the skill roll, as indicated on the table below.

An aspect put on a scene using the Inspire trapping describes its general mood, which is important to keep in mind for more than just invocations and compels. For instance, if the mood of a scene is "Somber," then that's likely to have a general effect on NPC behavior.

It's also worth remembering that the mood of a group offers a secondary opportunity for compels and other complications. If the mood of the room is somber, and a player fails to act in accordance with the mood, others will probably respond badly to them—for example, texting on a smart phone during a funeral.

Theme: Performance, wit, speechifying.

Circumstance	Notes	Mod.
Existing mood	The room has an existing mood, and you're trying to add another.	-1
Changing a mood	The room has an existing mood, and you're trying to change it	-3
Distractions	A noisy room or other activities that make it hard to focus on the performance.	-1
Major Distractions	A large, active area with many distractions that requires active effort to pay attention to the performance, such as a busy marketplace.	-3
Total Distractions	There's no reason for anyone to be paying attention to the performance, such as on a battlefield.	-5

LANGUAGES+

The character knows a number of languages (in addition to his own) equal to the skill's rating. These languages can be currently spoken, such as German or Mandarin, or dead languages, such as Sanskrit or spoken Archaic Egyptian. Normally, these languages must be from Earth, but if it suits the character's background more "exotic" languages can be chosen instead. For example, Grey aliens know their own language. The player can decide on these all at once, or define them as needed during the course of play.

Knowledge of a language also provides insight into the culture of its speakers. Gamemasters may allow characters with a language skill to connect with other speakers of the language and understand their motives.

Theme: Intellect, formal education, or wordliness.

Extraordinary Tier: The character knows an additional five languages as described above. These can be defined during play or chosen in advance.

Superhuman Tier: As the Extraordinary Tier, plus a number of "exotic" languages, such as High Aklo, Atlantean, or Grey Psi-speech, equal to the skill rating.

Ascendant Tier: The character knows all languages used on Earth, mortal or otherwise, living or dead, plus a number of exotic languages equal to the skill rating. In addition, the character may spend a Fate Point to add any language which she could've reasonably encountered to her list of known languages.

Godlike Tier: As Ascendant Tier, plus the character may spend a Fate Point to add any language to her list of known languages, even if there's no way she could've ever encountered it before.

LEAP+

A skill with the Leap trapping can be used to determine how far the character can jump. For most characters, of course, this is closely associated with the Move trapping, but it's been split off here to account for characters whose jumping prowess has nothing to do with how quickly they can cover ground. For example, a super-strong character might not be able to sprint quickly, but his inhuman muscles might enable him to leap the Grand Canyon in a single bound.

Adjudicating such leaps, though, is an odd propo-

sition. The act of jumping itself should be a complication to some other task, not the focus itself. Generally speaking, whether a jump "succeeds" should not be a binary pass/fail affair, unless there's an interesting consequence attached to failure. "Plummeting to one's death" doesn't really fall in that category—immediate, unforgiving death-by-dumb luck isn't especially interesting for the player or the story. Instead, it often makes more sense to assign that pit, chasm, or cliff a high border value to increase the cost of passing from one zone (this side) to another (that side).

If the border value is equal to or less than the rating of the skill with this trapping, the character can cross it freely. Otherwise, the character takes the difference as a penalty to her next action. See Time and Space, page 126, for more on zones and border values.

For example, let's say the character wants to jump from one rooftop to another to jump kick her enemy. Her Athletics skill (which includes the Leap trapping) is +3, but the border value between her zone (one rooftop) and her enemy's (the other rooftop) is 4. Instead of rolling Athletics to see if she can jump, she just takes an additional −1 to her attack once she gets there.

Alternately, a "failed" skill roll can be interpreted as the character's sudden realization that she just can't jump that far, so she doesn't even attempt it. In this case, a failure just means having to find another way to the other side, especially if that's where the story is.

Naturally, it's entirely possible that there's something worth seeing at the bottom of that pit, in which case it makes total sense to roll.

Here, you're rolling to see which of two possibilities the character encounters: Do they leap across the alley, or do they fall through the secret trapdoor in the street below?

Theme: Movement, athleticism, or physical strength.

Extraordinary Tier (or better): The character's ability to Leap is so impressive that he can cover great distances in the blink of an eye. For each Power Tier above Mundane, the character can move 1 zone as a Free Action, or ignore the equivalent border value between zones (border value of 1 at Extraordinary, 2 at Superhuman, etc.).

MENACE

The Menace trapping covers mental attacks, such as fear or intimidation. This is usually done as an opposed skill roll (versus a skill with the Willpower trapping). However, these things don't occur in a vacuum—the target must have a reason to believe that the character is capable of harming them. If this isn't the case, and the attacker is outnumbered, imprisoned, bound to a chair, or at a similar disadvantage, the defender receives a +2 bonus to his skill roll.

As an attack, successful use of the Menace trapping inflicts Composure stress and Mental consequences. The trapping can also be used to perform an aspect maneuver on the defender.

Theme: Fear, intimidation, appropriate brands of social prowess.

MINIONS+

A skill with this trapping can be used to call forth allies of some kind—an entourage, bodyguards, supernatural entities, or whatever else is appropriate to the skill's theme. By default, these allies must contacted by ordinary means, such as a text or a tweet, and arrive under their own power by conventional means.

In some cases, this may preclude their arrival altogether, such as if you're trapped in a prison with no way to contact the outside world. To alter any of these parameters, take the Unusual Extra, once for each alteration (see Extras and Drawbacks).

With a Fate Point and proper justification, the Minions can arrive more quickly than would otherwise be considered reasonable. Perhaps your operatives were already on the scene, blending with the crowd until needed, or maybe that crate over there just happens to contain a half-dozen of your Reaper Deathbots, waiting to be shipped out.

Regardless, Minions cannot be called more than once per scene, and the allies generated by it disperse or disappear, as appropriate, once the scene is through.

Roll the skill against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0), and spend the shifts obtained to produce your Minions. An Average-quality Minion ally costs 1 shift, a Fair-quality Minion ally costs 3 shifts, and a Good-quality Minion ally costs 5 shifts. All Minions must be of the same quality.

For 2 skill points, you get Simple Minions. Instead of giving them skills, simply assign scopes, Physical,

Mental, or Social, according to their intended purpose within the scene. Treat the scope as a broad skill that covers a variety of mundane functions.

An Average Minion has one scope at +1, a Fair Minion has one scope at +2 and one scope at +1, and a Good Minion has one scope at +3, one at +2, and one at +1. For twice the cost, 4 skill points, the character can call on Advanced Minions. These Minions can have full skill pyramids of one, three, or six skills: one Average (+1) skill for Average-quality Minions, two Average (+1) skills and one Fair (+2) skill for Fair-quality Minions, and so on, using skills instead of scopes. Advanced Minions are more customizable, but also require more attention from the player to implement.

See Playing the Opposition in Chapter 177: Running the Game for more information on Minions.

Minions cannot take consequences—once their stress track is exceeded, they're Taken Out. For a specific ally, such as an assistant or valet, use the Companion Gift (see Gifts).

Theme: Authority within an organization, social connections, sorcery.

Superhuman Tier: By rolling the skill against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0) (S), one of the Minions' scopes or skills can be upgraded to the Extraordinary Tier.

Ascendant Tier: As Superhuman Tier, but roll against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0) (A) to upgrade one of the Minions' scopes or skills to the Superhuman Tier, or two scopes or skills to the Extraordinary Tier.

Godlike Tier: As Superhuman Tier, but roll against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0) (G) to upgrade one of the Minions' scopes or skills to the Ascendant Tier, one scope or skill to the Superhuman Tier and one other to the Extraordinary Tier, or three scopes or skills to the Extraordinary Tier.

A specialized form of this trapping, Duplicates, can be used to create clones or identical copies of oneself. See below for details.

Duplicates

This is a specialized form of the Minions trapping, one that can only be used to create copies of the character. The duplicates arrive instantly, however they're created; for "slower" duplicates, take a Flaw to that effect. Roll the skill against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0), and spend shifts obtained to create duplicates. An Average-quality duplicate costs 1 shift, a Fair-quality duplicate costs 3 shifts, and a Good-quality duplicate costs

5 shifts.

All duplicates must be of the same quality. The duplicates have one skill per rating available, as per their quality (for example, a Fair duplicate has one +2 skill and one +1 skill). Only Strange skills can have this trapping, and no duplicate can have a skill with the Duplicates trapping.

A duplicate's skills are limited to those belonging to the character, and no duplicate can have a skill rated higher than the character's equivalent skill.

For duplicates that are radically different from the character, such as past and future versions of the same person, or duplicates called forth from alternate dimensions, use the Minions trapping instead.

Theme: Duplication, super-mitosis, space-time control.

MOVE+

Use Move to determine how quickly or well a character can cover ground. By default, the mode of movement is walking or running. To change that to some other, weirder form of movement—flying, tunneling, etc.—use the Unusual Extra (see Extras and Drawbacks). Under normal circumstances, a character can move 1 zone as a supplemental action. See the Climb and Leap trappings for details on negotiating border values between zones.

Alternately, the skill can reflect the character's ability to operate a vehicle, such as a car, spaceship, giant robot, or magical carpet, or ride an animal, such as a horse or camel.

Though these modes of transport obviously offer some advantages over walking or running, they're balanced (more or less) by the fact that they require specialized, expensive equipment, and/or animals, to use.

A character who takes the Move trapping as part of such a skill automatically has (or has access to) an appropriate vehicle, as long as that vehicle's cost (see Wealth, page 134) is equal to or less than the skill's rating.

Theme: Movement, obviously—although how that movement is achieved, whether via muscle power or telekinetic flight or a vehicle, is wide open.

Extraordinary Tier (or better): The character's ability to Move is so impressive that he can cover great distances in the blink of an eye. For each Power Tier

above Mundane, the character can move 1 zone as a Free Action (1 zone at Extraordinary, 2 at Superhuman, etc.).

NETWORKING+

With the Networking trapping, the skill can be used to take advantage of a character's social contacts for the purposes of gathering information and spreading rumors. The extent of this, however, is limited by the character's aspects. Before rolling the skill, the player must cite (but not invoke) an aspect related to his social contacts.

At the bare minimum, every character should be able to cite his Background aspect to rely on people he may know in his immediate social circle, or his Archetype aspect. The aspect chosen will color the information received and limit its extent.

For example, using this trapping with the Human Background aspect is unlikely to be useful (or at least reliable) if attempting to learn information or rumors about aliens. In a way, Networking is the social equivalent of the Information trapping.

The process begins with a question—say, "Who's trying to kill me?" The player then describes where her character is going to talk to folks (usually "the street" or "the local bar" or something else appropriate to the cited aspect), the GM sets the difficulty, and the player rolls her skill. If the skill roll fails, then the player can retroactively improve her roll by taking more time (see the Time Table, page 163). This takes an afternoon by default, and a +1 can be added to the roll for every additional step taken on the Time Table, up to +4 for four steps.

Regardless, a successful roll should always result in a clear course of action. If the character is being "shut out" for one reason or another, no amount of dogged persistence through time investment is going to help. When that happens, it usually means there's another problem the character needs to solve first.

Note that being the most informed guy and knowing all the latest gossip aren't necessarily one and the same. Networking finds out what people know—and people always have their own biases and misconceptions.

It rarely indicates the veracity of the information provided, save by the discovery that contradictory answers are coming from different sources. If a character wants to separate truth from lies, that's a more in-depth conversation, and may involve other skills.

Networking also keeps the character apprised of the general state of things, and acts as a sort of social Notice. It's far from foolproof, and the GM is usually the one to call for a roll. A player can't generally go out looking for a tip off, though he can tell the GM he's going out talking to his contacts "just to check" on what's up, which is a good hint that he'd like a tip off. If the resulting skill roll is at least a +0, the character catches wind of an interesting rumor. At +3, and every two shifts over that, the character learns an additional rumor, or more information on a previous rumor.

For example, at +0 the character may learn that a mutant with blue skin has been asking questions about him; at +3, the character may also learn that the mutant in question had teleportation powers.

This trapping is also useful for planting rumors in addition to ferreting them out. The player simply tells the GM what rumor he wants to plant and rolls the skill with the Networking trapping.

If the subject of the rumor is a person, it's an opposed roll between the rumor-spreader and the target. If the subject of the rumor is something more general, such as "I hear Freddy the dealer is a snitch for the feds," then the GM can use the standard declaration rules (see Aspects). The pervasiveness of the rumor depends on how many shifts are obtained on the roll, according to the table below.

The final effort is also the target for someone else's Networking roll to find out who's been spreading rumors, refute a rumor, or replace a rumor with another. When a player plants a rumor, the GM should consider it a mental bookmark.

Assuming anything but a terrible roll, that rumor should resurface later in the game. What form it takes depends on the player's roll.

Theme: Social connections or politics, as per at least one of the character's aspects.

Extraordinary Tier (or above): Social attacks that would benefit from this skill's Networking trapping deal additional Reputation stress—Weapon 1 [Reputation] at Extraordinary Tier, Weapon 2 [Reputation] at Superhuman Tier, and so on.

This skill and the skill used to attack must be thematically related to receive this benefit. For example, a character with Contacting (S) would deal +2 Reputation stress when using a skill with the Influence trapping.

Rumor Planting Table	
Shifts Obtained	**Result**
0-2	The rumor earns passing mention (a fragile aspect).
3-5	Other people are passing around the rumor, maybe even back to the original character (a sticky aspect).
6-7	The rumor has spread far enough that someone (presumably the target) will do something in response to it.
8+	The rumor has spawned a number of alternate or embellished versions as well, all with the same thread running through them. Additional shifts may be used to speed up the rate at which the rumor spreads or help conceal who started it in the first place.

NOTICE+

This trapping measures the character's passive level of perception. This includes spotting things without actively looking for them, such as a concealed door, an easily missed clue, or an assassin about to strike. (If the character is actively looking for something, use the Examine trapping.)

The GM usually sets a difficulty for the Notice roll, and should provide an additional piece of information for every two shifts achieved. Whenever ambushed (see the Hide and Stealth trappings), a character may make one last Notice roll opposed by the attacker's Stealth trapping, whichever is appropriate, to see if he's actually surprised.

If the roll succeeds, the character may use a skill to defend, with a -2 penalty on the roll. If the Notice roll fails, the character's defense is +0.

Theme: Sensory or extra-sensory perception.
Extraordinary Tier (or better): The character's senses are so keen that she can defend normally even when surprised.

PARRY+

The skill offers defense against melee attacks. Unarmed characters can attempt to parry weapons, but the gamemaster should use discretion. Parrying a knife with a hand should still inflict stress or consequences, for example.

Characters may parry ranged weapons if they have an appropriate object to block the attack. A magical shield can be used to parry thrown knives, for example.

Extraordinary Tier (or above): The character may parry attacks that are not normally blockable, such as bullets or lightning bolts. The character must still be aware of the attack to block it. The gamemaster has final say whether a particular attack can be parried.
Theme: Fighting ability, defense, or perception.

PHYSICAL FORCE+

The skill measures the character's ability to exert physical force on an object. The source could be sheer muscle power, an exoskeletal suit of armor, telekinesis, or whatever else makes sense with the skill's theme.

Characters have a default amount of weight they can lift or carry. Find the Power Tier of the skill with Physical Force, then compare that to the skill's rating. That's the maximum the character can lift and carefully handle or, if the skill's theme is related to the character's actual physical capability, move slowly with. If purely lifting without moving, treat the skill as if it were 2 steps higher. A character carrying something 4 steps below their listed maximum can move freely, but suffers a -1 to all physical actions for every weight increment over that. If the weight of the object is listed in a Tier below that of the character's skill, it can be carried freely and without penalty. If aided by equipment such as a pulley system, the character's Physical Force can be improved by as much as one Tier, at the GM's discretion.

This may seem like an awfully numbers-heavy approach for a game that generally shies away from such things, but when it comes to character strength,

people generally like to have benchmarks. Plus, the weight a character can lift is a pretty accessible way to get a feel for how strong they are. At a +0 difficulty, a character can lift a medium-sized adult in the Mundane Tier, a large Siberian tiger in the Extraordinary Tier, a killer whale in the Superhuman Tier, a city bus in the Ascendant Tier, and a skyscraper sized giant robot in the Godlike Tier. (Obviously, things get a little ridiculous for Physical Force in the Godlike Tier, but that's why it's called Godlike.)

To determine how far a character can throw something (or someone), roll your Physical Force against the rating (in the left-most column of the table below) of the object's weight. Successfully throwing the object 1 zone requires spending 1 shift plus a number of shifts equal to the object's Weight Factor (WF). The WF of a row remains the same regardless of the Tier. In other words, a 400-pound object has a WF of 3, as does a 1,500-pound object and a 32-ton object. (The difference is that throwing an object of a lower Tier lets the player swap out Fudge dice for d6s.) Every additional zone costs as many shifts as the previous one did, plus one, so it gets progressively harder to throw an object multiple zones. In no case can a character lift, carry, or throw an object whose weight is above the maximum for the skill's Tier.

If throwing an object whose weight is in the Mundane column using a skill whose Power Tier is higher than Mundane, treat it as if you were rolling against an opponent's Mundane skill.

For example, a character with Good (+3) Physical Force (Mundane) can lift and carry a 50-pound object without penalty, or a medium-sized adult (150 pounds) at a -1 penalty to his physical actions. He can lift and stagger around with a 300-pound object at a -4 penalty to physical actions, and if he's just lifting something without moving (for instance, lifting a heavy gate), his maximum lift is 400 pounds, but he can't maintain that for long. He can try to lift something heavier by making a Physical Force roll, but under no circumstances can he even attempt to lift something heavier than 800 pounds unaided. If he wanted to throw a 50-pound sack of flour 2 zones, he'd need to make a Physical Force roll against a difficulty of -1 and get at least 4 shifts (1 for the object's weight, +1 for the first zone, and +2 for the second zone)—a total of +3.

If the character's Physical Force were instead Good

(+3) (E), carrying 400 pounds would be only a -1 penalty to his physical actions. Throwing that sack of flour two zones would still require at least a +3, but now he gets to roll 3dF+1d6 instead of just 4dF. Needless to say, if he wants to throw it a little farther, odds are good that he can do it.

Theme: Strength or physicality. If a Strange skill, themes like psychic ability or elemental control are also options.

Extraordinary Tier (or above): Physical attacks, armed or unarmed, that would benefit from this skill's Physical Force trapping have Weapon 1 per Tier over Mundane— Weapon 1 [Health] at Extraordinary Tier, Weapon 2 [Health] at Superhuman Tier, and so on. This skill and the skill used to attack must be thematically related to receive this benefit. For example, a character with Might (S) would deal +2 Health stress when using Unarmed, but not Firearms or Strange skills such as Telekinesis or Earth Control.

REPAIR

A skill with the Repair trapping can be used to fix technological devices, given the right tools and enough time. For devices with stress tracks, the difficulty is equal to the quality of the device. It takes a Few Hours to remove stress or a Minor consequence, a Day for a Moderate consequence, and a Week for a Severe consequence. For devices that don't have stress tracks or consequences, the difficulty is based on the monetary value of the device (see the Wealth trapping) or its quality (see the Craft trapping), whichever is higher.

Failure on a repair roll can be made up in a few ways, retroactively. First, each additional step longer on the Time Table (page 163) gives a retroactive +1 to the player's roll, up to a maximum of +4 for four steps on the table. Second, the device can be repaired within the usual time frame, but the quality drops by one for every point shy of the target. Both methods may be combined; for example, a character can get a retroactive +3 to take two steps longer and drop the quality of the item by one. Degradation in item quality may mean that some of its special abilities are lost, if it has any. Subsequent efforts may be made to restore the item to its original quality, but those face a difficulty equal to the target quality, +1 for every two steps the current quality is below the target. Missing a restoration roll

Physical Force	Weight Factor	Mundane Tier	Extraordinary Tier	Superhuman Tier	Ascendant Tier	Godlike Tier
-2	0	10 lbs.	100 lbs.	1,000 lbs.	8 tons	250 tons
-1	1	50 lbs.	200 lbs.	1,500 lbs.	16 tons	500 tons
+0	1	150 lbs.	400 lbs.	1 ton	32 tons	1,000 tons
+1	1	200 lbs.	600 lbs.	2 tons	64 tons	2,000 tons
+2	2	250 lbs.	800 lbs.	4 tons	125 tons	4,000 tons
+3	2	300 lbs.	1,000 lbs.	8 tons	250 tons	8,000 tons
+4	3	350 lbs.	1,250 lbs.	16 tons	500 tons	16,000 tons
+5	3	400 lbs.	1,500 lbs.	32 tons	1,000 tons	32,000 tons
+6	4	450 lbs.	1,750 lbs.	64 tons	2,000 tons	64,000 tons
+7	4	500 lbs.	2,000 lbs.	125 tons	4,000 tons	125,000 tons
+8	5	600 lbs.	2,250 lbs.	250 tons	8,000 tons	250,000 tons
+9	5	700 lbs.	2,500 lbs.	500 tons	16,000 tons	500,000 tons
+10	6	800 lbs.	5,000 lbs.	1,000 tons	32,000 tons	1M tons

can only be made up by investing time, and the starting length of time on such efforts is usually a week.

If the GM agrees to it, a player may make a partial repair when falling just short of the target. In these cases, the consequence on the device being repaired is downgraded in severity, rather than being entirely removed. If the character misses the roll by one, he may opt to downgrade the consequence, regardless of its severity, to Minor. If the character misses the roll by two, he may opt to downgrade the consequence one step, taking Severe to Moderate and Moderate to Minor. If the consequence is Minor in any of these cases, it is removed, but the device's appropriate stress track is filled.

Given a sufficient Workspace, the skill can be used to Repair devices whose Power Tier is at or below its own. For example, a Superhuman Tier skill with this trapping could fix Extraordinary or Superhuman Tier devices.
Theme: Mechanical aptitude.

RESEARCH

Used in conjunction with Information, this trapping lets the character take advantage of an appropriate Workspace, such as a library or laboratory, to aid in a skill roll to learn about the topic at hand. Where Information represents immediately accessible knowledge stored in the character's head, Research is knowledge gained from a more methodical approach. To use Research, take the margin of failure on an unsuccessful Information roll. This is the number of steps up on the Time Table (page 163) the character may take to turn that failure into a success. It's up to the GM to determine the default time required to conduct Research, but a good rule of thumb is Half an Hour.

The maximum obscurity of the information that can be obtained from a Workspace trapping is equal to its quality. See the Workspace trapping for more detail.
Theme: Anything related to academia, the intellect, any sort of science, expertise, or formal education.

RESIST DAMAGE

The Resist Damage trapping allows the skill to be used to defend against a physical attack not by avoiding the blow, but by being tough enough to just take it. However, this is only effective if the attacker's intent is to deal Health stress to the defender. Otherwise, treat the skill as if it had a rating +0 in the Mundane Tier.

For example, if the attacker throws a dart at the defender, Resist Damage can be used to negate taking damage from the hit, but not to avoid the hit. If the dart actually conceals a homing beacon or a hallucinogenic poison, this trapping will not prevent the dart from finding its mark, or the poison from taking effect.

However, some gamemasters may rule that a good roll means that the dart fails to penetrate the skin and thus deliver the poison.

Theme: Physical toughness or strength.

SECURITY

The Security trapping is used to overcome or evaluate security systems, such as locks, tripwire alarms, or a deadfall trigged by a spring-loaded pressure plate. If multiple obstacles of this nature are encountered in the course of an infiltration attempt, all of them can be rolled into a single skill roll, or, if the infiltration itself is an important part of the story, they can each be treated individually, requiring a series of skill rolls to defeat.

The difficulty of any such roll can be estimated according to the table below, or set by the skill roll of whoever set up the security measures in the first place, as the GM desires.

Most security measures require tools of some kind to disable, from ordinary lockpicks to more exotic implements for sophisticated safes or electronic sensors. Improvised tools, such as picking a lock with a bent piece of found wire, imposes a -2 penalty. Lacking any such tools doubles that penalty to -4, assuming the task can even be attempted at all.

As a rule of thumb, the default time required to defeat a Fair (+2) security measure is Half an Hour (see the Time Table, page 163), stepped up or down depending on the difficulty of the task. For example, the default time required to pick a lock of Average (+1) difficulty would be 15 Minutes, while cracking a safe of Good (+3) difficulty would default to An Hour. Shifts obtained on the roll can be spent to speed the process up at a rate of one step down on the Time Table per shift spent, to a maximum of 4 steps. Likewise, a failed roll can be mitigated by taking more time than the default, to a maximum for +4 to the result for 4 steps up on the Time Table.

The Security trapping is a good one to use for declarations and assessments when casing a potential target or anticipating the strengths or weaknesses of a security system.

This trapping focuses on human-built security systems, and many traps and alarms in bases are unique in nature. Very exotic traps and locks can only be analyzed and disarmed by other skills. For example,

a magical ward needs the Arcana skill, not Security. However, the gamemaster may allow a character to understand some parts of an exotic trap through a successful skill test. The character may not be able to read the ward, but realizes it is triggered by crossing the threshold of the door.

Theme: Crime or law enforcement.

Difficulty	Example
Mediocre (+0)	A locked desk drawer, a bicycle lock
Average (+1)	A securely locked middle class home with a burglar alarm
Fair (+2)	A hotel safe
Good (+3)	The door of a county jail cell
Great (+4)	A high grade security door, a typical safe
Fantastic (+6)	Average security door for a superhero base
Legendary (+8)	Dr. Pangloss' bio-engineered Smart Door - a robotic door with organic brain and linked plasma cannons

SHOOT

As Strike, but with the advantage of range—by default, the skill can be used against targets one zone away. For more distant attacks, use the Range Extra (see Extras and Drawbacks).

Unless the character has a natural ranged attack, a character needs a weapon like a firearm or plasma cannon in order to use this trapping.

Theme: Offense.

STEALTH+

A skill with the Stealth trapping is one of not being seen (or heard). Lighting, obstacles, and other environmental factors can affect the player's roll, and the result of the skill roll is the difficulty for the searcher to find her (using a skill with either the Notice trapping or the Examine trapping). When someone is searching you can usually assume they'll do logical things like turn on the lights and check behind the curtains. Assuming

such action is possible, the searcher receives a +2 bonus to his skill roll. This means that if a stealthy character is ever in a position where people are actively searching for her, she's in a lot of trouble. That usually requires that the character was spotted or somehow set off an alarm—which, if she's doing her job, she wasn't, and didn't.

For example, consider a character hiding in a storeroom. If a guard opens the door, shines a flashlight in, and looks around, it's just a quick skill roll (reason, perhaps, but not time), and the character can probably stay hidden. If the guard brings in several other guards and they all start methodically going through the room, hiding is much more difficult—they've imposed some penalties, and they have both reason and time.

The good news is that this sort of searching is usually obvious, so when the guards start looking, it's the player's cue to act now or give up her chance at surprise.

Environmental conditions can have a significant effect on a character's ability to hide and remain hidden, as shown on the table below.

Mod.	Environment
+4	Pitch black, no visibility
+2	Darkness, smoke, thick fog, no clear line of sight
+1	Noisy distractions
+0	Bad lighting, poor line of sight, some noise
-1	Complete silence
-2	Good lighting, clear line of sight
-4	Bright lighting, clear area

If you're not certain how to handle something, treat it as a half step. For example, if a character is hiding in the dark from guards holding torches, reduce the bonus to only +1.

Theme: Stealth, subterfuge, environmental familiarity.
Extraordinary Tier: The character may move 1 additional zone without automatically giving herself away.
Superhuman Tier (or better): The character may move any number of zones without affecting her ability to remain unseen.
Theme: Skulking, subterfuge, environmental familiarity.

STRESS CAPACITY [SCOPE]+

The Stress Capacity trapping modifies one of a character's stress tracks. Pick one when this trapping is chosen: Stress Capacity [Health], Stress Capacity [Composure], or Stress Capacity [Reputation].

The effect of the trapping depends on the rating of the skill: one additional stress box if the skill's rating is Average (+1), two additional boxes if it's Fair (+2) or Good (+3), and three more boxes if the skill's rating is Great (+4).

A skill with this trapping can also act as a limiting skill for long-term activity within its scope. See Chapter 8: Running The Game for more on limiting, modifying, and complementary skills.

Theme: Toughness, hardiness, or resilience appropriate to the scope of the trapping.
Extraordinary Tier: The skill provides Armor 1 for the chosen scope.
Superhuman Tier: The skill provides Armor 2 for the chosen scope. Additionally, the character can withstand an additional Minor consequence of the chosen scope.
Ascendant Tier: The skill provides Armor 3 for the chosen scope. Moreover, the character can withstand an additional Minor consequence of the chosen scope, and once per scene the character may clear a Minor Consequence of the chosen scope as a free action.
Godlike Tier: As Ascendant Tier, but the skill provides Armor 4 for the chosen scope.

The character also receives one additional Moderate Consequence slot of the chosen scope.

STRIKE

The skill can be used to cause physical harm to others in a manner consistent with its theme. For example, as part of the Common skill Melee, the Strike trapping is used to attack with weaponry, while as part of the Unarmed Common skill it's about slugging your foe with your bare hands or feet. All martial arts use this trapping.

Strike can only be used against individuals in the same zone as the character. For ranged offense, see Shoot.

Theme: Offense, Martial Arts.

TRANSPORT

A skill with this trapping is used to operate a mode of transportation, such as a horse, car, plane, or giant robot. The exact form of transportation this applies to depends on the skill's theme, but in general it should fall into one (and only one) of five broad categories: animal riding, cars, watercraft, aircraft or robot.

Normally, the skill only needs to be rolled when taking a risk, such as driving at top speed through a crowded street, engaging in a chase, attempting a dangerous maneuver, running someone down, and so on. Otherwise, merely having a rated skill with this trapping is enough for competent, safe operation.

When a skill roll is required, however, it's generally made in conjunction with one of the animal's or vehicle's skills, such as Gallop or Handling. If rolling against a static difficulty number, look at each skill roll individually. If both succeed, the action is a success. If only the character's roll succeeds, the animal or vehicle takes Health stress equal to its margin of failure. If both rolls fail, things are bad; see Chapter 8 on page 164 for more detailed information.

When using this skill to cover ground, a successful roll only indicates safe operation. Use the animal or vehicle's roll to determine how many zones are moved. No matter how good the rider, driver, or pilot, an animal or vehicle can only move as fast as it can move. To simulate pushing beyond its normal limits, put an aspect on the animal or vehicle using an aspect maneuver.

In a conflict, this trapping can be used to both attack and defend, although the animal's or vehicle's skills may have an effect as well.

Theme: Animal riding, vehicle operation.

TREATMENT [SCOPE]+

Treatment is the trapping of making things better—the "meat" version of the Repair trapping. Depending on the scope chosen, the skill can be used in a medical capacity to treat injury, disease, poison, and so forth (the Physical scope), or it can be used to alleviate fear and restore confidence (the Mental scope), or repair a damaged reputation (the Social scope). In game terms, this means clearing stress boxes and consequences.

The difficulty involved depends on the severity of the situation. To clear stress boxes, roll this skill against a difficulty equal to the highest stress box filled; for every 2 shifts obtained, clear one stress box. Removing a Minor consequence has a difficulty of Fair (+2). Reducing (not removing) a Moderate consequence to Minor, assuming the "patient" has a Minor consequence slot to spare, has a difficulty of Great (+4). If this roll obtains spin , the consequence is removed altogether. Severe consequences cannot be removed with Treatment—only time.

This trapping should generally represent a "downtime" use of the skill, as opposed to something the character can do in the heat of the moment or the press of battle. Clearing stress and Minor consequences is the exception to this—think of it as the first aid equivalent of the chosen scope—but this cannot be attempted more than once per character per scene.

Treating a Moderate consequence may, depending on circumstance, require a Workspace, or at least the proper environment. For example, removing a Moderate Physical consequence may necessitate medical equipment, while a couple hours down at the local may be just the thing to clear a Moderate Mental consequence.

Theme: Varies widely, depending on the chosen scope, but in general the theme should be able to comfortably cover reducing trauma or injury in yourself or others.

Extraordinary Tier: Ordinarily, attempting to reduce or remove a Moderate consequence is something that has to take place outside of a conflict situation. For you, this is not the case. If the consequence is within the scope of this trapping, you may make a roll against an Extraordinary Tier target of Great (+4). On a success, the consequence is reduced to Minor (assuming the character has an open Minor consequence slot of the appropriate scope). If the roll obtains spin, the consequence is removed altogether.

Superhuman Tier: As Extraordinary Tier, plus you can also attempt to clear a Severe consequence within the trapping's scope. If it's a Physical consequence, the patient's body must be intact. Make a skill roll against a Superhuman Tier target of Fantastic (+6). On a success, the consequence is reduced one degree of severity, and with spin it's reduced by two degrees of severity.

Regardless, the patient must immediately change

one of his Personal aspects to reflect the indelible mark the trauma has left on him.

Ascendant Tier: As Superhuman Tier, except you can also reattach limbs, restore organs, and the like if the trapping's scope is Physical. Make a skill roll against an Ascendant Tier target of Legendary (+8). On a success, the consequence is reduced one degree of severity, and with spin it's reduced by two degrees of severity. Again, the patient must still immediately change one of his Personal aspects as a reminder of the experience.

Godlike Tier: As Ascendant Tier, plus you can attempt to revive the dead—that is, a character whose Taken Out condition was death. Make a skill roll against a Godlike Tier target of Divine (+10). On a success, the patient is immediately brought back to life, but must re-write a Conviction or Complication aspect to reflect the profundity of the experience. On a failure, the patient is still dead, and another revivification cannot be attempted until sufficient time has passed. (The default is A Day, plus one step on the Time Table for every point by which the roll failed.) You may use aspects to grant a bonus to this roll. The GM may lower the difficulty of the roll under certain circumstances.

This process does not remove any of the patient's consequences or stress he may have had when he died. Normally, this requires that the patient's complete corpse be present (though not necessarily intact). If the GM deems the circumstances appropriate—for example, if the character has a Magical Being aspect of "Reincarnated Goddess of Life"— an attempt may be made without the body at a -4 penalty to the roll. Treat a success as described above, but the character's body arrives (somehow) naked as the day she was born.

VARIABLE [FREQUENCY]

Some skills are just so broad that they defy precise definition, such as Spell Sorcery or Shapeshifting. For these skills, there's the Variable trapping. A Variable trapping can be used to replicate any other trapping or Extra on the fly, as decided by the player during the course of play. The specifics, however, must fit within the skill's theme.

For example, a Variable trapping in a Strange skill called Psychic Constructs could be used to create a psychic sword (the Strike trapping) or shield (the Parry trapping), or even a psychic motorcycle (the Move trapping). But it couldn't be used to duplicate the effects of the Conversation trapping, or the Willpower trapping, because those trappings simply don't make sense in the context of the skill's theme.

A Variable trapping that can be defined anew once per scene costs 4 skill points to add to a skill, while one that can only be defined once per session only costs 2 skill points.

When replicating another trapping or Extra, the number of skill points it would cost to add the trapping or Extra to the skill is the number of Variable trappings you'll need for the job.

For example, duplicating the effects of the Shoot trapping (2 skill points) would require two Variable trappings; tacking on the Zone Extra (also 2 skill points) would require another two Variable trappings. Once a Variable trapping is committed to creating an effect, it can't be used to create anything else until the next scene or session.

Variable is not a when-in-doubt trapping—it's a there's-no-other-way trapping.

Theme: Versatility, such as shapeshifting, magic, or impressively eclectic training.

Extraordinary Tier (or better): If the Variable trapping is duplicating as a skill with a Tier-dependent benefit, such as Physical Force, then the Variable trapping provides that benefit as well.

WEALTH

The Wealth trapping measures the character's available funds, whether that's a few bucks in her pocket, a well-endowed trust fund, or a sizable investment in a successful Internet startup. Usually, a skill with this trapping serves to passively inform the GM about what the character has at her disposal, but may still be rolled for large expenditures, like purchases and bribes.

Some large-scale conflicts may be about trying to out-spend the other guy; here, the skill can be used to attack or defend. Wealth-based attacks deal Reputation stress and Social consequences.

In terms of background and the Wealth trapping, members of the lower class have a Mediocre (+0) income, while the middle class is at Average (+1), the upper middle class is at Fair (+2), and the lifestyle of

the 1% is at least Good (+3), if not somewhere in the Extraordinary Tier. Consumer goods (up to the cost of a new car) are rated at +4 or lower. The GM sets price based on current availability. Higher price items are set at the (E) power tier or above.

Consequences and aspects may affect Wealth, especially ones connected to the character's reputation. A character who takes a consequence to avoid Reputation stress may find it harder to use Wealth to solve problems. For example, a character with the consequence "rumored to be a drug dealer" will have a great deal of difficulty when trying to buy property or invest in a business.

A character can easily afford anything with a rating 2 steps below his skill, and anything 1 step below his skill with a minimum of fuss. Anything with a rating equal to or greater than your skill, however, will require a roll. If successful, the item is obtained; if not, it isn't. Only one such skill roll can be made per scene.

Note, however, that this trapping is less about buying things than it is about leveraging your personal assets to solve problems. If the players are spending a bunch of time shopping, things aren't dangerous enough.

If knowledge of the character's wealth would affect a situation, the skill with this trapping may modify whatever other skill is being used, either positive or negative. (And if you don't believe that having a lot of money can negatively affect a situation, you've never applied for a student loan.)
Theme: Status, social connections, livelihood.

WILLPOWER

Use a skill with the Willpower trapping to defend against attempts to get inside the character's head and attacks against Composure. This includes the menace trapping, fear, intimidation, and mesmerism, and efforts to assess the character's aspects. Characters use Willpower to resist traumatic and sanity-draining encounters.

In addition, this trapping is also used to resist supernatural or psychic attacks against the character's psyche, such as mind control, possession, emotion control or telepathy.
Theme: Discipline, self-control, social prowess.

WORKSPACE+

Workspaces are environments where a character can perform a certain type of work, such as a library, laboratory, studio, hackerspace, workshop, and so forth. Attaching the Workspace trapping to a skill provides the character with such a facility of a quality equal to the skill's rating.

This trapping isn't so much about a character's ability to use such a facility—that's better represented by the Research, Craft, and Repair trappings—but about his easy access to, and the utility of, such a facility. If coupled with the Wealth trapping, the workspace in question is likely owned by the character; otherwise, it's probably just one that he can reliably use.

The quality of a workspace limits the obscurity of information that can be found there (see the Information trapping), or the quality of devices that can be made or fixed there (see the Craft and Repair trappings), depending on the skill's theme. Also see the Device Flaw for more on skills-as-equipment.
Theme: Academia, expertise, formal education, technological or scientific aptitude, personal wealth.
Extraordinary Tier (or better): The workspace can be used to make, fix, or improve works equal to or less than the skill's Power Tier, and relevant to its theme. For example, an Extraordinary Tier laboratory can be used to make or repair Mundane or Extraordinary Tier scientific devices.

EXTRAS AND DRAWBACKS

Trappings paint a Unique skill in broad strokes, but Extras and Drawbacks fill in the details and help bring it to life. Extras are a trapping's refinements and add to its total value.

Extras

PSYCHIC (+1 SKILL POINT)

The trapping works through sheer Strange mental ability. With this Extra, Social trappings don't require any

actual interaction between the character and the target as long as they're in range, and Perception trappings don't rely on ordinary human senses.

For example, a clairvoyance themed Strange skill with Examine + Psychic would ignore any penalties due to poor visibility, but still be subject to whatever "psychic" penalties due to environment or circumstance the GM might see fit to impose. (This is highly dependent on context, though: If the skill's theme were telepathy instead of clairvoyance, Examine + Psychic would let the character read minds, not view an area remotely.)

The Psychic Extra removes the need for physical exertion implicitly required by trappings such as Dismantle or Physical Force. Even a character restrained by chains and a padlock could use Security + Psychic, for example, to pick the lock and free himself. When attached to trappings like Disguise and Hide, Psychic represents a forcible change in the observer's perception as opposed to a physical transformation. Observers without "minds," such as robotic drones, would therefore remain unaffected.

A skill with Convince + Psychic can be used to simulate mind control. Make an aspect maneuver against the target, using the standard rules for aspect maneuvers. If successful, put an aspect like "Under My Control" on the target. Your total effort on this roll is the difficulty for the target to remove the aspect (with an aspect maneuver of their own) and break free of your control.

Until then, you can invoke the aspect for effect to control the target. The first tag's free, as usual, but after that it'll cost a Fate Point each time— paid to the target. This is expensive, of course, but no one ever said controlling minds would be easy.

It's up to the GM and player to determine what narrative effect the Psychic Extra might have as part of any other trappings. For instance, Minions + Psychic could mean servile psychokinetic constructs, or it could simply remove the need to contact your Minions by conventional means: Instead of sending a text, you send a telepathic message.

If one of a skill's trappings has the Psychic Extra, every trapping under that skill must also have it. In other words, a skill can't be just partially Psychic—it's all or nothing.

EXAMPLES: Telepathy (Conversation + Psychic),

Mind Reading (Insight + Psychic), Psychic Persuasion (Convince + Psychic), Mind Blast (Menace + Psychic), Mental Illusions (Disguise + Unusual: Illusion + Range + Psychic).

Extras Summary Table

Name	Cost	Description
Psychic	+1	The trapping operates via supernatural mental ability.
Range	+1	The trapping's effective range increases.
Spray	+1	The trapping affects multiple targets in the same zone simultaneously.
Unusual	+1	The trapping operates by some non-standard principle appropriate to the skill's theme.
Zone	+2	The trapping affects all targets in a zone simultaneously (and indiscriminately).

RANGE (+1 SKILL POINT)

The trapping's effective range increases. If it's a trapping that normally only affects the user, like Disguise, the Range Extra turns the skill into one that affects other targets, as long as they're in the same zone as the character. If the trapping normally only affects the character who uses it, such as Disguise, it can be applied to a target within the same zone.

If the trapping is normally used against other targets but has no inherent range, such as Strike, it gains a range of 1 zone. If it already has range of 1 zone or more, such as Shoot, increase its range by +2 zones. Range can be taken more than once on a single trapping.

EXAMPLES: Stretching (Physical Force + Range), Telekinesis (Physical Force + Range + Psychic), Clairvoyance (Examine + Range x2 + Psychic), Keen Eyesight (Notice + Range x2)

SPRAY (+1 SKILL POINT)

With this Extra, a trapping can be applied against multiple targets in a single exchange. If the trapping is used offensively, roll your skill as normal, then take

a penalty of -1 per target if you have two or more targets. For example, if you have three targets and your total effort is +6, each target only has to get a +3 or better to avoid taking stress. Otherwise, spend 1 shift per additional target affected. All targets must be in the same zone.

EXAMPLES: Mystical Armor (Parry + Spray), Machine Gun (Shoot + Spray), Miniature Hover Platforms (Move + Unusual: Flight + Spray)

UNUSUAL (+1 SKILL POINT)

The trapping operates by some non-standard principle appropriate to the theme of the skill, or gains some minor additional functionality. This is kind of a catch-all Extra for a trapping that can do a weird thing that is hard to peg down. If an effect doesn't fit neatly into any other category of Extra, make it Unusual.

The Unusual Extra can be added to a trapping to eliminate any gear or preparation it might require, such as Disguise + Unusual: Illusion to cloak the character in a magical disguise, or Craft + Unusual: Instant assembly to create a machine from its component parts without using any tools to put them together.

EXAMPLES: Shield (Parry + Unusual: Affects ranged attacks), Flight (Move + Unusual: Flight), X-Ray Vision (Examine + Unusual: Through walls), Invisibility (Hide + Unusual: Invisibility), Instantaneous Teleportation (Leap + Unusual: Doesn't pass through intervening space), Create Illusion (Disguise + Unusual: Illusion + Range)

ZONE (+2 SKILL POINTS)

The trapping affects everyone in a zone. If used as an attack, roll your skill once; each target in the zone defends against your total effort. Otherwise, roll your skill and apply it to all targets in the zone. If the trapping doesn't work at range, it automatically affects everyone in your zone.

If it would make sense for the skill to affect yourself as well, such as a swarm of demonic locusts that attack everything in the area indiscriminately, then it does. To avoid such a fate in these circumstances, take the Unusual Extra.

EXAMPLES: Fireball (Shoot + Zone), Hover Platform (Move + Unusual: Flight + Zone), Force Bubble (Resist Damage + Zone), Fear Aura (Menace + Zone)

DRAWBACKS

Drawbacks come in two main categories. One is aspect related Drawbacks, which involve sacrificing your Free aspects in exchange for Complications and Convictions. The other is Flaws (Minor and Major), which define a skill's boundaries and can reduce its total value. Every Unique skill in the Extraordinary Tier must have an accompanying Complication or Conviction aspect, while every Strange skill (of any Power Tier) requires a Drawback of any kind.

Drawbacks on a skill provide a 1-point discount if a Minor Drawback or a 2-point discount if a Major Drawback. The final cost of a skill can never be reduced below its rating. If a Drawback on a Unique or Strange skill isn't genuinely disadvantageous or doesn't fit with the skill's theme, it's not a Drawback.

ASPECT: COMPLICATION (MINOR OR MAJOR)

One of the character's Free aspects becomes a Complication aspect. Complications come in two degrees of severity, Minor and Major. A Minor Complication is a persistent nuisance, something that crops up now and then to cause trouble for the character. A Major Complication, however, is just what it sounds like: a serious problem in the character's life, and a source of constant struggle. When a Major Complication is compelled, the compel starts at two Fate Points.

ASPECT: CONVICTION (MAJOR)

One of the character's Free aspects becomes another Conviction aspect.

FLAW: CHARGES (MINOR OR MAJOR)

A Strange skill with Charges can only be used a limited number of times before being replenished. Examples include a ghostly revolver, an elixir with limited doses, or a magical incantation that gradually disappears from the speaker's mind each time it's uttered. A skill with Minor Charges can be used a number of times per scene equal to its rating, so a Fair (+2) skill

with the Charges Flaw could be used twice in a scene. As a Major Flaw, the skill's uses are limited per session instead of per scene. To reflect a skill that requires lengthy preparation or delays between uses, use Delay. For example, if that ghostly revolver has Minor Charges, but some sort of occult ritual is required to load it with ectoplasm first, the ritual is a form of the Delay Flaw.

FLAW: DELAY (MINOR OR MAJOR)

A Strange skill with the Delay Flaw requires additional time to activate or be made available to use. This could be a technological device that needs to be charged, a potion that requires lengthy preparation before it can be consumed, or a skill that can't be used unless the character meditates for a while first. A Delay time of A Full Action/A Few Moments is a Minor Flaw. The character has to essentially lose a Turn to activating the skill, and can't take any other actions, such as using a secondary skill, in the interim. A Delay of Two Rounds/Half a Minute or longer is a Major Flaw. (See the Time

Table in Time and Space.)

If the Delay requires an action that can be interrupted, such as cranking an electrostatic discharge cannon, then doing so also requires the Delay to start all over again.

By default, Delay's meant for "constant" abilities that, once turned on, stay on. If the skill instead requires A Few Moments or more every time it's used, that's a Major Flaw. If it requires more than A Few Moments to Activate, and then once it's on the character still requires A Few Moments per use, that's two Activation Flaws: one to turn it on, and one for each use.

Compare this with Charges, which limits the number of times a skill can be used on a per-scene basis. Combining these two Flaws can create an ability which, for example, takes a long time to prepare, and once it's available can only be used a certain number of times, such as a solar powered laser cannon. First it has to be charged in direct sunlight for a few minutes (a Major Delay), and then once that's been done there's only so much energy available (Major Charges).
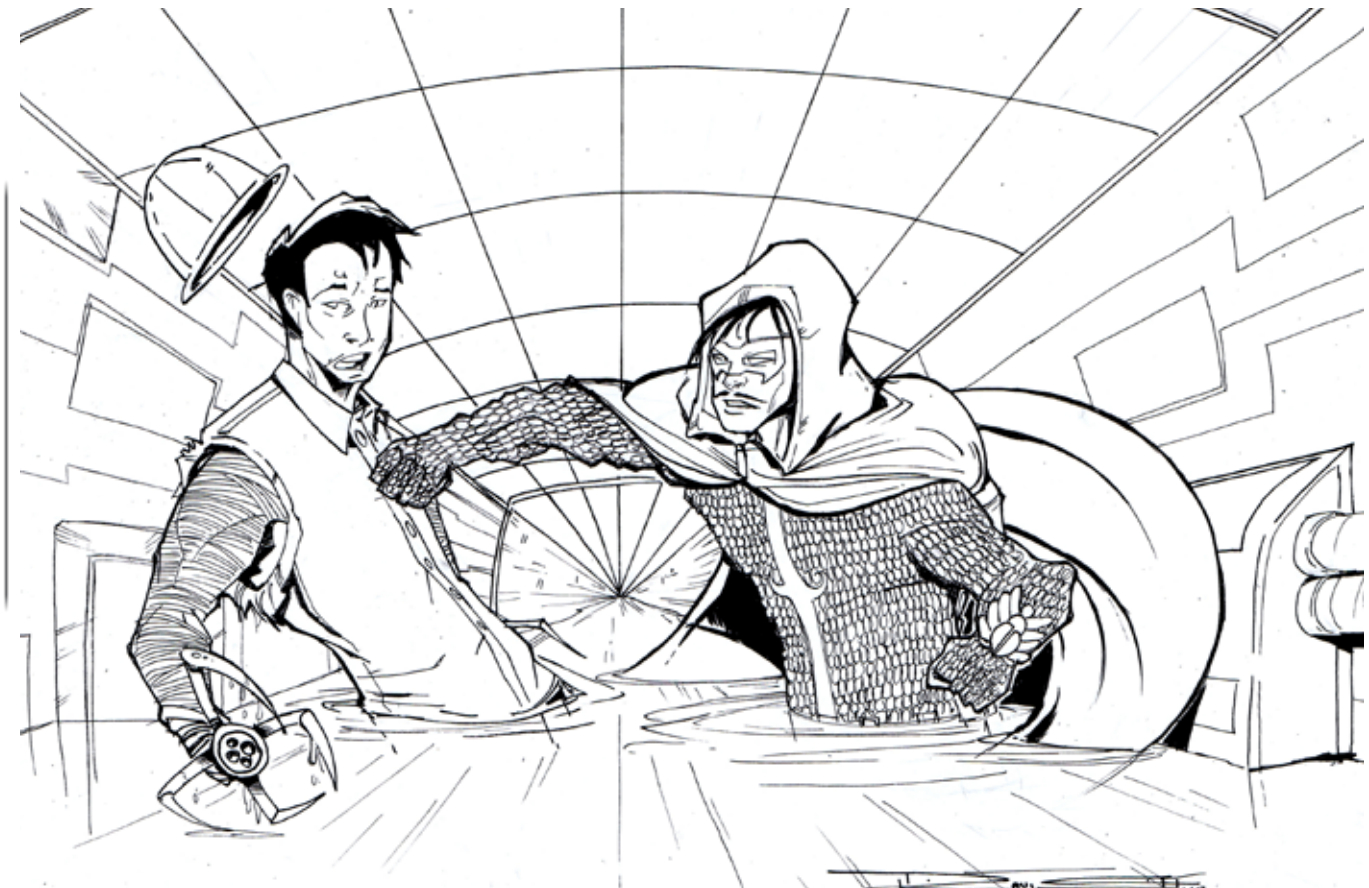
Drawbacks Summary Table	
Aspect	**Description**
Complication	A nuisance (Minor) or recurring problem (Major) in the character's life
Conviction	An additional Conviction aspect
Flaw	**Description**
Charges	Skill can be used a limited number of times per scene (Minor) or session (Major)
Delay	Skill takes time or effort (Minor) or both (Major) to activate
Focus	Character needs a device (Minor), possibly breakable (Major), to use the skill
Snag	Skill's functionality is reduced occasionally (Minor) or frequently (Major)
Taxing	Player must spend a Fate Point each time the skill is used
Transform	Skill requires a brief (Minor) or lengthy (Major) transformation before it can be used

FLAW: FOCUS (MINOR OR MAJOR)

The Focus Flaw means that the skill is external to the character. Without the Focus, the character can't use the skill. Taken as a Major Flaw, the skill must have an accompanying aspect, such as "Power Armor," "Utility Belt," "Scientific Gadgetry," or "The Eye of Argon." As a Minor Flaw, Focus has no affect on the character's aspects.

FLAW: SNAG (MINOR OR MAJOR)

A Snag is a limitation of some kind, although that limitation can be just about anything (as long as it's actually limiting, of course). These aren't aspects—just boundaries around the skill's utility. For example:

• Only works during the day (Minor)

• Only works at night (Minor)

• Only works on ferrous metal (Minor)

• Only works on animals (Minor)

• Only works on gold (Major)

• Can't consciously activate (alternately, deactivate) (Major)
• No access to normal senses while using the skill (Major)

• Only works during a full moon (Major)

• Can't use any other Strange skills while this one is active (Major)

• Can't move while this skill is active (Minor for a defensive physical skill or Major for an offensive physical skill, but probably isn't worth anything otherwise)

FLAW: TAXING (MAJOR)

The Taxing Flaw is for a skill that requires a great investment of effort, is of limited use, or that just isn't especially reliable—when it works, it's a big deal for the character's story. In mechanical terms, the skill requires a Fate Point to activate each time it's used. Taxing always counts as a Major Drawback.

FLAW: TRANSFORM (MINOR OR MAJOR)

A skill with this Flaw is only available to the character after he undergoes some sort of dramatic physical or mental transformation. This process takes time—Full Action/A Few Moments for a Minor Transform, or longer for a Major Transform. Examples include drinking an elixir that turns you into a monster, metamorphosing into an animal, or manifesting an ectoplasmic aura.

Once the transformation is complete, the player re-

places one of the character's Free aspects to reflect the nature of the character's change. For example, a Strange skill called Fire Giant with the Transform Flaw might replace the character's "Gregarious and Outgoing" aspect with "Towering Inferno."

Ordinarily, the Free aspect to be replaced is chosen and the replacement aspect defined when this Flaw is taken. The character always loses access to the same Free aspect and gains the same replacement aspect whenever he Transforms.

The exception is if the Strange skill has the Variable trapping, in which case the player may define the replacement aspect each time the transformation occurs. If multiple Strange skills have this Flaw, they can share the same transformation, but each one replaces an additional Free aspect.

If the Transform can be interrupted or prevented, or relies on a condition that isn't fully under the character's control (such as losing one's temper in an unseemly manner), that's a Snag in addition to the Transform.

MAGIC

Magic comes in two forms in Base Raiders: spell and ritual.

Ritual Magic

Ritual magic is slow, ritualized, and extremely powerful. It taps ancient forces, sleeping gods, and weirder, more alien things, and the results are astonishing, or so subtle and pervasive as to escape common notice.

Ritual magic is more akin to gadgeteering: Instead of the power coming directly from the Magus, there's always a token or talisman which contains the force of the magical Work.

To reflect this, a Ritual Magus must take the Focus Flaw on each of his Strange skills that represents a Work he's crafted. If the Focus that contains the power is lost, so is the access to the Strange skill—apart from your ability to craft such items, none of your Strange skills are innate.

A Ritual magician who wishes to create new Works during play must also purchase the Ritual Works skill. This skill may be of any Power Tier.

STRANGE SKILL: RITUAL WORKS (4)

Power Tier: As desired
Craft, Repair, Dismantle, Information, Research, Examine
Ritual (-2)
Major Delay (-2): Half a Minute or more (however long it takes to craft the Work)
Minor Snag (-1): Requires a sufficient Workspace

Given enough time and access to a proper Workspace, the Ritual magician can create new temporary Works. He can also create permanent Ritual Works by spending Refresh instead of investing Fate Points, and repair or disassemble such Works as well.

FLAW: RITUAL (MAJOR)

This Flaw is mandatory for the Ritual Works skill, or any other skill that enables the character to create Works imbued with Ritual magic. The Ritual Flaw requires the magic user to invest one or more Fate Points to create a Ritual Work. This is in addition to any Fate Points the character might spend when making a skill roll to Craft the item.

The number of Fate Points to be invested depends on the Power Tier of the Work: 1 for Extraordinary, 2 for Superhuman, 4 for Ascendant, and 6 for Godlike. By default, the Work lasts for one session. If the Work is destroyed, the invested Fate Points are lost as if they'd been spent; if you Dismantle the Work, the Fate Points are immediately returned. Otherwise, the process for Crafting, Repairing, or Dismantling a Work is exactly as laid out in those trappings' descriptions.

A skill with this Flaw can also be used to create a permanent Work. In this case, the character sacrifices Refresh instead of investing Fate Points: -1 Refresh for an Extraordinary Tier skill, -2 for a Superhuman Tier skill, and so on.

Spell Magic

Spell magic is incredibly fast, but the effects are temporary and short-lived. A Spell magic user can throw fireballs, teleport out of a jail cell, or disintegrate a door. The effects of Spell magic come from the sorcerer who

wields it, and as such exacts a certain cosmological toll. This is reflected by the Spell Flaw, which is mandatory for each of a Spell magician's Strange skills. In addition, a Spell magician who wishes to create new effects during play needs to take the Spell Sorcery skill, which can be of any Power Tier.

STRANGE SKILL: SPELL SORCERY (9)

Power Tier: As desired
Variable [Scene] x3
Spell (-2)
Minor Delay (-1): Full Action/A Few Moments

The Magus can define magical effects on the fly (once or twice per scene) with practically no preparation.

FLAW: SPELL (MAJOR)

This Flaw is mandatory for the Strange skills of a Spell magician. The Spell Flaw requires the magic user to invest one or more Fate Points before using the skill in a scene. The Fate Point is invested the first time the Strange skill is used (or, if the skill has one or more Variable trappings, once per new effect defined during the scene). Regardless of how many times the skill or effect is used in the scene, the magic user only has to invest the Fate Points once.

Invested Fate Points are set aside, or given to the GM to set aside, or discarded and tallied by the player—whatever works for the table—but they aren't lost. At the end of the scene, all of the player's invested Fate Points are returned to her, with one exception: If the player ever invests her last Fate Point—that is, investing the Fate Point means the player now has none left—that Fate Point is lost as if she had spent it.

The number of Fate Points that needs to be invested depends on the Power Tier of the skill: 1 for Extraordinary, 2 for Superhuman, 4 for Ascendant, and 6 for Godlike. (Strange skills in the Mundane Tier are the exception—they require no Fate Point investment whatsoever.)

The Spell Magus may voluntarily reduce the Strange skill's Power Tier, and therefore invest fewer Fate Points, when the spell is cast. However, doing so limits the skill's Power Tier for the duration of the scene, or until the Magus invests more Fate Points for the spell.

SAMPLE UNIQUE SKILLS

Because Unique skills so often derive from a character's occupation or lifestyle, the examples provided below are organized by Background.

In parentheses following each skill's name is its total trapping cost; add that to its rating to determine its total cost in skill points. Below that are its trappings and Extras (and the value of each), one lifestyle appropriate Complication or Conviction aspect, and some explanatory notes.

While all of these Unique skills are in the Mundane Tier, there's nothing stopping you from elevating them to the Extraordinary Tier. Also keep in mind that this is hardly an exhaustive list, nor are these the definitive versions of these Unique skills.

Non-Human
URBAN SCAVENGER (5)

Networking, Information, Repair, Dismantle, Examine, Hide, Environment [Urban]
Minor Complication (-1): Living Hand to Mouth

You live in the sewers, the derelict buildings, abandoned factories, and other forgotten parts of the city. You survive by finding and fixing whatever you find for personal use or resale to other non-humans in the Underground.

The city holds no secrets to you and you can fix nearly anything with nothing but duct tape and determination.

PICKPOCKET (6)

Networking, Information, Dexterity, Hide (2), Stealth (2), Notice (1)
Minor Complication (-1): Outstanding Warrants

You make your living on the streets, relieving others of their wallets, smart phones, and whatever else you can purloin when they're not paying attention. Thanks

to others of your kind, you usually have a pretty good idea what the word on the street is—and when they can't help you can probably see it coming.

UNDERGROUND LEADER (7)

Networking, Information, Convince, Insight, Inspire, Environment [Urban], Minions
Conviction (-2): Protect the community at all costs

The aliens, mutants, and other non-human sapients need leadership if they are going to survive. Fortunately, you're there to guide and organize them and they can lend a hand when it's necessary.

Human
POLICE OFFICER (7)

Networking, Information, Environment [Urban], Examine, Notice, Menace (1),
Minor Complication (-1): Answers to Superiors in the Department

You can rely on your training to investigate crime scenes, spot clues, navigate the streets of London, stare down a criminal, and gather information from your contacts on the street.   You also have the authority to arrest criminals, but loose cannons are not welcomed in the police station.

PERSONAL ASSISTANT (2)

Networking, Information, Notice, Conversation, Insight
Minor Complication (-1): Needy Boss

Your boss is a very important individual but is utterly helpless without your constant attention. Not that he would ever appreciate or even realize that. You spend your days scheduling appointments, picking up dry cleaning, and getting coffee. Fortunately, as an assistant, you are practically invisible to others in the corporate workforce and you can gain access to information and favors that others of your station usually can only dream about.

IT NERD (5)

Networking, Information, Craft, Repair, Dismantle, Research
Minor Complication (-1): Have you tried turning it on and off again?

You're the computer guy for a company and as a result you're a bitter shell of resentment and apathy. You can fix nearly anything in the building, but you only work when you absolutely must. The users are all idiots and you can't be bothered to deal with them unless they can bribe or threaten you into work.

Heroic Connections
TRAUMA SURGEON (7)

Networking, Information, Examine, Research, Treatment [Physical], Willpower
Conviction (-2): The Hippocratic Oath
Minor Complication (-1): The dreams….

You have specialized training in treating combat injuries and were hired by the Ideal as a trauma surgeon. You've seen what plasma weapons can do to the human body and know how to treat hellfire burns. You also know how to diagnose aliens, mutants, and other non-humans.

The experience hardened you but you have dreams of past surgeries. Those nights you wake up in a cold sweat. They are starting to get to you but you can self-medicate all you want. No one will question a doctor taking a few extra pills from the pharmacy.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY (4)

Networking, Information, Convince, Inspire, Insight
Conviction (-2): My Client's Interests

Defending superheroes and vigilantes in court was an interesting experience. Your courtroom experience makes you a persuasive speaker with a ready knowl-

edge of the law. You're also a good judge of character, and more than capable of confounding your opposition in a debate.

THERAPIST (6)

Networking, Information, Inspire, Convince, Conversation, Treatment [Mental]
Conviction (-2): Help the needy

You were one of many therapists hired by the Ideal to counsel troubled superheroes and their families. The stress of fighting super villains and protecting the world were too much for almost anyone.

Villainous Past

HENCHMEN LEADER (14)

Networking, Information, Willpower, Wealth, Influence, Esteem, Stress Capacity [Reputation] , Minions
Minor Complication (-1): Got a lot of good (and bad) men killed

You weren't a super villain but you worked for one, managing their henchmen. You might have some minor superpowers but your real power was in how you managed the hundreds of costumed henchmen for the super villain. You hired them, trained them, and sent them on missions.

Even after Ragnarok you managed to keep some of the men under your control and now you desperately hold onto as much as power as you can because you've made a lot of enemies over the years. You sent a lot of henchmen to their deaths on suicide missions and that's not even mentioning the enemies of the super villain who want to see you dead. You need more power if you're going to live much longer.

BOARD MEMBER OF A MAJOR

CORPORATION (17)

Networking, Information, Wealth, Influence + Spray (+1), Stress Capacity [Reputation], Esteem, Guile, Initiative [Social], Treatment [Social]

Minor Complication (-1): Secret connections to super villains

You're a proud member of the 1% and serve on the board of a major corporation. In order to get to your position, you had a little help from a super villain or two. In exchange for insider information, you got favors that only a super villain could give. Need a rival have an unexpected heart attack? Not a problem. Need blackmail on the SEC official investigating you? That can be arranged.

You quit the corporation and now have plenty of time and money on your hands. All you need to do is find the base of the villains you dealt with and erase any blackmail information they had on you.

MERCENARY SCIENTIST (28)

Craft, Dismantle, Guile, Information, Initiative [Mental], Languages, Menace, Minions, Networking, Repair, Research, Stress Capacity [Composure], Treatment, Wealth, Willpower, Workspace
Minor Complication (-1): Wanted for Crimes Against Science

For every scientist known around the world, there are a hundred equally qualified ones that just happen to lack fame. This lack of recognition drove you to working for super villains. As a mercenary scientist, you worked on a variety of projects that can only be described as evil. Despite the Interpol warrants, it was rewarding work, both intellectually and financially. Ragnarok ended that career but the field of applied superhuman archeology is opening up . . .

SAMPLE STRANGE SKILLS

The Strange skills below are organized by Archetype. As with the example Unique skills, these are merely illustrations of a few Strange skills that may be appropriate for any given Archetype. Obviously, there's a lot of room for your own ideas, and few of the skills listed below are necessarily exclusive to the Archetype under

which they appear.

Unlike the Unique skills, each of these Strange skills includes a Power Tier, but only to provide an example. None of these Tiers is mandatory in the slightest.

For a detailed treatment of these Archetypes, including example aspects for each one, see Archetypes on page 102.

Adept

ATLANTEAN BODY CONDITIONING (2)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Resist Damage, Willpower
Minor Complication (-1): Restricted Diet

Atlantean techniques for toughening the body for war are popular on the Internet. It requires dedication, a tofu diet, total focus, and months of practice but it's definitely possible to become as tough as steel.

FLYING DRAGON STYLE (8)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Leap, Strike, Dodge, Initiative [Physical]
Minor Snag (-1): Needs open space to fight effectively with this style.

A master of Flying Dragon Style leaps through the air as though he were a character in a kung-fu movie in battle. This technique is relatively easy to master but it only works when the fighter can leap freely - a grounded fighter is unable to use the style.

THE SONG OF THE CRYSTAL (8)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Shoot + Unusual: Sonic (+1), Convince + Zone (+2), Inspire + Zone (+2)
Minor Complication (-1): Beholden to the Crystal Children Cult

Leaders of the Crystal Children Cult know how to project their voices to persuade or command others or to destroy buildings. Everyone who learns the secrets of the Song of the Crystal is personally obligated to help the cult, even if they aren't members.

Alien

LUYTEIN TACTICAL GOGGLES (5)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Examine + Unusual: 3-D mapping and X-ray vision (allowing user to see through solid objects and in total darkness) (+2),
Examine + Unusual: Full sensory suite - thermal, ultraviolet, radiation sensor, radar, etc. (+2)
Information + Unusual: Instant spectral analysis of objects, detecting chemical makeup and other information (+3)
Major Focus (-2): Alien helmet designed for Luyteins and all instructions are written in the Luytein. The character must be a Luytein to wear and use the helmet.

This high tech helmet was built for commandos of the Luytein Empire, allowing them to detect and analyze virtually anything they might encounter in a mission. Because humans can't use these helmets, they are only sold to engineers and scientists interested in reverse-engineering the technology, which is easier said than done.

METAMORPHOSIS (7)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Disguise + Unusual: Shapeshift (+1), Stealth, Hide, Variable [Session] x2
Minor Snag (-1): Variable trappings limited to form taken

Several rare species of aliens are able to shapeshift. Most find their way on earth through the Tunguska Dimensional Zone as accidental travelers. Most spend their time trying to find a way home but others prefer living on a planet where no one else can change their shape. It makes life so much more entertaining when no one expects you can change yourself at will. Impersonating a specific person requires some social skills, which are not included in this power.

WARRIOR FROM HIGH
GRAVITY PLANET (15)

Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)
Leap, Parry, Physical Force, Resist Damage, Stress Capacity [Health], Strike
Minor Complication (-1): Monstrous appearance

You are a squat, incredibly muscled alien from a planet with high gravity. Earth's low gravity effectively gives you superhuman strength and endurance, as you can crush engine blocks with one hand or punch through a tank.

Hired as a mercenary by a super villain and lured to earth on a job, you were quickly abandoned by your employer and left to fend for yourself. Despite your strength, you realize that you must hide as much as possible to survive, because the humans can overwhelm you in numbers.

Super-Genius
PLASMA CANNON (4)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Shoot + Unusual: Sets target on fire (+1), Menace + Range
Minor Focus (-1)

Plasma cannons were first built and used by the Grey aliens but the technology has been reverse engineered for decades. Super villains favored them for their incendiary properties and they've developed an infamous reputation as a result. Simply brandishing one can terrify potential opponents.

SCIENTIFIC GENIUS (9)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Workspace, Craft, Repair, Dismantle, Information, Research, Treatment [Physical]
Conviction (-2): "I'll show them. I'll show them all!"

You are a world class expert in various scientific disciplines, from physics to chemistry to medicine, with an

ego to match.

ROCKET BOOTS (1)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Move + Unusual: Flight (+1), Dodge,
Minor Focus (-1)
Minor Snag (-1): Dodge can only be used if airborne
Minor Snag (-1): Flight ceiling of 100 meters

The Ideal manufactured hundreds of pairs of rocket boots for their team members and while many were never used, nearly every Ideal safe house has at least one pair.

Artificial Being
RECKLESS DEATHBOT (9)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Physical Force, Resist Damage, Menace, Willpower
Minor Snag (-1): Heavy robot body and loud servo motors

So-called "Deathbots" are standard configuration robots built by super villains and used as guards and cannon fodder in their battles against the Ideal. Built from a single template, Deathbots were cheap (by super villain standards) and easily built, so they were used by nearly every major villain.

Some inventive villains customized their Deathbots to hold a few surprises. In your case, you were given a full AI brain, making you a free-willed sapient being. While you are capable of independent action and thought, you can be affected by mind control powers like hypnosis. Fortunately, you're a loose cannon, incapable of taking orders and your stubbornness makes you almost immune to these powers. Almost.

SATELLITE NETWORK LINK (6)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Information + Unusual, Networking + Unusual, Research + Unusual
Minor Snag (-1): Must be in range of a communications satellite (on Earth, not more than 10 meters

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underground or into certain shielded rooms.

You have a mental interface to the Internet and a link to a communications satellite so you can always access it. Perform research, contact allies, or learn the latest news at the speed of thought.

The link only works when you're in range of the satellite obviously, so going off planet or far underground severs your connection. Certain rooms are shielded from outside communications, including many bases.

HEART OF THE FORGE (13)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Repair + Unusual, Craft + Unusual, Minions [Advanced] + Unusual + Range, Shoot + Unusual + Spray
Minor Delay (-1): Require an action to warm up before using it.
Minor Snag (-1): Water douses the Heart and prevents its use.
Minor Complication (-1): Heart valued by alchemists and magic users but removing it destroys you.

As a golem made to assist a powerful wizard in his efforts creating magical items, you were built with a mystical engine of fire in your chest, powered by bound fire elementals.

The primary purpose of the Heart is to repair and construct magical items but it has other functions. You can summon the fire elementals and command them to fight your enemies or you can release a torrent of fire on your enemies. All of these powers require time to charge up.

Mutant

INSECT SWARM (12)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Minions + Unusual: Arrive immediately (+1), Physical Force + Range (+1), Menace + Spray (+1), Strike
Minor Complication (-1): Not the bees!

You can command and control insects and you've found that swarms tend to be the most effective in combat. While this is a useful ability, the bugs are always

nearby, whether you want them to be there or not. More than one friend has been driven off by angry bees.

BAT WINGS (3)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Move + Unusual: Flight (+1), Dodge
Minor Snag (-1): Dodge can only be used when airborne

You can fly silently through the air and you never have to pay for drinks at a goth night club.

TELEPATHY (4)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Convince + Psychic
Insight + Psychic
Minor Snag (-1): Does not work on extremely alien minds or non-organic beings.

Standard garden variety mind-reading with a side order of mind control. You can persuade others to do your bidding or you can learn what makes them tick by perusing their memories and thoughts.

Bear in mind that non-consensual telepathy is considered a felony in most places. Governments and corporations have measures to detect and counter telepaths, although these measures do not always work as advertised.

Magical Being
GOD OF STRENGTH (9)

Power Tier: Godlike (-6 Refresh)
Physical Force, Leap, Resist Damage [Physical], Stress Capacity [Health], Willpower
Conviction (-2): Might Makes Right

Your divine physical prowess is matched only by your equally divine toughness. Few, if any, on Earth can challenge you when it comes to feats of strength.

DIVINE LUCK (11)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Dodge, Environment [Wilderness], Environment [Urban], Notice, Resist Damage
Conviction (-2): Laughing in the Face of Danger

Things just seem to have a way of working out for you. Bullets and blows often miss you by a hair's breadth, and when they do connect they usually deal only minor injuries.

Whether lost in the woods or the city, you always manage to find your way without starving or getting lost, and you often find yourself in the right place at the right time to spot what others miss.

COMMANDING PRESENCE (11)

Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)
Conversation + Zone (+2), Convince + Zone (+2), Menace + Zone (+2), Willpower
Conviction (-2): "Look upon me, ye mortals, and despair!"

As a Godling, your mere presence is enough to cow the average mortal. Everywhere you go, people like you, fear you, or follow your commands, as you please. As a result, you are probably not exactly a mature or modest person. After all, being able to persuade anyone to do what you want does not wonders for your personality. Empathy is most likely a foreign concept to you.

Super Soldier

TEST SUBJECT (3)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Stress Capacity [Health], Stress Capacity [Composure]
Minor Complication (-1): Distrusts Scientists

As a result of being a frequent test subject for a dozen or more unscrupulous scientists, your body and mind are remarkably resistant to harm. The procedure wasn't exactly painless though. You still have issues with needles and people in lab coats.

UPSILON DRUG USER (5)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Shoot + Range [2 zones]
Minor Snag (-1): Does not work in extremely cold environments.

The Upsilon drug (page 81) imbues energy-based powers in users. You can project energy blasts at a great range. However, your power does not work when you are in a cold environment, like the Arctic.

REPTILE-CHIMERA DRUG USER (11)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Move + Unusual, Strike, and Resist Damage
Major Complication (-2): Inhuman appearance.

You've taken a dose of the Chimera super soldier drug, (see page 81) which was mixed with reptile and bird genes. You gained a scaly hide, claws, and flying powers. Unfortunately you now look like a human/dragon hybrid.

Magic User

PARLIAMENT OF UNDEAD FELINES (7)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Minions, Advanced + Unusual (arrive instantly) + Unusual (Different Skills) + Unusual (Undead) Variable [Scene]
Minor Complication (-1): Robert's Rules of Order
Minor Complication (-1): Undead cats EVERYWHERE
Conviction (-2): The Ethics Committee is Right!

An early experiment with necromancy resulted in the mass resurrection of a horde of cats, all imbued with

the spirits of politicians and bureaucrats. The Parliament believes you are the prime minister and will follow your orders, as long as you address them in proper parliamentary form. These requests can even defy the laws of physics, as they are undead magical cats. Having them maul a foe for you is quite gruesome to watch though. The cats are quite knowledgeable, and you can use their skills to help you. Every time you summon the Parliament, you may pick new skills for them, representing a different committee of undead cats.

HELLFIRE

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Shoot, Menace, Variable [Session] x4
Spell (-2): Invest 2 Fate Points to use this skill in a scene.
Minor Delay (-1) A full action/A few moments
Minor Snag (-1): Variable trappings can only be used to add extras.

The power of Hell is yours to command, to destroy or terrify your foes.

Adventurer

MILLIONAIRE PLAYBOY WITH

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES (13)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Leap, Climb, Move, Strike, Dodge, Parry, Initiative [Physical], Wealth
Conviction (-2): Grimdark Vigilante
Minor Snag (-1): Secret Civilian Identity

You swore revenge on all criminals, costumed or otherwise, after a childhood trauma inflicted by gangsters. As a trust fund baby, you could afford to spent years honing your body into a living weapon.

GENIUS CON ARTIST (10)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Disguise, Guile, Languages, Variable [Scene], Willpower

Major Complication (-2): Life is a house of cards built on LIES and more lies.

With a knack for learning all kinds of skills and reading people, you might have been a great leader. Instead, you used your gifts to deceive others for fun and profit.

INTERNET SENSATION (9)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Influence, Networking, Esteem, Stress Capacity [Reputation], Initiative [Social]
Major Snag (-2): Crowdsource all the things!

As a master of social media, you have built up a huge audience of adoring (and some obsessive) fans who follow your every blog post, tweet, and vlog. They provide tremendous leverage and expertise when you need it, but this power comes with a major limitation: namely every time you use it, the whole world knows about it.

GIFTS

Gifts represent areas of special training, talent, or similar capability within the purview of a single skill. Mechanically speaking, this is reflected by a small bonus or a bit of rules bending in the character's favor.

Described below are the six different types of Gifts, each of which costs 1 Refresh to buy. Every character starts with one Gift for free.

Companion	A NPC loyal to the character.
Equipment	Important or special gear
Impact	Declare an aspect with the skill for free on a roll that succeeds with spin.
Signature Aspect	One aspect can be invoked once per scene for free.
Skilled	+5 skill points.
Theme	A variety of circumstantial benefits spread among three connected skills.

Companion

The character has a sidekick, personal assistant, unemployed roommate, robot bodyguard, ancestor spirit, or some other "helper" character. The Companion defaults to Average (+1) quality, with one Average (+1) skill, 2 stress boxes in each stress track, and one Minor consequence. A Companion requires the expenditure of a Fate Point to act alone. Otherwise, he or she attaches to the character as a Minion would, and provides the character with a +1 bonus to any skills the two share in common. In addition, each Companion automatically comes with three improvements, chosen from the list below.

Unless otherwise indicated, an improvement can be taken more than once for the same Companion.

Every time this Gift is taken, it can be used to either create a new Companion or provide another three improvements to any existing Companions.

Aspect: The Companion gains an aspect (but no Fate Points).

Quality: Increase the Companion's quality by +1, to a maximum of Good (+3). A Fair (+2) Companion has one Average (+1) skill, one Fair (+2) skill, 3 boxes in one stress track and 2 boxes in the other two, and a Good (+3) Companion has one Average (+1) skill, one Fair (+2) skill, one Good (+3) skill, and 3 boxes in each stress track.

Communication: The character and the Companion have a special mode of communication in keeping with their capabilities. This could be a magical cell phone, a psychic link, or whatever else is within reason for the character. Attempts to break this communication link between the two are made against a difficulty of 2 + the Companion's quality.

Independent: The Companion can act on their own without needing to spend a Fate Point, unless the Companion's sent off on a mission of significant story importance (comparable with something a PC might do, for example). While the Companion is so separated, they have access to the main character's Fate Points and two of their aspects relevant to their bond.

Keeping Up: If the main character has some unusual form of travel, the Companion can somehow follow along without getting left behind.

Skilled: The Companion gains 3 skill points. None of a Companion's skill ratings can exceed his or her quality.

Gifted: The Companion gains one of the following Gifts: Equipment, Impact, or Theme. This improvement can't be taken more than twice per Companion.

Empowered: Upgrade the Power Tier of one of the Companion's skills. The Companion receives Tier Benefits from this skill the same way characters do. Empowered counts as two improvements.

Numerous: Each time this improvement is taken, the main character gains one additional Companion.

Summonable: The Companion can show up at the main character's beck and call without needing to resort to conventional means. This takes One Minute (see the Time Table in Time and Space) by default; for a Fate Point, the Companion arrives in An Instant. The Companion automatically vanishes at the end of the scene.

Equipment

The character has an important piece of mundane (or mostly mundane) equipment. When this Gift is taken, the piece of equipment gains three of the following improvements. Every time this Gift is taken, it can be used to either create a new piece of equipment or provide another three improvements to any existing equipment.

Aspect: The piece of equipment gains an aspect (but no Fate Points).

Deadly: The equipment acts as a Weapon 1 for one type of stress (Health, Composure, or Reputation). This bonus can't do more than double the stress dealt by an attack. For example, if a weapon with Weapon 2 is used for an attack that succeeds by 1 shift, the attack does 2 stress, not 3. This improvement can be taken up to three times on a single piece of equipment, providing a maximum of Weapon 3. Only the highest Weapon value from any one piece of equipment can apply at a time.

Well-Made: The equipment grants a +1 bonus to one skill relevant to its operation, chosen when this improvement is taken. This counts as two improvements, and can only be taken a maximum of three times on a single piece of equipment.

Empowered: The equipment artificially boosts the Power Tier of one skill. Examples include an enchanted

sword that lets its wielder fight as if his Melee Weapons skill were in the Supernatural Tier, or a personal cloaking device that gives anyone who wears it Extraordinary Tier Stealth. If the character's skill is already in a higher Power Tier, use either his own Power Tier or the equipment's , whichever is higher. (In other words, multiple Power Tiers don't "stack.") Each step above the Mundane Tier counts as four improvements.

Alternate Use: The equipment lets the wielder use one skill in place of another in limited circumstances.

Protective: The equipment grants Armor 1 against one type of stress (Health, Composure, or Reputation) in a manner appropriate to the Equipment. This improvement can be taken up to three times on a single piece of equipment, providing a maximum of Armor 3. Only the highest Armor value from any one piece of equipment can apply at a time.

Rugged: The equipment adds one stress box to one of the owner's stress tracks (Health, Composure, or Reputation). This improvement can only be taken a maximum of three times on a single piece of equipment. In order to take this improvement, the equipment must be a suit of armor or some similarly protective item. Only the highest Rugged value from any one piece of equipment can apply at a time to any one stress track.

Numerous: Each time this improvement is taken, it gives the character a duplicate of a previously defined piece of equipment.

Essential: The equipment lets the owner take an additional Minor consequence, usually Physical. This improvement can't be taken more than twice on the same piece of equipment. In order to take this improvement, the equipment must be a suit of armor or some similarly protective item. Having multiple pieces of equipment with this improvement does not increase this benefit.

Optional Rule: Gifts and Flaws

As an optional rule for those groups who want a little more nuance in their Gifts, you can apply certain Drawbacks to Companion and Equipment Gifts to represent allies or gear that can sometimes hinder as much as they help. Maybe that doorman's gambling debts make him susceptible to bribes, or those fancy range-finding goggles of yours seem to work only when they feel like it.

Whereas a Drawback on a skill reduces its cost by one or two points, if this option is used, a Minor or Major Drawback on a Companion or Equipment Gift provides an additional improvement.

Applying a Complication aspect to a Companion or piece of Equipment adds an aspect to it, but one with a predominantly negative or troublesome slant. Conviction and Weakness Drawbacks, however, are too character-specific to be applied to something as external as Companions or Equipment.

Snags are great for limiting the usual scope of Companions or Equipment, such as mail armor that doesn't offer protection against firearms or a sidekick who doesn't speak English. Delay and Taxing can be suitable for many types of Equipment, but usually don't make much sense when it comes to Companions.

Most other Flaws don't work quite as well and probably shouldn't be applied to Companions or Equipment (and it should go without saying that the Focus Flaw can't be applied to Equipment), but the ultimate call on that is up to the GM and your group.

GMs should carefully consider whether to use this optional rule. It's great for certain situations, but is potentially open to abuse as well.

Skill, Equipment, or Aspect?

As you can see, there are basically three ways to represent a gadget using these rules: as a Strange skill, as an Equipment Gift, or simply as an aspect. So which is the right one to use? Any of them, really—it just depends on what you want to do.

If it's a Wonder—some truly remarkable bit of gear like mechanical wings—or a supernatural artifact of some kind, make it a Strange skill. That'll give you the power and versatility to make something truly remarkable and/or outlandish.

If it's an exceptional but otherwise mundane item that's conceivably possible to create in the non-Strange world, it's probably best to make it an Equipment Gift. As an Equipment Gift, it won't give you any new abilities, really. It'll just make you better at things you can already do.

Or you can skip these routes entirely and just make it one of your personal aspects. For example, if you have an aspect of "My Father's Hunting Rifle" to represent a family heirloom, you could invoke it when shooting, schmoozing with one of your father's old hunting buddies, scaring a thug, or anything else where it might come in handy. But it would exist only in nar-

rative terms—you'd have to spend a Fate Point to get any use out of it.

Probably the best option is to make your gadget either a Strange skill or an Equipment Gift, and devote an aspect to it, either a personal aspect or with the Aspect improvement. That way you can define it mechanically and concretely, if you go in for that sort of thing, plus you get added utility (and Fate Points) from it as an aspect.

Impact

Choose one of your skills (whether Common, Unique or Strange). When you use that skill and obtain spin, you can declare a fragile aspect on yourself, your opponent, or the scene (as appropriate) as a free action.

EXAMPLES: Unarmed Impact, Resolve Impact, Investigation Impact.

Signature Aspect

Choose one personal aspect. You may invoke that aspect for free once per scene.

Skilled

Receive another 5 skill points. You may take this

Theme

Choose three skills (whether Common, Unique or Strange) that share a thematic connection, such as Athletics, Might, and Alertness (physical fitness) or Academics, Art, and Science (education). Each of these skills receives one (and only one) of the following benefits. This Gift can be purchased multiple times, but no skill can ever receive more than one benefit.

- A +1 bonus in narrow circumstances, such as +1 Athletics when jumping, +1 Firearms with sniper rifles, or +1 Unarmed when outnumbered.
- A +2 bonus when using that skill to maneuver or

Block.
- Use the skill in place of another skill in narrow circumstances, such as using Might instead of Athletics when chasing someone, using Firearms instead of Athletics to defend against ranged attacks, or using Arcana instead of Presence to orate.
- Ignore circumstantial or environmental penalties equal to or less than the skill's rating.

CHARACTER GOALS

DESIGNING A GOAL

Players who have a personal goal that will affect the campaign setting in some measurable way should first consider how that goal can be achieved in broad terms. Use the list of trappings in chapter 7, starting on page 116, and note any trappings that seem like they would be important to achieving your goal. If you want to be rich and famous, the Wealth trapping is obviously necessary and Minions (for your entourage) would be nice. If you want to cure cancer, you would need Research and Information at the very least. Taking down a corrupt organization might require Research, Guile, and Insight.

The next step is to establish the tier of the goal by determining how much achieving your goal will affect the campaign world. The gamemaster has final say over the tier of a goal. Take this skill point cost of the goal and multiply it by the skill point cost multiplier of the tier. This is the final skill point cost to achieve the goal.

Tier	Milestones	Skill Point Multiplier
Personal	2	0.5
City	4	1
National	6	1.5
Global	8	3
Cosmic	12	6

Personal tier: a life changing event for a single person, which will not impact more than a handful of other people at most. Examples include finding a long lost

relative who is not being concealed by a powerful organization, marriage, divorce, buying a middle class home, starting a small business, graduating college, or proving a person, who is unconnected to organized crime, innocent or guilty of a felony.

City tier: A life changing even for a family, which will have a significant impact in the community, an event that a civilian would not be able to achieve on their own, or drastically changing a city wide organization. Examples include curing a single person of any disease, but in such a way that the cure could not be studied or reproduced, finding a lost person who would be impossible to find through conventional methods or is concealed by a powerful organization, taking down or taking a powerful gang in a single city, starting or taking over a business worth several million dollars, changing the law or culture of a single city.

National tier: A major event on the national stage, which will make headlines in most newspapers and blogs, if it is publicly known. These goals are almost never achieved by individuals without superpowers - rather they are the product of an effective and well-funded organization dedicated to achieving the goal or the work of a supremely competent superhuman. This goal changes the status quo in some noticeable way and will almost always have unintended consequences. Examples including changing federal law (but not the Constitution), creating, taking over, or destroying a large corporation, shifting the perspective of public culture over a single topic over a hot button issue, or building a long range spaceship capable of flying to the moon and back.

Global tier: A historical event felt around the entire planet and news of the event will be published by every media source. Books are written about the event. It partially defines the time period, a flash point of that age. Even superhumans with major powers can achieve a goal like this on their own - the efforts of many other talented superhumans or thousands of competent humans are required. Examples include curing all forms of cancer permanently with a cheap and easily distributable method, starting or ending an international war or conflict, creating or wiping out a worldwide ideology or theology, or introducing a new technology that will fundamentally change society.

Cosmic tier: These events are usually outside the reach of mortals, and only a few superhumans have ever achieved a cosmic goal. They affect a significant portion of the universe (or an alternate dimension) and may fundamentally and permanently alter the laws of physics.

Examples include creating or destroying a 'pocket' dimension, creating a new intelligent species and populating it throughout the universe, preventing or causing a star to go supernova, summoning the Ragnarok Object (and all of the missing superhumans) back to earth or permanently barring them from returning, resurrecting or slaying a deity or other cosmic being, or perfecting time travel.

The gamemaster may modify the final skill point cost and number of milestones based on the individual goal.

Characters may only have 1 goal at a time. A character may choose to abandon the goal but all skill points spent on achieving the goal are wasted.

ACHIEVING A GOAL

Skill point investment in a goal happens between adventures by spending skill points earned through gameplay into the goal rather than the character's personal improvement. This skill points are spent and can never be reused or returned to the character, even if the goal is abandoned or if it is achieved. They represent the grunt work the character spends planning and working towards the goal - raising money, researching, and otherwise preparing for the goal. There is no need to role play these segments. Characters cannot use skill points from character generation towards a goal, only those earned during the game. Characters can split their earned skill points between personal improvement and goal achievement however they wish.

Milestones are specific in-game missions that must be achieved during game play. The gamemaster and player work together to describe each milestone, but each one should be a logical step towards completing the goal. In general, the difficulty of a milestone should be based on the tier of the goal, but the gamemaster can vary the difficulty of a particular milestone. Milestones are usually done in order, but the gamemaster can allow milestones to be achieved out of order. Additionally, the gamemaster can only reveal one or a few of the milestones at a time, thus keeping players focused on one task at a time. The gamemaster may

allow only certain milestones to be attempted after a certain number of skill points have been invested in the goal, thus 'unlocking' them, but this is optional. The only exception is the last milestone, which must be completed last and cannot even be attempted until the character has spent all the necessary skill points.

Personal tier: A single scene or encounter of modest difficulty - a fight, a negotiation, or puzzle for example.

City tier: A single scene or encounter of high difficulty or a pair of linked scenes of average difficulty

National tier: A one session adventure with multiple scenes of average difficulty or several scenes leading up to a boss fight/encounter

Global tier: a 2 to 3 session adventure with many scenes of varying difficulty including boss encounters.

Cosmic tier: a multiple session adventure requiring abilities in combat, social skills, and puzzle solving,

Note that higher tier goals require the work of the entire group to complete, which can cause tension between players. In order to maximize player enjoyment, it is recommended that players either agree to work on a single higher tier goal together or they take turns achieving each other's goals. Achieving a higher tier goal can be the subject of an entire campaign for the group.

The two measurements of a goal's completion are its skill point cost and the number of milestones. The goal is not achieved until the character has invested all of the skill points and completed every milestone. The character must invest all the skill points in the goal before the last milestone is attempted. Completing the last milestone of a goal triggers its activation and its effects start taking place immediately.

COLLABORATING ON A GOAL

Players can work together to achieve a goal. One character is designated as project leader. Other characters may participate and aid in achieving the goal but the project leader must stay with the goal. If the project leader abandons the goal, then the all work on the goal is wasted, including skill points spent on the goal and milestones completed. If any other character leaves, the goal continues.

Any character working towards a goal may contribute earned skill points towards the goal. All charac-

ters may help complete milestones, even if they are not aware of the overall goal. However, the project leader must be involved with every milestone in some way, even if that is just communicating with other characters as they complete a milestone.

For example, the project leader can work towards completing milestone 1 while 2 of his friends complete milestone 2 on the other side of the world. As long as the 2 friends remain in contact with the project leader, their work counts towards goal completion. The project leader must be part of the team that completes the final milestone.

EFFECTS OF A GOAL

When the final milestone of a goal is completed, the goal is achieved and it begins to affect the campaign as a whole. The stated effect happens as described in the goal, which happens on a time line set by the gamemaster. For example, proving someone innocent of murder does not instantly teleport them out of prison for example, but it does set the wheels of justice moving so that the person will be freed or face a new trial. In addition, a goal is represented by a new aspect, which affects an area equal to the tier of a campaign.

A personal tier goal aspect would only refer to the character and perhaps a few other people while a cosmic tier goal aspect would be applicable to the universe.

The aspect represents how the world has changed because of this goal - most notably the character who achieved the goal and those it affected the most. The gamemaster may assign a separate aspect to the character who achieved the goal to represent how achieving the goal has changed the character.

Campaign aspects created by goals can be extremely powerful because any PC or NPC can invoke or tag them for effect. A goal that provides a "Cure for Cancer" aspect can be invoked to remove any cancer from a patient. A goal that imbues all of humanity with the potential to learn magic like "The Mystical Awakening of Ra" means any NPC can invoke the aspect to learn how to cast a spell, thus effectively giving everyone a free power source. A "Civil Rights for Aliens" aspect can be invoked to release imprisoned aliens or keep police from harassing aliens in the street. Aspects can compel as well. For example a city tier goal

"The Syndicate Is On Borrowed Time" can be used to compel Syndicate members into encounters against the police or have their assets seized or be attacked by rival criminals.

EXAMPLE GOAL

Iconoclast is a strident believer in transhuman philosophy. She wants to create an open source nano-technology implant that can be used to monitor health and mentally interface with computers and distribute it around the country, free to anyone who wants an implant. Looking at the trappings, she picks the following ones:

Information + Unusual: the implants provides this trapping to anyone who gets it. She will need access to a lot of information to design and plan this goal.

Networking: Iconoclast will have to network with other engineers and scientists to get all the info she needs.

Research + Unusual: This kind of project requires access to data secreted by super scientists in various bases on an esoteric topic and in total secrecy.

Craft + Unusual: building a mass nanotech fabrication plant is not covered by ISO standards.

Wealth: building countless nanotech implants will require a lot of raw materials, which means money.

Workspace + Unusual: This project needs a dedicated workspace for cutting edge technology.

Conviction Aspect: Transhumanity Now! This is driven by Iconoclast's belief in transhuman philosophy so it will be hard for her to stop or compromise.

This costs 11 skill points. The gamemaster assigns this as a global tier goal with 8 milestones and a 3 skill point cost multiplier. The final cost is 33 skill points and 8 milestones.

The gamemaster comes up with the following milestones for Iconoclast:

1. Secure a factory site by scaring away everyone near the site or deceive the authorities by making the site look like it has a different purpose.

2. Convince the legendary nanotech researcher Dr. Algernon to help with the project. He has been on sabbatical since his daughter went missing a month after Ragnarok.

3. Establish a distribution network for the implants by persuading a suitable organization to help your cause like the Underground or a collective of transhuman hackers.

4. Get cybernetic implant test data from the Ideal database by raiding one of their safe houses and accessing what's left of their computer network.

5. Acquire a nano-fabricator device from a crashed alien spaceship in the Gobi desert.

6. Perform tests on a live human subject, which is difficult to do while keeping the subject alive and unharmed.

7. Transport a massive shipment of raw materials from Siberia to the factory site without being detected by federal authorities or rival base raiders.

8. Retrieve a cold fusion reactor from a base to power the factory and start mass production of the implants.

This goal will take many sessions to complete, and will probably take most of a campaign to fully resolve. Assuming Iconoclast succeeds, the new nanotech implants will be distributed around the world, available to any would-be transhuman. The campaign aspect "Transhumanism NOW!" affects the entire planet. Anyone may invoke it to gain a bonus on relevant skill tests or use it as a power source to gain nanotech based Strange skills. Iconoclast gains the "Transhuman Pioneer" aspect to represent her work in the movement.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER

Caleb wants to make a headstrong character for a high power level campaign (30 skill points and 10 refresh) who rushes into danger and loves the thrill of battle. Looking at the options, the Adept archetype seems most interesting. A martial artist who gains superpowers through ancient Atlantean esoteric fighting techniques sounds like a fun character to play. He pictures his character as a washed up mixed martial arts (MMA) fighter who learned Atlantean techniques after Ragnarok. For background, normal human seems the most appropriate. Caleb names his character Adam Morrison before moving on to the five questions.

The first question, **Life Before Ragnarok,** determines Adam's early life. Adam was an athletic prodigy who lived on the wrong side of the tracks. He did not work well with others, so team sports were out, but Adam found MMA training as a perfect fit for his life. After several years of professional fighting with a decent record, Adam received a career-ending knee injury during a fight. Unable to continue his dream, Adam got a job at a local gym as a trainer that barely pays above flipping burgers.

Next is **Origin Story,** which describes how Adam received his powers. Several months after Ragnarok, a guy at the gym, Jim, tore a punching bag in half with single punch. Adam confronted Jim and learned that he had seen an ancient scroll that did something to him but couldn't describe exactly what it was in precise terms. A woman named Helena owned the scrolls and allowed others to view them, but it cost $5,000, upfront. At first, Adam was incredulous, but two weeks later, he saw a news report that showed Jim fighting a dozen riot cops to a standstill before being overwhelmed. Adam knew that he would never forgive himself if he didn't try to reclaim his lost glory, so he sold his car to pay Helena. As soon as he glanced at the scrolls, Adam's mind was sent back in time to ancient Atlantis, where he learned how to unlock the full potential of his body and mind. At least that's what he perceived. He may have been in a mystically simulated reality created by the scrolls in order to imbue warriors who viewed the scrolls. Adam has no way of knowing what happened to him. All he does know is he could perform superhuman feats of strength and speed after viewing the scrolls.

Joining the Movement focuses on why Adam decided to become a base raider. After gaining his powers, Adam chanced upon a mob attacking a group of aliens. Poor non-human refugees were common in the neighborhood, but Adam had never really thought about them one way or the other. But when he saw the hapless aliens being beaten until they stopped moving, he acted without thinking. Adam used his new skills to fight the mob off to save the aliens. Some in the mob recognized him and threatened revenge for protecting the non-humans, but Adam did not care. The aliens, grateful for his help, offered to repay him by telling him about a hidden base of a missing super villain, filled with weapons and money. Of course, it would be too dangerous to explore alone, but the aliens knew others who might be able to help him. Adam realized he'd have to leave the neighborhood soon or watch his back for the rest of his life because the residents would never forgive him for siding with non-humans.

The Darkest Moment in Adam's life came only a day after gaining his powers. Overjoyed at his new chance for a MMA career, Adam took a cab to a MMA training center for a chance to try out for a professional fight. The organizers had him spar with one of their fighters to assess his skills, but Adam broke his partner's knee in the first round. Adam had barely tapped into his Atlantean martial arts powers and he already had crippled a man. To his horror, he realized he had done to someone else what he had suffered through and fled the training center in a panic. He knew then that he could never misuse his talents again, so he could never become a professional MMA fighter.

Finally, Adam's **Crossover Adventure** happens during his first foray into base raiding. The aliens he met put him into contact with Iconoclast, a transhuman scientist and hacker. With her help, the two were able to unlock the vault door of the villain base in the city's sewers and defeated a squad of robotic guardians. The base contained a small cache of advanced technology including a drug that temporarily increased a person's ability to heal. Adam claimed the drug as his share of the loot. He gave the drug to the man he crippled so he could recover from his injury, but word soon spread throughout the city that Adam had access to contraband super science. The residents of his neighborhood surrounded his apartment building

that night while he was asleep and set fire to it, believing Adam was no longer human. Adam woke up and called Iconoclast for help. She was able to alert the fire department and trick the mob into leaving the house by remotely identifying their cell phones and calling them all at once.

When several members of the mob answered the phone, Iconoclast disguised her voice to make it sound like an inhuman monster and threatened them. The bluff worked and the mob scattered. Adam used his talents to rescue everyone else in his building. Adam took up base raiding full time after that night. He eventually plans to become a costumed superhero, but only after he's built up a network of allies and resources. He's even put together a costume and calls himself "Resilient" when he's raiding bases.

Adam has 30 skill points to distribute among ratings and trappings. For his strange skill, he decides that his ability to defeat the mob was a result of a spinning attack he calls the "Iron Cyclone Technique." He chooses the Dodge, Initiative [Physical], Stress Capacity [Health], and the Strike trapping with the Zone and Unusual extras for Iron Cyclone. This costs 14 points but he lowers it to 12 by picking a Major Complication named "Feared and hated by the common man." A drawback is necessary for a strange skill. Finally, he makes Iron Cyclone Technique a superhuman tier strange skill by paying 2 refresh.

Caleb wants a unique skill called "Stoic" to represent his background in physical training and years of dedication.

He picks Information, Resist Damage, Stress Capacity [Composure], and Willpower plus a conviction: "The strong must protect the weak." Altogether, this costs 5 skill points and is put at the extraordinary power tier by paying 1 refresh.

With 13 skill points left, Adam gets the following skill ratings:

Great (+4): Stoic
Good (+3): Iron Cyclone
Fair (+2): Unarmed
Average (+1): Alertness, Athletics, Contacting, Intimidation, Stealth, and Might

Next, aspects for Adam must be fleshed out. He already has a complication aspect from his strange skill:

"hated and feared by mortal men." Whenever Adam uses his superhuman powers, he risks terrifying normal people who see him as force of nature, not as a hero. His second aspect is a conviction from his Stoic unique skill: "The strong must protect the weak." All characters must have one conviction aspect not associated with a strange or unique skill, so he picks another conviction: "My Fighting Style is the Strongest." He has the normal human background, so he picks one to reflect his past: "Could have been a Contender."

For the adept archetype, he chooses "Visions of the Atlantean Dojo." He has three free aspects left (two were used up by his strange and unique skill drawbacks.) Since he's earned the trust of some aliens he selects "Out of this World Friends." The experience with the Atlantean scrolls disturbs Adam the more he thinks about it so an aspect called "Haunted by Dreams of Atlantis." Finally, Adam realizes the world needs heroes, so he plans to become a crime-fighting vigilante, thus the aspect "A superhero in the making."

Gifts are the next step. Caleb decides that Signature Aspect would be appropriate for Adam. He selects Visions of The Atlantean Dojo, which means he can invoke that aspect once per scene without paying a Fate Point. He decides to spend one refresh to buy the Skilled Gift, which gives him 5 additional skill points. He raises his skills, always remembering to follow the Skill Pyramid rule, as described on page 94. Adam is left with 6 refresh altogether. His new skill ratings are:

Great (+4): Stoic
Good (+3): Iron Cyclone, Unarmed
Fair (+2): Intimidation, Athletics
Average (+1): Alertness, Contacting, Stealth, and Might

Resilient is a skilled hand to hand fighter, able to unleash a tremendous amount of damage with his Iron Cyclone Technique. He can also take a beating, thanks to Stoic. However, outside of physical challenges, Resilient is quite limited in what he can do. Socially, he can only scare people into doing what he wants with Intimidation. However, thanks to Signature Aspect, he can give himself a +2 bonus once per scene on any roll that he can connect to Visions of the Atlantean Dojo. Because that aspect is open ended, a clever player could use it in many different ways.

Adam Morrison - AKA Resilient

ASPECTS

Adept: Visions of the Atlantean Dojo
Background: Could have been a Contender
Conviction: The strong must protect the weak
Conviction: My Fighting Style is the Strongest
Complication: Hated and feared by mortals
Out of this World Friends
A superhero in the making
Haunted by Dreams of Atlantis

SKILLS

Great (+4): Stoic
Good (+3): Iron Cyclone, Unarmed
Fair (+2): Intimidation, Athletics
Average (+1): Alertness, Contacting, Stealth, and Might

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Iron Cyclone Technique
Power Tier: Superhuman
Dodge, Initiative [Physical], Stress Capacity [Health], Strike + Zone + Unusual
Major Complication: Hated and feared by mortals

Stoic
Power Tier: Extraordinary
Information, Resist Damage, Stress Capacity [Composure], Willpower
Conviction: The strong must protect the weak

GIFTS

Signature Aspect: Visions of the Atlantean Dojo
Skilled

TIER BENEFITS:

Armor 2 [Health]
Armor 1 [Composure]

Can take 1 additional minor consequence for health.

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health O O O O O O
Composure O O O O O O
Reputation O O O

Refresh
Base Refresh 10 (High Power)
Power Tier -3
Gifts -1
Adjusted Refresh: 6

CAMPAIGN ASPECTS

Base Raiders is a broad setting that encompasses many superhero tropes and concepts but that doesn't mean you have to use all of them for your campaign. Players can pick the ideas and themes that interest them the most with the optional Campaign Aspects system so the gamemaster can weave them into the campaign. Each player describes up to four aspects based on issues, events, people, or places. No player has to choose or describe any campaign aspects though but it can enhance the quality of the game. A player can describe multiple aspects in a single area, like four places or people, but no player should contribute more than four aspects total. The best campaign aspects come from elements based in your player character's history. For example, a cult that hunts your character should be listed as an issue for the campaign. So should the black market doctor who installed your cybernetic leg.

Issues: What controversies dominate the headlines? What affects the daily lives of the player characters? Important issues to the player characters connect to the circumstances of their lives. While the financial regulations of the stock market are an important issue in the global economy, they are probably not very important to most base raiders. Conversely, the civil rights of non-humans are very important to all aliens and magical beings. Some issues only affect specific regions or

sections of the population. The shutdown of a factory in a city only affects the people who live there. Once you identify the issue, think of a phrase that captures its essence. "The Rise of the Crystal Children" describes the growing influence and power of a cult with dark secrets while "No jobs for the working man in New Arcadia" illustrates how a shift in the economy affects blue collar workers. Issues can be countered or changed through an appropriate goal. The Crystal Children cult could be stopped with a goal to expose their secrets to the public and the blue collar residents of New Arcadia could be helped by opening a new factory.

Places: Important places to the player characters could deserve an aspect, if they are integral to the campaign. Be sure to name the place, along with the aspect name. The Underground's local black market bazaar deserves an aspect like "We'll buy it at a high price!" The newly built private prison designed to hold superhumans should get an aspect like "The last stop

of the criminally empowered." Other important places could include the homes or headquarters of important characters, abandoned hero or villain bases, or places with unique features, like a nearby magical nexus or the site of an infamous crime.

A place works as a campaign aspect if you can see multiple scenes taking place there throughout the campaign. For example, city hall might be a good setting for one or two scenes, but if your campaign focuses on a group of mystic non-humans on the run from the law, it doesn't make much sense to set many scenes there.

Events: Recent and important events that have happened since Ragnarok can drastically affect the tone of your campaign. For example, let's say a few months before the campaign began, a group of petty thieves bought super soldier drugs off the black market and used their new super powers to go on a crime spree. One of them makes a mistake, gets arrested, and the tells the police everything. The story becomes public

and the resulting publicity causes a new call by politicians to crack down on base raiding and the trade in super soldier drugs. The resulting aspect is called "Beware the superpowered criminal!" Any player characters who use superpowers in public are more likely to be viewed as potential criminals. On the other hand, a base raider who uses his newfound superpowers to save lives in dangerous search and rescue operations would be viewed as a hero. Even better if he discovers a cure for a rare but deadly disease in an abandoned base and releases it to the public for free. The aspect would be called "Base Raiders: The next generation of heroes." Civilians who encounter the player characters would be more likely to give them the benefit of the doubt.

People: Important NPCs in the campaign could be potential allies, enemies, or unknowns. Players do not get to stat the NPC out, but only name them and provide an aspect to describe them. Good campaign NPCs are ones who have a reason to interact with all of the player characters, not just one or two of them. Black market dealers, crime bosses, other base raiders, or government agents make great campaign NPCs. Furthermore, don't be afraid to list enemies in this section.

After all, the player characters may turn enemies into allies (or vice versa) during the course of the campaign. Interesting people also have unique agendas or personalities to separate them from the crowd. A government agent who doggedly hunts the player characters but who loves high culture with the aspect "Cop by day, Fine Arts Patron by night" is more interesting as an adversary than a humorless agent in sunglasses. A black market dealer who sells high tech equipment and homemade cookies made by his daughter is more memorable as a NPC with the aspect "One Stop Shop for Cybernetics and Confectioneries."

Once the list is complete, the gamemaster has many potential plot hooks and elements to draw upon when constructing adventures. These aspects are not meant to limit your campaign though. It is not necessary to weave them into any given adventure. Frequently, a campaign will change over time and new themes and aspects will arise. They are not ironclad laws that prevent other elements from coming into play. They are only suggestions to keep a campaign consistent and entertaining.

COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES

The world is at critical junction a year after Ragnarok. It could eventually become a transhuman utopia, where superpowers are available to all and heroic guardians keep the peace or it could become a nightmarish dystopia where the superpowered rule and crush the weak. The progression of the setting towards a better or worse state of development is tracked through collateral consequences. Collateral consequences are a pool of consequences shared by all the PCs (and only the PCs). They work just like a character's personal consequences, and come in three degrees of severity: Moderate (-4 stress), Severe (-6 stress), and Dire (-8 stress). At the start of the story, the players collectively have three Moderate, two Severe, and one Dire Collateral consequences available to them.

Any player can use any of them anytime with any type of stress, but unlike personal consequences, Collateral consequences need not be directly connected to the conflict that created them. They're a narrative device—an opportunity for the players to affect the nature of society around them, if they so choose. A Collateral consequence could be an innocent bystander catching a face full of mutagenic toxic waste, or it could be a Senate subcommittee about the dangers of artificial intelligences, or anything in between. You're essentially trading short-term security for some sort of future trouble. What this trouble may be depends largely on how severe the Collateral consequence is.

Moderate: A Collateral consequence of this severity can be rectified during the scene in which it's created. Doing so requires a skill roll, using whatever skill is most appropriate to the situation. For example, if a player were to take a Moderate consequence to avoid taking damage from an explosion, that consequence might be "Building On Fire." If the PCs can put out the fire before the scene's over, that consequence slot is cleared and can be used again. If not, the consequence remains and can never be removed. Later on, the GM or players might invoke or compel that consequence to create a situation that stems from it, such as being confronted by a tenant in the building who has it out for the PCs because their fight led to his home

being burned to the ground.

Each Moderate Collateral consequence has a stress track two boxes long and a target number of Great (+4). Record shifts obtained over that number on the stress track, and once the stress track is bypassed, the consequence is cleared.

Severe: Unlike Moderate consequences, Collateral consequences of this severity cannot be removed. Once they're taken, they're there for good. As such, they can have immediate and persistent effects on society. If that "Building On Fire" consequence were Severe instead of Moderate, that burning tenement would become a gnawing issue in the public's mind—perhaps one seen as a symptom of a greater problem, or the flashpoint for a movement to arrest non-humans and base raiderse, starting with the PCs. At the end of the story, every Severe Collateral consequence remakes one of the campaign aspects in its own image, if those rules are being used for your campaign. For example, perhaps that burning building galvanizes "A Fractured Society" into one that believes that "Superhumans Are a Public Menace."

Dire: A Collateral consequence of this severity represents a serious and profound impact on the campaign setting. Like a Severe consequence, it alters an existing campaign aspect at the end of the story, but it also requires that each PC alter a personal aspect. That's just how dire a Dire Collateral consequence is. Keep track of the group's Collateral consequences on a sheet of paper in the middle of the table where everyone can see it, or maybe on a small whiteboard (the better to easily erase and replace those Moderate Collateral consequences)—whatever you all prefer. Regardless, as players, don't forget to make use of them. Not only are they frequently life savers, but they also have enormous potential to add to the story and create future plot hooks, as well.

ADVANCEMENT

Base Raiders is a game of revolution and progress. As time marches on after Ragnarok, the world changes dramatically as the secrets of superpowers spreads. The PCs are no exception, constantly growing and developing as a result of their adventures. This advancement occurs after significant developments in the narrative: at the end of a chapter, story, or volume.

CHAPTER ADVANCEMENT

A chapter can generally be equated with a session of play, or with the resolution of a significant story element. The end of a chapter also provides an opportunity for the characters to evolve in response to what's just happened. This means one of the following:

- Swap two skills of adjacent skill ratings with each other, such as a Fair (+2) skill and an Average (+1) skill.
- Replace one Gift with another or, if you have the Refresh to spend, buy a new Gift.
- Earn one skill point, but only usable for a goal or pay off burn.
- Rename a Free aspect.

Chapter advancements let you shift a character's focus to reflect the story so far, or just change something about the character that isn't working out as expected, like an aspect or skill. However, these alterations have to be reasonable within the context of the chapter. For example, if the chapter ends with the PCs in prison, one of them can't suddenly acquire a set of lockpicks or a plasma cannon while they're in there.

Additional skill points earned can be spent at the end of a Chapter. Alternatively, if there's significant downtime and a reasonable opportunity for the character to learn something new or improve an existing skill during a Chapter, they can be spent then as well.

STORY ADVANCEMENT

A series of chapters—usually three or four sessions—constitutes a story. When a story ends, your character's Refresh increases by one. He also gets one of the following:

- One chapter advancement
- One skill point
- Rename a Conviction aspect.
- Upgrade the Power Tier of one skill, if you have the Refresh to spend.
- One Refresh point, usable only to pay off burn.

As with a chapter advancement, any changes to the character should derive organically from the story itself. With the end of a story usually comes the resolution of a major plot line. As a consequence, the

characters have been through the wringer and are probably worse for wear.

If the character has a Severe consequence at the end of a story, he can erase it and alter one of his aspects accordingly. For example, if your character finds herself with a Severe consequence of "Shattered Faith in Mankind," you get to clear it—but you also have to change one of her personal aspects to reflect her new-found cynicism. Maybe her "Heroic Tendencies" are twisted into a belief that "The Only Person I Can Count On Is Myself." But there's a silver lining: The character's Refresh increases by one. This is in addition to the standard point of Refresh received at the end of a story. However, this point of Refresh cannot be spent until the end of the next chapter or story.

VOLUME ADVANCEMENT

A string of connected stories makes up a volume. Perhaps the characters have been struggling to foil the machinations of a single super villain, finally confront him face-to-face, and emerge victorious (or not). Or maybe the link between the stories is a theme rather than a person, such as dealing with a rash of individuals around the globe who've been mutated into gigantic kaiju-style monsters. Whatever the case, the characters will never be the same.

At the end of a volume, the character's Refresh increases by one and he can clear a Severe consequence. He also gets all of the following:

- Two chapter advancements.
- One story advancement
- Rename a Conviction aspect, or turn a Free aspect into another Conviction aspect.

In addition, the group's allotment of Collateral consequences increases, starting with another Moderate consequence. If the group already has four Moderate consequences, add a third Severe consequence instead. If the group already has three Severe consequences, add a second Dire consequence instead.

The end of a volume signifies a major change in the campaign. You can think of it as shifting gears, or moving up a weight class. The characters grow more powerful, but so do the threats they'll be facing in the future.

CHAPTER EIGHT
RUNNING THE GAME

It is the great goal of this book to provide you, the GM, with enough material and inspiration to run a truly fun and memorable game. This section offers some techniques and advice for leveraging the setting and its themes into play, and on taking full advantage of all the hooks and hints your players give you when building their character. It also contains rules and guidelines for interacting with the environment, setting scenes, and creating and playing the various antagonists (and occasionally, allies) the players will encounter, along with an extensive sampling of NPCs of every stripe.

TIME AND SPACE

FATE handles both time and distance in abstract terms. The first is measured by steps on the Time Table; the second, by loosely defined areas called zones.

The Time Table

Whenever a character does something, it takes a certain amount of time—anywhere from an instant for something like throwing a punch to a few days or more for conducting intensive academic research or forging

an enchanted sword.

The Time Table lists a wide range of time increments, from no time at all at the top to an eon at the bottom. Each of these is called a step. When speaking of taking less time than normal, we refer to that as steps up on the Time Table; taking longer than normal means taking steps down.

Where two values are given, the one before the slash is the time required in a conflict. Most actions in combat require just that—An Action—and can be combined with a supplemental action, which imposes a -1 penalty to the character's skill roll for the round, or a Free Action, which carries no penalty. Something that requires A Full Action, however, consumes a character's entire effort for the round—not even a Free Action can be taken with a Full Action.

Zones

Zones divide up the geography of a scene into intuitive areas of action. When you're in the same zone as someone else, you can have a civilized conversation, a fistfight, or any interaction that requires proximity. If you're a zone away from that person, you'll probably have to shout to communicate, and the only way

The Time Table
Free Action / No Time
An Action / An Instant
A Full Action / A Few Moments
Two Rounds / Half a Minute
Three Rounds / A Minute
A Conflict / A Few Minutes
A Scene / 15 Minutes
Half an Hour
An Hour
A Few Hours
An Afternoon
A Day
A Few Days
A Week
A Few Weeks
A Month
A Season
Half a Year
A Year
A Few Years
A Decade
A Generation
A Lifetime
A Century
Five Hundred Years
A Millennium
An Eon

that—a single zone—or it could be divided into multiple floors, each with its own collection of zones, such as Entry Foyer, Living Room, Main Hall, Stairway, Dining Room, and so forth.

It's often a good idea to further distinguish a scene's zones with one or two aspects. For example, that Dining Room probably has a "Table and Chairs," and the Stairway could have "Creaky Third Step." The more detailed you get with zones and aspects, the more easily the players will be able to interact with and make use of the environment. To keep things straight, draw a series of circles on a piece of blank paper, labeled with their aspects.

By default, a character can move 1 zone as a supplemental action. Moving farther than that requires an Athletics roll, or a skill with an appropriate Mobility trapping. See the trapping descriptions for Climb, Leap, and Move for more detail.

Beyond common sense considerations such as two people needing to be in the same room to be able to have a discussion, only physical conflicts really demand zones.

BORDER VALUES

Zones can also have factors that make crossing between them difficult—things like walls, locked doors, fences, moats, debris, rubble, or some other complication. These are represented by border values. Subtract the border value from the skill roll made to enter the zone, or, if the movement is a supplemental action, from whatever skill roll the character makes during the round.

For example, let's say Knight Errant wants to drop down on a mugger in an alley from the rooftop above. That's a movement from one zone (Rooftop) to another (Alley). The GM rules that the drop means a border value of 3. Since Knight Errant's objective this round is to attack the criminal, the movement is a supplemental action, so he'll take a penalty of -3 to his Energy Sword roll.

DOING THINGS

Characters in your games are going to do a lot. For most things they do, there's no real need for rules: They

you can engage them in combat is to throw or shoot something at them. If the distance separating you is two zones or greater, only firearms and other missile weapons can reach your enemy.

There are no hard-and-fast rules for how big or small a zone is—use your best judgment and settle on whatever makes sense for the scene. Generally speaking, you only need a few. For example, a scene that takes place on a hill could be divided into three zones: Hilltop, Hillside, and Base. Or you could get more detailed, if that's what the scene demands: The Big Rock, The Clearing, Eastern Hillside, Western Hillside, Riverside, Forest. Similarly, a house could be just

can stand, walk, talk, go shopping, and otherwise do normal things without needing to roll dice. They can even take actions that use their skills, like driving a car or flying a jet pack, without worrying about the dice. No, the dice only come out when things get interesting—when there's a challenge with meaningful consequences for both success and failure.

Generally speaking, when a character rolls the dice, it's a success if the result matches or exceeds the difficulty; otherwise, it's a failure. When the issue is simple, then this may be all that's necessary, but sometimes you also need to know how well a character did or did not do. For example, if a character rolls three higher than the target, that's better than rolling only one higher.

Effort, Shifts, and Effect

Accomplishing a task—climbing a wall, singing an aria, stabbing a sauropod—consists of three parts: your effort, the shifts you obtain, and your final effect.

EFFORT

The total of your roll plus your skill and any other modifiers, including bonuses from invoking aspects, is your effort. This will always be compared against a target number, be it Mediocre (+0) for an easy, everyday task, a higher static number for more difficult tasks, or an opposing party's effort.

EXAMPLE: Iconoclast is setting a trap in a junkyard. She uses her Good (+3) Stealth skill to do this. As this is a static task, the GM rules that Iconoclast only needs to hit a target of Mediocre (+0) to succeed. After rolling the dice, adding her skill bonus, and spending a Fate Point to invoke her "Genetically Augmented Intellect" aspect, Iconoclast's total effort is Great (+4).

SHIFTS

The margin by which your effort overcomes that target number is the number of shifts you've obtained on your roll. In a conflict, these shifts pretty much automatically go towards damaging your opponent, physically or otherwise, but in other circumstances shifts can be spent to achieve other goals. Sometimes the

GM will spend shifts in accordance with what you've described, or sometimes you'll spend them yourself.

Among other things, shifts can be spent to:

- Reduce time required: Make the action take less time, usually one step on the Time Table per shift.
- Increase quality: Improve the quality of the job done beyond the minimum required.
- Increase subtlety: Make the results of your action harder for someone else to detect.
- Overflow: In a conflict—usually physical combat—shifts in excess of what's needed to Take Out a group of Minions can be applied to another group of Minions. These excess shifts are referred to as Overflow. (See The Opposition for details.)

EXAMPLE: Iconoclast's Great (+4) effort vs. a Mediocre (+0) target gives her four shifts on her roll. The GM decides that the two factors at work here are how deadly the trap is and how long it takes to complete (A Few Hours by default). Iconoclast's player points out that how well-hidden it is will make a difference, too—if the pursuers can't see the trap, it'll take them by surprise. The GM agrees.

Consequently, shifts can be spent to make the trap more effective, faster to set, and/or harder to detect. She can take a few hours to make a Great (+4) trap that has only Mediocre (+0) concealment, or a Fair (+2) trap with Average (+1) concealment that only takes an hour to build, or any other combination of those three factors and her 4 shifts.

There is no such thing as "negative shifts"—if the effort falls short of the target number, it's a failure, plain and simple. However, if that failure could reasonably be mitigated by taking more time with the task, the character can retroactively gain a +1 to the roll for each step down on the Time Table.

As a rule of thumb, this is limited to a +4 bonus for four steps down. For example, if picking a lock should normally take about 15 minutes, the character could opt to spend the entire afternoon to gain +4 and overcome missing the roll by 4.

If the effort results in three or more shifts, it generates spin. Spin has different effects in different situations—for example, the Impact Gift uses spin to create an aspect—but it's most important in conflicts. (See Conflicts, below, for more on this.)

INTERPRETING SHIFTS

Let's say your roll succeeds easily, but you don't have a use for those excess shifts. What do they mean in terms of the narrative?

0 shifts: Minimal success. Not bad, but not great either. Complications may ensue.

1 shift: Notable success. Your performance is solid and reliable, equal to the work of a true professional.

3 shifts: Significant success. Your performance is impressive and masterful. Moreover, your roll generates spin, if you have a use for that.

5 shifts: Potent success. Not only is your performance remarkable, it may carry some secondary benefit, such as a deeper insight into the situation at hand.

10+ shifts: Incredible success. A success of this caliber is usually the result of applying a supernatural solution to a mundane task. Onlookers are likely to either give you a wide berth or tag along like eager puppies, as appropriate.

EFFECT

The number of shifts obtained and put directly towards your intention—i.e., what you were trying to get done in the first place—is your effect. For instance, in the example above, the main thing Iconoclast is trying to do is harm or discourage her pursuers, so shifts spent directly on the quality of his trap will be his effect.

EXAMPLE: Iconoclast chooses to make a trap with Average (+1) Stealth in An Hour (requiring her to spend 1 shift), which means that she has 2 shifts left over to spend on the trap's effect, which in this case is Fair (+2). When the Hybrid gang members who are after her come upon the trap, Iconoclast's player will roll the trap's Average (+1) Stealth opposed by the goons' Alertness, then make an attack with its Fair (+2) Arms (the trap's effect). If they saw the trap, they defend with Athletics; otherwise, they defend as if their skill were

Mediocre (+0).

SETTING DIFFICULTIES

Sometimes it can seem tricky to figure out just how difficult a given task should be. You can use the following guidelines to help determine where to set difficulties relative to a character's skills.

- Skill -2 or lower: The character will nearly always succeed without needing to invoke any aspects.
- Skill -1: The character is likely to succeed, but may have to invoke an aspect.
- Skill +0: The character's chances of success and failure are roughly even.
- Skill +1: The character will probably have to invoke an aspect to succeed.
- Skill +2 or higher: The character will almost always have to invoke one or more aspects to succeed.

If the task's Power Tier is higher than the skill's, that matters a great deal as well. Generally speaking, for each Tier of difference, you can expect the player to need to invoke two aspects to make up for the deficit.

When to Roll Dice

Dice are used in one of three types of situations:

- Simple Actions: The character rolls against a fixed difficulty. Most aspect declarations are simple actions.
- Contests: Two characters each roll, with the high roll winning and generating shifts. Aspect maneuvers and assessments (and opposed declarations) are contests.
- Conflicts: Two or more characters act in direct opposition to one another, but resolution is not as simple as a contest.

Simple actions are rolled against a difficulty set by the GM and are used to simply see if a character can do something, and possibly how well he can do it. The GM describes the situation and the player chooses a skill to apply to it, and rolls against a difficulty determined by the GM (by default, Mediocre).

Some sample simple actions include:

• Climbing a wall
• Researching an obscure fact
• Examining a crime scene for clues
• Shooting a (non-character) target

Generally speaking, the quality of a simple action beyond success or failure only matters when the results of that action are going to be referenced later. For example, if your effort to conceal a secret compartment under a loose floorboard is Great (+4), that'll be the difficulty for anyone else who tries to find it.

Contests are very much like simple actions, except the action is in direct opposition to someone else and easily resolved one way or another. Rather than setting a difficulty, each party rolls the appropriate skill, and the outcome is resolved as if the high roll had beaten a difficulty equal to the low roll. A tie means both succeed, but whether that means the outcome is a tie or if it calls for another roll depends on the situation. Some sample contests include:

• An arm wrestling match
• A quick footrace
• A game of chance

Ordinarily, shifts obtained in a contest don't really matter—all you really want to know is who won. In some situations, however, the outcome of the contest may influence a future roll, the GM may offer a bonus to the winning player for the second roll, or even let the victor place a temporary aspect on himself, his competitor, or the scene, as appropriate to the situation.

The GM may also declare a consequential contest: The loser takes a Minor consequence for a loss of 2 or 3 shifts, a Moderate consequence for a loss of 4 to 5 shifts, or a Severe consequence for a loss of 6 shifts or more. Consequential contests are best for when circumstances call for something a bit more dramatic, despite the simple outcome.

Other times, the GM or the players may want something that takes longer than a single roll without having a full-blown contest. In these cases, an extended contest—a series of rolls that add up to a final result—is the way to go. There are two basic ways to go about this, which we'll call the race and the chase.

DIFFICULTY AND POWER TIERS

When attempting a simple action with a difficulty of a Power Tier higher than the skill you're using, replace one Fudge die with a d6 per degree of difference. But instead of adding the result of the d6 to the roll, subtract it. Compare your effort to the target number, as usual, to determine your effect.

For example, let's say you're attempting to pick Great (+4) (E) lock using your Good (+3) Burglary. Because the Power Tier of the task is one higher than your skill's Power Tier, you swap out a Fudge die for a d6 and roll 3dF-1d6. Your result: — + — 2, or -3. Adding that to your skill rating of Good (+3) yields a total effort of Mediocre (+0)—not nearly good enough to defeat that lock. Spending 2 Fate Points to invoke two aspects, though, will give you the +4 you need to succeed.

In the race, set a number as the goal or "finish line"— the higher the number, the longer the race—then have each participant roll against a difficulty number, usually Mediocre (+0), and record how many shifts he obtains.

Repeat this process, accumulating shifts each round, until one participant accumulates enough shifts to reach the finish line. That's your winner. Usually only one skill (or one skill trapping) will be applicable to the task at hand, but if the player can justify another within reason, the GM's free to allow whatever works in context. The participants can take as much time as is required to reach the goal, but that's not to say that the situation can't worsen the longer it continues.

EXAMPLE: Knight Errant and a psychic serial killer are trapped on opposite ends of a burning building's rooftop, their only possible means of escape a hover platform some distance away. If they simply fight each other, the fire below will consume them both. Instead, each makes a beeline for the platform. It's a race! The GM sets the difficulty at Mediocre (+0) and the finish

line at 5 shifts—but each round spent on the rooftop will inflict a point of Health stress due to the heat and smoke inhalation. The two lock eyes for an instant, then run for their lives. After three rounds, Knight Errant has his 5 shifts, while the serial killer only has 3. Errant leaps onto the platform with 3 Health stress, while the serial killer—a Good (+2) quality Minion—falls to his knees mere feet from salvation, coughing and choking.

By a similar token, the chase also uses skill rolls and tracks accumulated shifts. But here, participants try to generate as many shifts as possible within a limited time period. In addition, instead of a static target number, the difficulty can change on a round-by-round basis. Individual stress tracks are replaced by a single stress track, with victory for the pursuer on the left and victory for the quarry on the right.

In the first round, the quarry rolls his skill against a target of Mediocre (+0), but modified by the Power Tier of the pursuer's applicable skill. (For example, if the quarry is using a skill in the Extraordinary Tier and the pursuer's skill is merely Mundane, the quarry rolls 3dF+1d6, but if each participant's skill were in the Extraordinary Tier, he'd just roll 4dF.) This is the quarry's "head start."

On the next round, and on every subsequent round, the quarry sets a difficulty number for himself and for his pursuer, then each rolls their relevant skill against that number. For every shift obtained by the quarry, he fills in a stress box; for every shift obtained by the pursuer, she clears a stress box. If the quarry accumulates enough shifts to bypass the stress track before time is up, he wins, whatever that may mean in the context of the contest. If not, or if the pursuer manages to clear the entire stress track, the pursuer wins.

EXAMPLE: Before Knight Errant ended up on that rooftop, he had to outrun the fire racing up the stairway from below. The GM draws a stress track with five boxes and sets the time limit at three rounds. If Errant can't get to the roof before then, the fire will have caught up with him! For his head start, Knight Errant rolls his Fair (+2) Athletics against a target of Mediocre (+0) and gets a + + + 0 , for a total of effort of Superb (+5). He checks all five stress boxes— an excellent start!

Then the GM rolls the fire's Good (+3) Athletics, but only rolls +−, for an Average (+1) effort. That clears the fifth stress box, barely cutting into Errant's lead.

Sensing victory, Errant's player opts to set the difficulty at Mediocre (+0) again for the second round. His next Athletics roll is + 0 0 -, which added to his skill rating gives him a Fair (+2) effort—enough to check that fifth box again and bypass the end of the stress track.

In both the race and the chase, time needs to be an important factor. This is a little more explicit in a chase, which has a pre-set time limit measured in rounds, but time should matter in a race as well. The difference is that time crunch in a race is usually going to be more focused on the narrative rather than enforced by mechanics. Don't bother with a race if there's no real hurry in the first place.

Conflicts are what happen when two or more characters are in opposition in a fashion that cannot be quickly and cleanly resolved. A conflict is broken down into a number of exchanges where each party makes an effort to try to achieve their goal, taking turns to act. Opponents who stand in their way may be called upon to roll a response. They will accumulate success in the form of stress on opponents. Eventually, opponents will accumulate enough stress, or suffer enough consequences, to be taken out; alternatively, opponents may preemptively offer a concession.

An entire scene may (and often does) revolve around a conflict. Conflicts include:

- Any kind of fight scene
- A political debate
- A long, tense stare-down
- Destroying a rival's public reputation before they can return the favor
- Trying to talk your way past a bouncer as he tries to scare you off

Conflicts are special and get their own section.

CONFLICTS

Once a conflict begins, take it step by step:

1. Frame the scene.
2. Establish groups.
3. Establish initiative.
4. Begin the exchange.
 a. Take actions.
 b. Resolve actions.
 c. Begin a new exchange.

Step 1: Where Are We?

At the most basic level, this is when the GM tells the players where they are, what they can see, hear, and smell, who else is there, and that sort of thing—give the players a sense of where they are and what's going on from their characters' perspective, so they can act or react accordingly.

Mechanically, though, the GM's primary means of framing the scene are zones and scene aspects. Zones have been discussed earlier , but scene aspects require a little more fleshing-out.

Scene aspects represent anything about the scene that could provide an advantage or disadvantage in a conflict. The GM should make any obvious scene aspects, such as "Dimly Lit" or "Quiet As The Grave," available to the players to tag or invoke. The best way to do this is to put each on an index card in the middle of the table, and mark them with a check once they've been tagged. (Hint: Get the ones that are blank on both sides.) Or you can use a small dry-erase board, then wipe it clean once the scene's over—whatever works for the group.

Any aspects that aren't obvious from the start, such as the energy pulsing from a cursed obelisk concealed behind a thin plaster wall, or the personal aspects of an NPC, have to be discovered by the PCs, usually through an aspect assessment or some other manner that makes sense, before they can be tagged or invoked.

It's generally considered bad form for the GM to tag scene aspects before the players get a chance.

On the whole, the more scene aspects there are,

the more lively the environment will be, and the more the players will be inclined to interact with it. This is a good thing—the more action, the better. GMs should therefore be pretty liberal about throwing scene aspects out there, giving the players a very tactile way of interacting with the environment and incorporating these details into their action descriptions. Five scene aspects, give or take a couple, is usually a good number.

Scene Aspects: The Players' Role

As the GM, don't feel like you have to come up with every scene aspect on your own. Take a minute to field a few suggestions from the players, then write down three or four that really speak to you. It's a win-win situation: You get to outsource some of your workload onto the players, and because the aspects come from those players, they're more likely to use them in interesting ways.

This is best for improvised scenes—ones you hadn't planned for, but that flow naturally from the narrative. Most of the time you'll want to figure out aspects for the "expected" scenes in advance.

Step 2: Who's On Your Side?

It may seem like a no-brainer, but it's good to sort out who wants what out of the scene before dice start rolling. Usually, it's a simple matter of PCs vs. NPCs, but it doesn't always have to be so clear-cut. Maybe some PCs will be at odds with others, or simply want a gentler or harsher resolution than their compatriots.

Taking time to establish groups gives everyone involved in the conflict a chance to state their intentions. If one PC wants to pump a criminal for information while another just wants to kill every bad guy in the room, that's something they each need to know up front, because before too long they're going to be at odds. Similarly, it's a helpful reminder for the GM to make sure she knows what each of the NPCs in the scene hopes to get out of it, which can inform their decisions later when it comes time to decide committed they are to attaining their goals.

This is also the time to figure out who's facing off against whom. Is one character going to make himself a target for the enemy's minions while his companions try to defuse the bomb, or do the PCs want to deal with one problem at a time? Will everyone talk to the Duchess at once, or will that be the responsibility of the PC with the best Rapport? Giving everyone an explicit time to determine all of this can save some headaches later on.

Step 3: Who Goes First?

The next step is to decide in what order the participants in the conflict will act. This is referred to as the initiative order, or just initiative—as in "taking the initiative." The skill (or Initiative trapping) used for initiative depends on the scope of the conflict. Physical conflicts use Alertness (Initiative [Physical]), mental conflicts use Resolve (Initiative [Mental]), and social conflicts use Empathy (Initiative [Social]).

There are many ways to skin this particular cat, some of which include:

- **Roll for it**. Everyone rolls the appropriate skill, invoking or tagging aspects if desired, and acts in order from highest to lowest. Egalitarian, but can bog things down with a lot of dice-rolling before the conflict's really even begun.
- **Skill ratings only**. As above, but instead of rolling, initiative is determined by the Power Tiers and raw ratings of the participants' skills, with ties being broken by a roll-off or GM fiat. Also egalitarian, but not finegrained enough for some groups' liking.
- **Clockwise**. Start with the character with the highest initiative-determining skill rating, then just proceed around the table clockwise after that. Initiative generally matters most in the first round anyway.
- **He started it!** Begin with whoever initiated the conflict—threw the first punch, delivered the first insult, intimated the first threat—and proceed via one of the above methods from there. Organic, but has the potential to unfairly favor whichever player

is most likely to start trouble (on the other hand, incentivizing that sort of troublemaking behavior isn't necessarily a bad idea).
- **Players first, GM last.** Combined with any of the above methods, all of the players get to act in their initiative order first before any of the NPCs. Emphasizes the importance of the PCs in the story, but sometimes means an interesting antagonist gets shut down before he can move a muscle.

Regardless, remember to first consider the skill's Power Tier—a skill with the Initiative trapping of a higher Power Tier will always let the character act before anyone else. If there's a tie for Power Tier, the GM can call for a dice roll or just break it in whatever way makes the most sense.

Step 4: What Do You Want to Do?

When your character's turn comes up during the exchange, describe what your character is doing in terms of one of the basic conflict actions. These are:

- **Attack**: Make an opposed roll against your target with the intent of causing harm (dealing stress).
- **Maneuver**: Make a skill roll (usually opposed by your target) to try to gain an advantage instead of dealing stress.
- **Move**: Roll to change zones, with each shift representing a zone entered or a point of border value overcome.
- **Full Defense**: Hunker down and turtle up. By concentrating entirely on defense for the exchange (a Full Action), any defense rolls you make receive a +2 bonus.

Each character gets one basic action for the turn, each of which requires an action, unless indicated otherwise. However, you can usually take a supplemental action as well, which imposes a -1 penalty to your skill roll for the exchange. It's pretty easy to spot which action requires a skill roll and which is merely supplemental. Look at the two skills and consider which one is interesting, or carries the most risk—that's the

one that gets the dice roll. For example, if you want to kick open a door and punch a cultist in the face, the door-kicking seems relatively bland compared to the face-punching, so you'll roll Unarmed at -1. If both tasks definitely require a skill roll, such as punching one enemy while trying to shoot another, neither can be a supplemental action to the other. Only one at a time can be attempted.

Free Actions are so minor as to require almost no time or attention at all, such as taking a quick look at your surroundings or shouting out a warning to your allies. As such, a Free Action can be combined with An Action at no penalty.

Each of these basic actions is described in more detail below.

Attack

An attack is a direct assault against your opponent with the intent of causing harm in the form of stress and consequences. As such, attacks are always opposed rolls between the attacker and the defender. There is no limit to the number of times a combatant can defend against attackers in an exchange, even against multiple attackers.

The skill used for an attack depends on the attacker's agenda and preferred methods. The Common skills that cover attacks include Melee, Unarmed, and Firearms for physical conflicts (or any skill with the Strike or Shoot trapping), Intimidation for mental conflicts (or any skill with the Menace trapping), and Contacting for social conflicts (or any skill with the Influence trapping). The attacker's skill also determines what skill the defender can use as a defense. See the list of trapping descriptions for more detail.

If the attacker wins the roll, the shifts he acquires translate into a stress value he can inflict on the defender. If the defender wins, or it's a tie, the attack fails.

STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

When an attack succeeds, it inflicts stress on the target. Stress is an abstract representation of the difficulties that threaten to take someone out of a conflict. Health stress can be minor cuts, bruises, fatigue, and the like. Composure stress can be thought of as an erosion of

willpower, nerve, or emotional control. Reputation stress represents disparaging rumors or damaging slights against one's character.

In any event, you can look at stress as the closest of close calls—not enough to be a lasting problem, but enough that you can't withstand it forever.

When you take stress, check the box on the appropriate stress track equal to the total stress dealt and all boxes to the left of it. If the box to be checked is already full, the stress "rolls up" to the next clear box. For example, if an attack deals 2 Health stress, check the second and first boxes on your Health stress track. If another attack deals another 2 stress to the same track, check the track's third box.

Anytime a character takes stress, he can opt to take a consequence instead—a special kind of aspect that represents a longer-lasting result of failing to defend against attacks. You don't want consequences, but sometimes they're your only chance to stay on your feet.

The exact nature of a consequence largely depends on the nature of the conflict as well as its scope (Physical, Mental, or Social). The more consequences of a given scope you can withstand, the harder it is to defeat you in a conflict of that scope. For example, a character who can take two Minor Social consequences is going to be more difficult to discredit than another character who can only take one Minor Social consequence. A Physical consequence might be a "Bloody Nose," representing an actual injury, or "Off-Balance," representing the difficulty the character now has coordinating his feet after being punched in the nose. Or maybe the character is now suffering from "Shaken Confidence" after taking a fist to the face.

Note that even though "Shaken Confidence" doesn't necessarily reflect a physical condition or wound, it was derived from a physical attack so it's fair game for a Physical consequence.

Normally, the player taking the consequence gets to describe what it is, so long as it's compatible with the attack that inflicted the harm in the first place. The GM can arbitrate the appropriateness of a consequence as well, which may result in a back-and-forth conversation between player(s) and GM to agree on something that makes sense. This is perfectly normal and nothing to worry about.

The consequences a character can withstand come

MENTAL WEAPONS, SOCIAL ARMOR

Weapons and armor don't have to be restricted to purely physical conflicts. A $10,000 suit from a top fashion designer can impress the board of directors while a Nobel Peace Prize can cast doubt on those nasty rumors.

However, these are contextual advantages. That suit might impress in an office but not at a heavy metal concert. This makes it difficult to balance against their physical equivalents, and a reason why the Equipment Gift is limited to tangible gear. Plus, mental and social assets such as these can be much more ephemeral. Suits aren't quite so flashy after a gunfight or two.

Keep all of that in mind before introducing "weapons" and "armor" into non-physical conflicts. If you still want to go for it, don't go overboard—bonus stress and Armor should be reserved for key situations to maintain their specialness. These types of advantages should be cherished and hard to come by. They should also be more about flavor than anything else, so keep the modifier to within +/- 3 stress.

They make for great short-term in-game rewards on the fly, as well. Did you host a charity ball for the city's social elite last night? That might translate to Armor 2 [Social] for the next week or so as talk of the event buoys your reputation in upper class salons. (Although the working class? They could care less.) Follow the guidelines above and those in the Equipment Gift description and you'll be in good shape.

in three degrees of severity, each of which absorbs a corresponding amount of stress. Consequences can't be taken after the fact to clear boxes in a stress track. They happen in the moment, as the attack happens.

- **Minor consequences absorb 2 stress**. They last for the remainder of the scene and automatically go away as soon as the character gets a chance to catch his breath (usually when the scene ends).

- **Moderate consequences absorb 4 stress**. They require effort during "downtime" to mitigate—a skill roll with a target difficulty of Great (+4). If the roll succeeds, the consequence is reduced from Moderate to Minor; if it succeeds with spin, it's removed altogether. As for which skill applies, that depends on the scope of the conflict that generated it and the nature of the consequence itself. See the Treatment trapping description for more detail.

- **Severe consequences absorb 6 stress**, and persist for the rest of the story. These consequences are traumatic enough that even when they go away, they leave their mark on you. If you have a Severe consequence at the end of the current story, erase it and alter one of your personal aspects to reflect how the experience has changed you.

A character may take one of each degree of consequence. Once the consequence slot is used, it can't be used again until the current consequence has been cleared. Multiple consequences can be "stacked" to absorb greater amounts of stress, such as combining a Minor consequence with a Moderate consequence to absorb 6 stress (instead of taking a much more serious and life-altering Severe consequence).

If the consequence(s) absorb all of the stress an attack deals, you take no stress. Otherwise, you take stress equal to whatever remains.

Keep in mind that because consequences are aspects, they can be tagged, invoked, or compelled just like any of your personal aspects—and like any aspect created by a skill roll, the first tag is free. After that, invoking one of your consequences will cost your opponent a Fate Point, but the good news is that the Fate Point goes to you. Consider it a small recompense for your trouble.

WEAPONS AND ARMOR

Weapons bought as Equipment Gifts can inflict additional stress by taking the Deadly improvement. Multiple instances of Deadly on the same piece of Equipment are cumulative, up to a maximum of +3 stress. However, this can't increase the stress dealt by

a weapon to more than twice the number of shifts obtained. For example, if you're attacking with a sword with Deadly x2 and you win the exchange by 1 shift, you'll deal 2 stress, not 3.

Similarly, Equipment with the Protective improvement absorbs stress, providing Armor equal to the number of Protective improvements taken (up to a maximum of Armor 3). If multiple pieces of Equipment with the Protective improvement are worn, only take the highest Armor value from any one of them.

Weapons and armor can also be represented by Strange skills, like a sword forged from the souls of the damned or environmentally sealed high tech body armor. A PC or NPC could conceivably have a Unique skill called, for example, Power Armor, with the Resist Damage trapping, which would be rolled as a defense against physical attacks.

Otherwise, weapons and armor are merely window dressing. Those cultists may be armed with knives, but unless they were purchased as Equipment with the Deadly improvement, they're not any more deadly than their bare fists. So why use them? Apart from flavor and looking cool—a vital factor behind nearly anything of any importance in a story—fighting with weapons allows them to use Melee instead of Unarmed. This also means that there's a tactical advantage in disarming them, which gives the PCs something to do besides try to brain them. More significantly, though, it keeps the emphasis on the characters and their skills instead of handing the conflict over to whoever has the shiniest toys.

TAKEN OUT

If the stress you take ever bypasses a stress track's maximum capacity—that is, when you have to check a box beyond the last box in your stress track—you're Taken Out, or forcibly removed from the conflict (and possibly the story) for at least a while. You could be dead, unconscious, disgraced, fleeing in panic, or whatever's appropriate for the attack that took you out. The attacker gets to choose your fate so long as it's within reason. Few people actually die from shame or embarrassment, but fleeing the scene in disgrace after being Taken Out during a debate (a mental conflict is perfectly acceptable. The winner gets to determine the what, but not the how—it's fine to tell your Taken Out oppo-

nent that he faints from fright, but not that he hits his head on the way down or soils himself. Those details are the purview of the Taken Out character's player. Even when being Taken Out does result in death, the characters on the losing end of things still has control over the particulars of his death scene.

In general, a character's Taken Out condition only applies within the scope of the conflict. A character who's Taken Out during a social conflict, for example, may have his name dragged through the mud, but that doesn't stop him from seeking violent revenge on those who wronged him. Something to keep in mind the next time you consider dragging someone's name through the mud.

In a physical conflict, it's a good idea for the GM to drop a hint or two about how far an NPC is willing to go to eke out a victory. An offhand remark like "This guy looks like he's out for blood" or "The hellbeast is definitely giving off a bloodthirsty vibe" lets the players know that being Taken Out is going to mean death.

Assuming you're still alive (or can come back to life—let's not rule anything out), being Taken Out comes with a silver lining: For every consequence you currently have when you're Taken Out, you receive one Fate Point.

What exactly is "a clear and decisive disadvantage"?

- The outcome creates significant difficulty for the character moving forward. He could be deprived of an important possession, imprisoned, see a friend turn into a bitter enemy, or something similar.

- The outcome creates a situation that restricts the character's behavior in some significant way, such as owing a large debt or becoming a persona non grata in an important segment of society. This may entail imposing a long-term aspect on the character (separate from consequences) to reflect the situation through compels.

- The outcome alters one of a character's existing aspects, and for the worse. Whatever the circumstance of the concession, it's so profound that it alters the character on a fundamental level. For example, "Unshakeable Faith" could become "Looked the Devil in the Eye… and Blinked."

If you make a concession on your turn, you receive a

Fate Point for each consequence you have, as if you'd been Taken Out. If you make a concession on your opponent's turn, however, you have to pay your opponent a Fate Point for every consequence you have. If you don't have enough Fate Points to cover your debt, just give your opponent all the Fate Points you have.

Maneuver

A maneuver is an attempt to gain a momentary situational advantage in a conflict by interacting with either the environment or an opponent. Unlike an attack, it's not intended to deal stress, nor does it necessarily have a lasting effect on your opponent. What it does is set up a condition that makes one or more future attacks more effective, in the form of a fragile or sticky aspect. Here are some examples of maneuvers:

- Knocking an opponent momentarily off balance.
- Disarming an opponent.
- Diving for cover behind an upended table.
- Spreading disinformation as a distraction from the real issue.
- Taking aim.

Against an opponent, a maneuver is performed much like an attack. On a successful opposed skill roll, the "attacker" gets to declare an aspect on his opponent, himself, or the scene, as applicable. For example, knocking your opponent off balance would mean putting an aspect of "Off Balance" on your opponent, whereas maneuvering yourself behind him would probably be an aspect of something like "Got the Drop on Him" on yourself. Smashing the flashlight he's holding, on the other hand, could result in an aspect of "Pitch Darkness" on the scene.

As discussed earlier (in Aspects), the duration of the aspect depends on the success of the roll. If the attacker's roll succeeds by 2 shifts or less, the aspect is fragile—one free tag and it's gone. If the attacker's roll obtains spin, the aspect is sticky, meaning it sticks around for the rest of the scene or until the situation changes such that it's reasonable for it to go away.

Make a note of the roll's total effort. That's the difficulty for the target to remove the maneuver-derived aspect on her turn, assuming it's still around. For exam-

ple, if a character uses an aspect maneuver to make a target "Distracted" with a total effort on the skill roll of Superb (+5), the target will need an effort of at least Superb (+5) on her skill roll, probably using something like Alertness, to remove it. Note that this only applies to temporary aspects, not consequences.

In certain circumstances, the difficulty of a maneuver is a static number if it doesn't make sense for it to be an opposed roll. For instance, a character could use Resolve as a maneuver to put an aspect of "Focused" on himself. There's no one to oppose this action, so it's not an opposed roll. Usually, the difficulty for such a maneuver is Good (+3), but the GM can adjust this up or down if the situation warrants it—or compel one of the character's aspects or consequences to prevent the maneuver in the first place. Alternately, if a character is attempting this sort of "self maneuver" while burdened with a consequence, the maneuver could be turned into an opposed roll, with the consequence itself treated as the opposing skill—rated at Fair (+2) for a Minor consequence, Great (+4) for Moderate, or Fantastic (+6) for Severe.

Given the right set of circumstances, any skill could conceivably be used for an aspect maneuver, but not every skill will apply equally in every situation. Common sense and logic is usually enough to determine what works and what doesn't; if there's still confusion, it's up to the GM to make the call.

MANEUVER EXAMPLES

This is by no means a comprehensive list, but the examples provided below should convey the general idea behind establishing and dealing with maneuvers in play.

- **Blinded**: You blind the target by throwing sand in his face or something similar. This is generally done using a skill with the Strike trapping, such as Unarmed. The "Blinded" aspect could then be tagged or invoked to improve your attacks or defenses against the target, or possibly compelled to make the target accidentally attack an ally or stumble off a ledge. At the GM's discretion, this could also be accomplished with a ranged attack—a shot that skims the target's eyes.
- **Disarmed**: A successful maneuver knocks the

target's weapon (or whatever she's holding) out of her hands. If it's a fragile aspect, the weapon hasn't gone far and is easily recovered after the "Disarmed" aspect has been tagged. Otherwise, a successful skill roll using Athletics or something similar recovers the weapon. The "Disarmed" aspect could be tagged or invoked by an armed attacker to aid on his roll, but an unarmed attacker can't claim the same advantage. After all, if they're both unarmed, the playing field has been leveled. Any skill with the Strike trapping (or, if the GM's up for it, the Shoot trapping) can be used for this maneuver.

- **Taking Cover**: The character dives behind a table, a car, a pile of debris, or something similar to aid in her own defense. If the character is under attack when she attempts this maneuver, it's an opposed skill roll, usually using a skill with the Move or Leap trapping. Otherwise, it's a roll against a static difficulty—either Average (+1) for a cluttered warehouse or Superb (+5) for an empty one, or Good (+3) if you're not sure. Or the GM can decide that no roll's required at all, if the character has plenty of time to set it up and there are ample opportunities for cover. The "Behind Cover" aspect can be tagged or invoked to assist the character's defense, or compelled to trap her behind her cover, unable to leave because she's been pinned down by enemy fire. A number of skills could be used for this maneuver. In the middle of a conflict, finding cover is generally a matter of speed and mobility, making Athletics or some other skill with the Move trapping the most likely candidate, but with some justification it could also be accomplished with Alertness (to spot the cover) or an attack skill like Melee or Unarmed to find cover by relying on prior combat experience.

- **Called Shots**: While FATE doesn't employ hit locations, unlike some other games, it's certainly possible to make a special targeted attack against an enemy by making an aspect maneuver out of it. Want to sweep the leg? Use Unarmed to put an aspect of "Hurt Leg" on him. This sort of thing is ideal for a fighter who fights smart by dedicating a few rounds to aspect maneuvers and then tagging them all at once for a single monumental attack. Such an aspect can never be as severe as

a consequence ("Hurt Leg" vs. "Broken Leg," for instance)—it needs to be something the target can shake off using a skill like Endurance, so keep that in mind.

- **Mind Control**: A skill with Convince + Psychic can be used to mentally control someone else by making an aspect maneuver. With a successful roll, opposed by a skill with the Willpower trapping, the character puts an aspect of "Mind Controlled" or something similar on the target. This can then be tagged or invoked for effect to give the target a command he must obey. While the first tag's for free, subsequent invocations—assuming the aspect's still around—will cost a Fate Point apiece. The target can try to remove the aspect with a maneuver of his own, of course, but the mind controller can compel the aspect to prevent him from even trying. All in all, mind control is a costly proposition, but you'll be thankful for that when some devious NPC uses it on you.

BLOCKS

Blocks are a special kind of preemptive defensive maneuver designed to prevent one or more opponents from taking a specified action. In this way, they're a little like the "Disarmed" maneuver described above, but applied to a broader range of situations. Examples include:

- Spreading a particularly damning rumor about someone that hampers their attempts to retaliate
- Blocking a doorway to prevent anyone else from going through it
- Protecting someone else from attacks
- Making sure no one else gets their hands on an object you're guarding
- Grappling someone in an attempt to restrain them

To perform a block, declare what specific type of action you're trying to prevent and roll an appropriate skill against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0), and record your total effort. That becomes the block's difficulty. Someone acting against your block must meet or exceed that number on an appropriate skill roll to overcome it.

If the skill is of a Power Tier higher than Mundane,

treat that difficulty as if it were of the same Tier as your skill—for example, attempting a block with a Superhuman Tier skill would mean rolling 4dF and treating the result as a difficulty in the Superhuman Tier. Someone trying to overcome it using a Mundane Tier skill would roll 2dF-2d6 , while someone using an Ascendant Tier skill would roll 3dF+1d6.

Typically, a block action lasts until the blocker's next turn, at which point she has to decide whether to maintain the block (which means rolling the skill again to establish a new difficulty) or to let it drop. Performing or maintaining a block usually requires a Full Action.

In some special cases, a block can persist without further action from the blocker. This is usually the realm of the Strange, such as an earth-controlling mutant raising a wall of stone from the ground to confound pursuit.

Oftentimes, the easiest way to handle a persistent block like this is to take the blocker's effort as the block's difficulty, as usual, then give those attempting to overcome it a cumulative +1 bonus to their rolls each round. Eventually, they'll get over, under, around, or through it.

The amount of time an attempt to break a block requires depends on the skill's Power Tier relative to that of the block's difficulty, as shown on the table. Only one attempt to break a block can be made per character per turn, even if the attempt is a Free Action.

Breaker's Skill Is...	Time Required
Equal Tier or Worse	Full Action
One Tier Higher	An Action
Two or More Tiers Higher	Free Action

The Environment

FALLING

Whether it's a faulty grip halfway up a skyscraper or a jump that falls just a hair short of the next rooftop, falling can really put a crimp in your day. When the GM wants to make a fall hurt, roll against the appropriate difficulty, as shown on the table.

Use a skill with the Leap trapping or the Resist Dam-age trapping for this. Success means a safe landing. Failure means taking Health stress equal to your margin of failure.

Height	Difficulty	Notes
Short	Fair (+2)	10' to 20'
Medium	Great (+4)	20' to 40'
Long	Great (+4) (E)	40' to 100'
Extreme	Great (+4) (S)	I can see my house!

EXAMPLE: When his hover platform is blown out of the sky by a Stinger missile, Knight Errant finds himself plummeting toward Brooklyn Bridge some hundred feet below. If he can succeed in a roll of his Fair (+2) Athletics against a difficulty of Great (+4) (E), he'll be able to break his fall somehow and land safely. Otherwise, it's stress or consequences.

His 3dF−1d6 roll comes up +00−4, which, when added to his skill rating, gives him a total effort of -1. He'll have to deal with 5 Health stress. Ouch.

BREAKING THINGS

Use the difficulty guidelines shown on the table below when someone wants to break through something. This applies to any skill with the Physical Force trapping; with the GM's say-so, the Strike and Shoot trappings can also be used.

Materials above a Mediocre (+0) difficulty have stress tracks with a number of boxes equal to their difficulty (that is, 2, 4, or 6 boxes). If the character's intent is to break through the material, bypassing its stress track creates an opening large enough for the character to pass through. Materials with a difficulty in the Mundane Tier cannot take consequences to reduce stress, but if the difficulty is in a higher Power Tier, the material receives Tier Benefits, such as Armor or bonus consequences.

FOR EXAMPLE, a brick wall has 4 stress boxes and Armor 1, whereas a castle wall has 4 stress boxes, Armor 2, and can take one Minor consequence.

Difficulty	Notes
Terrible (-2)	Window glass; this is just for reference—don't bother rolling
Mediocre (+0)	Thin wood
Fair (+2)	Thick wood, interior door
Great (+4)	Heavy or thick wood, exterior door
Fantastic (+6)	Reinforced wood, interior wall
Fair (+2) (E)	Exterior residential or shop wall
Great (+4) (E)	Brick, weak stone
Fair (+2) (S)	Reinforced metal, strong stone
Great (+4) (S)	Exterior castle wall, vault door
Great (+4) (A)	Adamantine Wall

The Opposition

Central to any good story is the opposition—those forces arrayed against the heroes who foil their efforts at every turn. Personified as NPCs, the opposition falls into one of three categories, in ascending order of story importance:

- **Minions**, the nameless fist-fodder any self-respecting antagonist has at his disposal
- **Adversaries**, unique opponents capable of challenging the PCs on a one-to-one basis
- **Villains**, the primary threats who are often more than a match for any one PC

We'll get into more detail about all of them below, but first let's take a moment to talk about where they live: scenes.

Unlike the PCs, Minions and Adversaries don't have their own Fate Points. They just aren't important enough, and besides, tracking the Fate Point totals of a dozen or more Minions at once would be a royal pain. Instead, the GM gets a per-scene budget of Fate Points to be spent on behalf of these lower classes of antagonists. The exact number of Fate Points available each scene depends on two factors: the number of players at the table, and the importance of that scene's conflict to the story, whether Minor, Major, or Climactic.

For a Minor conflict, the GM gets 1 Fate Point per player. Minor conflicts are those in which the story is moved forward only slightly as a result of its resolution. Generally speaking, the stakes are relatively low. It's not unusual for a Minor conflict to end with a PC shaking a Minion by the collar and asking, "Who sent you?" in a harsh tone. There's no real danger of a PC being Taken Out or sustaining more than a Minor consequence; if anything, Minor scenes are more likely to drain a few Fate Points from the players.

Minor scenes are usually populated by Minions, and tend to occur early in a story. That's not to say that the PCs can't face terrifying peril right out of the gate, but stories usually work best when tension and danger increase over time. If a story does start out with the PCs free-falling from a space ship while being fired upon by mutant gunmen, that's great—but the next scene should probably be quieter, and with a different focus. If everything is a 10, after a while it'll all feel like a 5. Improvised conflicts, such as when the PCs pick a fight, are usually Minor.

For a Major conflict, the GM gets 2 Fate Points per player. By the end of a Major conflict, there should be

a correspondingly major revelation about the larger story—the leader of the mutant gang is taking orders from a respected senator, the summoning ritual is almost complete, the nuclear warhead has been stolen, etc. Minor consequences (personal or Collateral) are a very real possibility, and the players' Fate Point reserves are likely to run low (or out).

Major scenes are rather ideal for pitting the PCs against a team of Adversaries, but that's certainly not a requirement. Indeed, the opposition in a Major scene can be limited to Minions and still be effective, or it can be a mix, such as Adversaries with some tougher Minions or, if it makes sense, the Villain and some Minions or Adversaries. Naturally, the danger with this latter option is the premature defeat of the Villain before the story's reached a proper climax.

Sure, there are hoary deus ex machinae to guarantee the Villain's escape, such as the ol' hidden escape hatch, but those are probably going to leave the players feeling pretty cheated. Other solutions are certainly possible, such as the Villain being present but in disguise, or via an astral projection (and the players know this), or even "present" via remote controlled robotic drone.

If it's that much trouble to insert the Villain into a Major conflict, why bother? For one thing, it increases the tension level. The players will instinctively know the stakes are higher if Death Token is standing right there. Second, it gives the players a greater sense of purpose, direction, and urgency. Third, in the story's final climactic scene, the players will be more invested if this isn't their first interaction with the Villain. Even if they don't have a huge history together, a single shared scene is enough to ratchet things up from "Who are you again?" to "You again!"

For Climactic conflicts, the GM gets 3 Fate Points per player. As the name implies, Climactic conflicts come at the end of shorter stories (one or two sessions), or at critical turning points of longer stories. As such, their resolution will either result in the end of the story itself or a significant revelation that results in a change of direction, purpose, or focus. The stakes are highest in a Climactic conflict—all manner of consequences are possible and encouraged. If some PCs are Taken Out in the process, so much the better. Climactic conflicts need to feel dangerous, and not to be entered into lightly.

Unsurprisingly, the story's Villain (or one of them) should be the centerpiece of a Climactic conflict. This is the moment when the Villain's plans have come to fruition, or when the PCs can intervene in the nick of time to make sure they don't. Minions and Adversaries alike are welcome in a Climactic conflict as well—the gloves are off, no holds are barred, the stops are all pulled out, and so on. A good rule of thumb is to make sure that every PC has an attractive challenge to face, such as pairing off a super-strong Adversary with a super-strong PC. Then add one or two more, so that the PCs are either outnumbered or always scrambling to keep up. For example, if you're working with five PCs, you might give them three adversaries, a few groups of Minions, and the Villain himself, plus an armed nuclear warhead set to detonate in the next five minutes. That's at least seven problems to manage (if the Minion groups don't quite count as a problem each), with the added pressure of a time limit. Put the whole thing on a giant robot towering above New York City and you're looking at a Climactic conflict.

Regardless of the type of scene or conflict, these budgeted Fate Points are spent to help the opposition by invoking aspects or improving Minions (see below), but never to compel aspects. Compels are always paid for from a limitless pile of Fate Points at the GM's disposal. Why is this? We want compels to happen frequently and impulsively. Making the GM spend her Fate Point budget on compels would discourage that.

Creating Minions

Here are some key facts about Minions:

Minions are categorized by quality: Average, Fair, or Good.

Minions act in groups. Individually, Minions are relatively weak, but they have strength in numbers. In a conflict, treat an entire group of Minions as a single entity.

For each Minion beyond the first in a group, the group receives a +1 gang-up bonus to its dice rolls. When a Minion group is down to just one or two Minions, merge it with another decimated Minion group of the same quality to make a new, whole group. It helps with the bookkeeping.

It's probably not a good idea to mix Minions of different qualities within the same group, though. That doesn't help with the bookkeeping.

Minions have a stress threshold, not stress tracks. The stress threshold is how much stress is required to Take Out a Minion, from 1 stress to 3 stress. Divide the stress dealt to a group by the Minions' stress threshold, dropping the remainder—that's how many Minions are Taken Out. Remember to reduce the group's gang-up bonus accordingly. For example, Fair-quality Minions have a stress threshold of 2. If you deal five stress to a group of four of them, you'll take out two of them and leave the other two standing.

Minions do not take consequences. Minions can do nothing to mitigate incoming stress.

Minions should only have one or two aspects, three tops. They certainly can have more, but odds are they won't be around long enough to make use of more than one or two, so don't get too invested in them. One of a Minion's aspects should identify their purpose in the conflict or mode of operation—for example, "Stubborn Bureaucrat," "Angry Demon," or "Hungry Zombie."

Minions have scopes, not skills. The three scopes are, as usual, Physical, Mental, and Social, and are rated like skills at Average (+1), Fair (+2), and Good (+3). Each acts as a very broad skill to cover anything a Minion might do within that scope. The number of scopes a Minion has depends on their quality. However, the Minion's ability to use a given scope is limited by their identifying aspect. The Social scope of a Minion with an aspect of "Stubborn Bureaucrat" will be limited to tasks relevant to their role as a bureaucrat, in essence using the Bureaucracy Common skill. It makes sense for a Minion with an aspect of "Hungry Zombie" to use the Physical scope as if it were Unarmed, but not to engage in ranged combat. And so on. This reflects the Minion's narrow focus within the conflict. Minions are specialists, not generalists. But don't let that get in the way of common sense, either.

A Minion with an aspect of "Thievery" would normally use his Physical scope for picking pockets, sneaking, hiding, running from the authorities, and so forth, but if he also has a tonfa, he should be able to use that same scope as if it were the Melee skill.

The GM's Fate Points for the scene can be spent to upgrade the Power Tiers of a Minion's scopes. The costs are the same as the Refresh costs for PCs: 1 Fate Point for an Extraordinary Scope, 2 Fate Points for a Superhuman Scope, and so on. This upgrades the scope's Power Tier for all Minions with the same aspects. For example, if some Minions in a scene have the aspects "Plasma Cannons" and Slightly Used Henchmen Armor" and some others have the aspects "Stun Gun" and "Merciless Bruiser," upgrading the Physical Scope from Mundane to Extraordinary for the former will have no effect on the latter.

Those Fate Points can also be spent to buy Minions Gifts. Likewise, 1 Fate Point will buy a Gift for all Minions with the same aspects. Gifts like Equipment, Theme, or Impact make the most sense, while some, like Companion, are right out. Use your best judgment.

Also, favor Gifts that improve offense over ones that shore up defenses. Making Minions a bigger threat is fine, but making them significantly tougher (such as with Protective or Rugged Equipment) is just going to make things drag. They're not meant to survive that long.

Overflow is important. When a conflict involves multiple groups of Minions (and most conflicts with Minions will), remember overflow. That is, if a PC deals more than enough stress to completely Take Out the Minion group he's attacking, apply the excess to another Minion group, preferably one that's already taken some losses.

Minions are commonplace. If the PCs are facing numerous opponents in the course of a story, the vast majority of them should be Minions. For one thing, this is a pacing issue.

Think of Minions like gears. By shifting up and down between them, you can easily control the speed and difficulty of a given conflict. Not that conflicts with Minions should be meaningless—no conflict should be— but changing a group of Minions from Good-quality to Average-quality is a lot easier than downgrading, say, a group of Adversaries. Second, it lets you more effectively build a sense of tension and danger over the course of a story. If every conflict directly involves a major enemy, it'll all start feeling samey after a while. Third, sprinkling in a few groups of Minions can help round out a conflict no matter where it is in the story, especially if doing so lets you illustrate a contrast between them and tougher opponents, like named villains. With all of that in mind, here's a closer look at Minions.

Average Minions: The Rank and File

- **Scopes**: One scope at Average (+1).
- **Stress Threshold**: 1 (For every point of stress the group takes, it loses a Minion)
- **Default Group Size**: Five. A group of five Average quality Minions will have an effective scope of Superb (+5).
- **Best Purpose**: To make the PCs look good. At this quality, a PC with a Superhuman Tier attack skill will go through most Average Minions like a hot knife through Minions. The whole point of these Minions is that they go down in one punch. If you want the PCs to face a literal horde of enemies and emerge victorious, make them Average-quality Minions.
- **Recommended Power Tier**: Mundane or Extraordinary. If you want them tougher or more of a threat than that, use Fair or Good Minions instead. For human Minions, an Extraordinary Tier scope should usually be justified with special equipment as opposed to inherent ability. (If they had that much inherent ability, they probably wouldn't be stuck being Minions.) No Average-quality Minion should be even close to a match for a PC in a one-on-one fight, so don't beef them up too much.

Fair Minions: The Trained Professionals

- **Scopes**: One scope at Fair (+2) and one at Average (+1).
- **Stress Threshold**: 2 (For every two points of stress dealt by a single attack, the group loses a Minion)
- **Default Group Size**: Four. The effective highest scope of a group of four Fair-quality Minions will be Superb (+5).
- **Best Purpose**: To challenge the PCs a bit or slow them down. Don't use Fair-quality Minions if you just want a quick action scene. The difference between a stress threshold of 1 and 2 might not seem like much, but it makes Fair-quality Minions twice as durable. The other thing to consider is overflow. If the player deals an odd number of stress to a group of Fair-quality Minions, that excess point of stress will just be ignored. From the player's perspective, this makes them feel a lot tougher.

- **Recommended Power Tier**: Extraordinary, if the Minions outnumber the PCs, or Superhuman if they don't. However, if you do give them a Superhuman Tier scope, it should be because of story logic, not game balance. Soldiers with high-tech weaponry, vicious dinosaurs, a swarm of ghosts—these are all fine. If the Minions are human, though, their greater-than-Mundane-Tier scope should usually be granted by something external to them, and not because of some innate ability. Minions are not special enough for that kind of differentiation. That's what Adversaries are for. This is also highly dependent on what Power Tiers the PCs are sporting: If the skills they'll be using in this conflict are largely in the Extraordinary Tier, then the Minions' Fair (+2) scope should be Extraordinary as well.

Good Minions: The Minion Elite

- **Scopes**: One scope at Good (+3), one at Fair (+2) and one at Average (+1).
- **Stress Threshold**: 3 (For every three points of stress dealt by a single attack, the group loses a Minion)
- **Default Group Size**: Three. The effective highest scope of a group of three Good-quality Minions will be Superb (+5).
- **Best Purpose**: To drain the PCs of resources, such as Fate Points and consequences. Expect the PCs to pay a price for victory over these Minions. Think carefully before adding Good-quality Minions to a conflict. Is there a reason they can't be Fair instead? Good-quality Minions are a lot more durable than their Fair and Average counterparts. You don't want that staying power to become dragging power.
- **Recommended Power Tier**: On par with the PCs. If they aren't a genuine offensive threat, an encounter with Good-quality Minions is just a grind. If you're using Minions of this quality, it's usually because you want to put the PCs in some danger without having to stat up a bunch of Adversaries individually. So go for it—plan to spend around half your Fate Point budget on upgrading the Power Tier of one or two scopes and buying Gifts.

Creating Adversaries

Adversaries have much more in common with PCs than Minions do, but they're still a step or two below a true Villain. A powerful mutant criminal, a self-taught hedge wizard, a rampaging T-Rex—each would make a fine Adversary. They're named, unique opponents, often imebued with powers and working as part of a team to either oppose the PCs or assist a Villain in carrying out his plans.

Adversaries are generally weaker than PCs, but not dramatically so. They should live up to their name. Adversaries are capable of taking out PCs one-on-one. Take care, though, that they don't overshadow the Villain as a threat.

Even if the Villain is employing one or more Adversaries specifically for their muscle or whatever, the Villain needs to be impressive in his own right, too. It might just be in a different arena or context.

The PCs should only face a handful of Adversaries in a story—say, one per PC—either all working together as a team, or split up among a few different locations.

Adversaries are built more or less like PCs, with a few notable exceptions: Starting Refresh for Adversaries is 4, 6, or 8, depending on the time period. Refresh is spent on Power Tiers and Gifts, just like for PCs. However, this is only relevant for character creation, as Adversaries don't have their own Fate Points—the GM spends her budget of Fate Points on their behalf. (This means that there's basically no reason to not spend all of an Adversary's Refresh on Power Tiers and Gifts.) Keep track of each Fate Point the players spend to invoke one of an Adversary's aspects. Each of these Fate Point goes to that Adversary to use as their own.

When an Adversary's personal store of Fate Points exceeds their starting Refresh, their Refresh increases by 1. That Refresh can then be spent between scenes on Power Tiers and Gifts.

Technically, an Adversary starts with at least 20 skill points but no more than 30. But that's more of a guide, really. There's no need to track every last Drawback as you might with a PC. If you give a skill the trappings it needs and have an idea of how it works, don't bother with the details.

An Adversary's top skill can be as high as Superb (+5). Letting an Adversary's skill pyramid exceed the normal skill cap of Great automatically makes them more of a threat without having to spend Fate Points on their behalf. However, there's no need to give them a full skill pyramid down to Average (+1) or anything. Just give them the skills you think they should have and improvise the rest during play, recording and ranking other skills as needed.

Adversaries have aspects, but not as many as PCs. Just give them Archetype, Background, and Conviction aspects, then whatever other aspects they'll need to function.

Adversaries don't have consequences of their own. Instead, they take group consequences, described below. If an Adversary's Tier Benefit grants her a bonus consequence, it gets added to the group consequences instead.

Creating Villains

Villains are the flipside of PCs: complex, driven, capable, and dangerous. The most compelling Villains aren't Villains in their own minds—from their point of view, they're fighting for the cause of justice, or at least enacting a righteous vengeance. Sure, there are outright monsters and thieves and killers, and those can be great too just for their sheer simplicity of purpose. But when it comes to being an engaging foil, the best Villain is one who evokes empathy from the players even as they're throwing him through a wall.

Individually, a single Villain should be more than a match for a given PC if that conflict is playing to the Villain's strengths. A good Villain should be able to do something so impressive (and/or frightening) that it makes the players think twice about engaging him

in a conflict. It's pretty common for a physically weak Villain to rely on others to fight on his behalf, but even then make sure he can pose a threat all by himself.

Villains are built and operate pretty much like PCs, with a few notable exceptions:

Villains start with a Refresh of 12, 14, or 16, depending on the campaign power level—or higher. Villains need to have a leg up on the PCs—enough so that a player will think twice before taking one on without friends around. Another two points of Refresh is usually enough to make that happen. Note that "taking on" a Villain need not mean a physical conflict. Indeed, a Villain with killer social connections (literally or figuratively) can ruin a PC's life without even meeting him face to face.

A Villain's top skill should be rated between Great (+4) and Fantastic (+6). This is for the same reason given for Adversaries, above. Again, there's no reason to completely fill out the skill pyramid—assign the Villain the skills she needs to be the threat she needs to be, and fill in the rest as needed.

Villains have both personal consequences and group consequences at their disposal. In this way, Villains are just like PCs, but in place of Collateral consequences they have whatever group consequences haven't been used by Adversaries. Bonus consequences granted by Tier Benefits stay with the Villain—they're not added to the pool of group consequences.

GROUP CONSEQUENCES

Instead of tracking consequences individually for Adversaries, they share a pool of communal consequences known as group consequences. Any Adversary can make use of this pool to reduce stress, and any bonus consequence granted by Tier Benefits that would ordinarily go to an Adversary becomes another group consequence instead.

In addition, group consequences serve as bonus consequences for Villains—assuming there are any left over, of course. Minions, however, can't take advantage of group consequences. The number of group consequences shared by Adversaries and Villains depends on the number of Adversaries in the story arc. The more Adversaries, the more group consequences.

It's entirely possible that the opposition in a given story will involve one or two Villains, a bunch of Min-

ions, and no Adversaries, or just one gigantic Villain. Whither your group consequences then? As a rule of thumb: No group, no group consequences.

Adversaries	Starting Group Consequences
1-2	2 Minor, 1 Moderate
3-4	4 Minor, 2 Moderate
5-6	6 Minor, 3 Moderate
7+	8 Minor, 3 Moderate

ADVANCED POWER INTERACTION RULES

In a world with super science, magic, psychic powers, and alien technology, occasionally one person gains power from two or more sources. This was a rare event before Ragnarok, as the Ideal and the UN did everything they could to limit access to superpowers. Even their own members were discouraged from pursuing additional powers. As a result, even their greatest scientists and mystics knew little in how superpowers interacted with each other. Today, base raiders who experiment on themselves have learned more about the art of mixing disparate superpowers in a single body.

TERMS

- **Superpowers**: inherent abilities that transcend the limitations of a species of sapient being. Gills on a human are superpowers but not for an intelligent fish man. The term Strange Skill is interchangeable with superpower.
- **Power Source**: A process or object that grants superpowers.

Game Rules

Character Creation: Characters cannot purchase Strange Skills that go over their allocated skill points and refresh during character generation. These rules are only for gaining new Strange Skills during play.

Non-humans and Strange Skills: The rules treat non-human characters the same as humans when it comes to gaining or using superpowers with the following exceptions: Non-organic characters like robots and golems cannot gain superpowers from organic power sources like drugs or potions or from cybernetic implants. The GM has final say in whether a particular character can gain superpowers from a particular power source. If a given power source has certain rules for who may use it or how it works, they supersede these rules.

The first Strange Skill: A character's first Strange Skill works as it is described, as long as it does not result in burn. A character never uses power interaction rules when gaining their first superpower, unless the character is gaining two more powers at the same time or gains burn as a result of gaining the power. Characters that gain burn from acquiring their first Strange Skill and only have 1 Strange Skill cannot take any Miscibility consequences that refer to having multiple Strange Skills, such as Inefficient Power Mixture, Cyclic Power, and Nullified Power.

Focus Flaw: Strange Skills with the Focus flaw have specific rules. See the section "Item Based Powers" to learn how Strange Skills with the Focus flaw work.

Gifts: These rules do not apply to Gifts.

Gaining a new Strange Skill

All Strange Skills purchased during character generation are assumed to work as the character intends. However, when a character uses a power source during game play, uses these rules. Each power source has different requirements for usage and many take time to work. A magic potion may work instantly but cybernetic arms needs time consuming surgery. When a character does this, look at their unassigned skill points and refresh and compare it to the cost of the new Strange Skill.

If the character has enough skill points and refresh to buy the Strange Skill, then the character can safely handle the new Strange Skill but he must immediately spend the required skill points and refresh to purchase the new Strange Skill. The character gains one minor

consequence from the Miscibility table below, which lasts for one session. This does not cost refresh.

POWER INSTABILITY

If a character gains a new Strange Skill but is not able to fully pay for it in skill points and/or refresh, the character becomes unstable, as the conflicting powers eat the character up from inside. This internal struggle is represented by an attribute called burn. A character gains 1 point of burn for every excess skill point worth of Strange Skills he cannot pay at the time he gains the power. Every excess point of refresh adds 3 points of burn. If a Strange Skill at the Ascendant power tier costs any burn, increase the total burn by 1 point. A Strange Skill at the Godlike power tier which costs any burn raises the total burn by 3 points. Once a character gains burn, consult the table below to determine the result. All effects are cumulative.

Burn	Effect
0	None - the character operates normally.
1-3	Strained: The character's maximum composure stress capacity is reduced by 1. If it is already 1, then reduce max health capacity by 1. If health is at 1, then the character suffers a -2 penalty to all rolls.
4-6	Miscibility: The character must take 1 consequence from the Miscibility table.
7-9	Major Strain: The character must halve his composure stress capacity and reduce his maximum health capacity by 1. If health is at 1, then the character suffers a -2 penalty to all rolls.
10-15	Unstable: The character must take 1 new consequence from the Miscibility table.
16-19	Death Throes: The character's body starts to burn away. The character will die in a manner of hours equal to his current refresh rating, with a minimum of 1 hour of time.
20+	System Shock: The character dies from massive internal shock. He lives for a number of minutes equal to his current Fate points before death.

Effects of burn are removed as soon as the character's burn is reduced to a lower level.

Burn is cumulative. Characters who gain multiple Strange Skills must be careful they do not die from loading up on burn.

In addition, the character must check to see which category his new Strange Skill falls under: Untrained power, Unstable Power, or Chaotic Power.

Untrained Power: A Strange Skill is considered an Untrained Power If the character does not have enough free skill points but does have enough refresh to buy the Strange Skill. The character does not know how to use the new Strange Skill and gains the Untrained Power aspect. The character must spend the necessary refresh to partially purchase the skill. The character can choose to partially spend all of his available skill points on the new Strange Skill or spend some of them or none of them on the new Strange Skill. Note that until the character spends the required skill points necessary to gain the Strange Skill, he retains the Untrained Power aspect.

The character does not know how to use this Strange Skill very well or at all. It may be compelled or invoked to change the outcome of a successful skill roll or reduce the effectiveness of this Strange Skill for one scene. For example, a character with flight may fly at a reduced speed or a character with a laser blast Strange Skill may hit a different target than what he was aiming for.

Unstable Power: A Strange Skill is considered an Unstable Power if the character does have enough free skill points but does not have enough free refresh to buy the Strange Skill. The character must spend the required Skill Points to partially purchase the skill. The character may choose to partially spend refresh on the Strange Skill, if any points are available. Until the character spends all of the required refresh to purchase the Strange Skill, he retains the Unstable Power aspect. The character can't predict when the Strange Skill will work effectively or sputter out. Aside from standard aspect rules, Unstable Power can be invoked or compelled to force the player to reroll any roll made with this skill.

Chaotic Power: A Strange Skill is considered a Chaotic Power if the character does not have enough free skill points or refresh to buy the Strange Skill. The character may choose to partially purchase the Strange

Skill but retains the Chaotic Power aspect until all of the skill points and refresh necessary to purchase the skill are spent. A chaotic power is not fully under the control of the character wielding it. The power may activate at inopportune times, or not at all when the character tries to activate it.

Relying on a chaotic power is a deadly gamble. This aspect may be compelled or invoked to activate the Strange Skill at any time, even when the character expressly does not wish it to activate or is sleeping. It may be compelled or invoked to prevent a character from activating the Strange Skill. Chaotic Power cannot be used to activate a Strange Skill that is nullified or negated.

MISCIBILITY CONSEQUENCES

Mixing superpowers can be dangerous, Whenever a character has to choose a consequence from the table below, he must meet all prerequisites for that consequence. The character cannot gain burn to pay for a Miscibility consequence.

These consequences do not follow any other rules for consequences - they are unique to gaining more Strange Skills than the character can safely handle. If a character wishes to remove the consequence, he must lower his burn. If a Miscibility consequence is removed, the character regains any refresh spent for the consequence.

Minor Consequences: Each minor consequence costs 2 refresh:

- **Cosmetic flaw**: The character's appearance changes slightly but noticeably. Hair may change color, voice sounds different, or the character may gain or lose weight. The character still looks approximately the same and will not stand out any more than he has in the past. A human still looks human, but an alien still looks alien. People familiar with the character will notice the difference and the character takes a -1 penalty when making a social skill against them.
- **Persistent stress**: The character takes 1 point of health or composure stress every 24 hours. The player chooses what type of damage is inflicted. This damage may be healed normally.

COMMON BELIEFS ABOUT SUPERPOWERS

The Miscibility Rule: It is possible to possess multiple superpowers from different power sources but the process is highly volatile and varies from person to person. Two different power sources that each grant a unique power will produce different results in two similar people. This may result in injury, madness, or death. Rarely, powers sync with each other so well, both superpowers are enhanced. It is possible to research how a new superpower would affect a given individual, but this is difficult and only a super scientist or skilled magic user can accomplish it.

The Skill Rule: Superpowers are an applied skill as much as they are an intrinsic effect. Some liken this to muscle memory. Think of a new superpower is a muscle you never had before and have no idea how to manipulate it yet. A person may be granted incredible, godlike power through a power source, but without learning how to use it, the person may as well not have an ability.

The Unique Power Rule: No two superpowers are identical. A super soldier drug that grants super strength and a Tunguska artifact that grants super strength do not grant the same power. Even if both power sources allow their users to lift the exact amount of weight, they will vary in subtle ways, such as how further power interactions will affect the person.

- **Weakened Power**: One of the character's Strange Skills loses one of its trappings of the character's choice.
- **Minor Weakness**: The character gains a new minor weakness but does not gain any refresh for it.

Moderate Consequences: each moderate consequence costs 1 refresh:

COMMON BELIEFS ABOUT SUPERPOWERS

The Permanency Rule: Superpowers are not guaranteed to be permanent. Some change in potency over time, becoming weaker or stronger, especially if the power is seldom or frequently used. Superpowers may stop working at any time, depending on the power source. This is especially true of additional superpowers gained after a person's first superpower.

The Sorcerer Rule: Even though spell and ritual magic are learned skills, they affect a person like any other superpower. A sorcerer who gains a new superpower from another power source must risk the possibility of suffering adverse side effects from superpowers.

The Acclimation Rule: The longer you use any superpower, the easier it is to gain and learn how to use other superpowers.

The Burn Out Rule: It is possible to temporarily boost one's superpowers by using multiple power sources but this is dangerous. A person who does this will burn out - suffering horrific injuries, temporary or permanent power loss, or death

- **Inefficient Power Mixture**: One of the character's Strange Skills becomes dramatically weaker. The character chooses one of his Strange Skills and halves its skill bonus (round down). The skill drops one power tier unless the Strange Skill is already at mundane tier. In that case, the skill loses all but one trapping of the player's choice.
- **Major physiological change**: The character undergoes a physical transformation that radically changes his appearance, to the point where he can no longer pass as a normal member of his species.. Humans look alien or monstrous. If he goes out in public, he will be labeled a monster or freak. Police will attempt to arrest or kill him. Aliens and other non-human characters never change to the point where they look human though. The char-

acter gains an aspect to reflect this flaw. If this consequence is removed because the character's burn lowers, his appearance reverts to normal and the aspect is removed.

- **Cyclic Power**: The character must have two Strange Skills at extraordinary power tier or above to take this consequence. The character lowers the power tier of one Strange Skill by one tier. The character can raise the power tier of that Strange Skill back to normal by using another Strange Skill that is at extraordinary tier or higher. That skill loses one power tier but the first Strange Skill raises up to its normal power tier. In other words, the character has to shift the power tier back and forth between the two Strange Skills by alternating usage of the two skills. A Strange Skill never goes above its normal power tier with this Miscibility Consequence.
- **Major Weakness**: The character gains a major weakness but does not gain any refresh for it.

Severe Consequences: Each Severe Consequence costs zero refresh:

- **Nullified Power**: One of the character's other Strange Skills no longer works. The character may not choose the power that inflicted this Miscibility consequence on him. If the power tier of the nullified Strange Skill is lower than the new Strange Skill, the character permanently loses a number of composure or health stress capacity equal to the difference in refresh cost, which is 0 for mundane, 1 for extraordinary, 2 for superhuman, 4 for ascendant, and 6 for godlike. For example, a character that loses a superhuman Strange Skill (2 refresh cost) in exchange for a godlike Strange Skill (6 refresh cost), must give up 4 points from health and/or composure stress capacity. If the character cannot do this, the character cannot use either Strange Skill until he can lower his burn rating.
- **Temporary**: The Strange Skill will not last very long, but you don't know when it will end. The GM determines how long the power will last, but it should not last more than 24 hours. The character follows all rules for this Strange Skill while it is in effect, including burn. The character takes an amount of health and composure stress based on

the power tier of the Strange Skill when the character gains and loses the power. (0 for mundane, 1 for extraordinary, 2 for superhuman, 4 for ascendant, and 6 for godlike). Once the character loses the Strange Skill, he regains all the skill points and refresh spent on the skill.

- **Grotesque Physiological Trauma**: The character's body rejects the new ability, causing massive trauma. The character survives, but is crippled or deformed in a way determined by the GM. Common traumas are paralysis of a limb, losing sight or hearing, or developing a serious allergy to a common stimulus like sunlight or water. The character's health and composure stress capacity are halved (round up) and the character gains an aspect related to this trauma.

Positive Consequences: A character may never have more than 1 positive consequence at any given time.

- **Power Synergy**: This consequence costs 3 refresh. The character must have at least 2 Strange Skills of the same power tier to take this consequence. Both Strange Skills increase in power due to a unique synergy between the two abilities. The character can reroll a skill check made with either skill by spending a Fate point. At the discretion of the GM, the character can create a unique effect by spending a Fate point and activating both Strange Skills at once. The effect of dual Strange Skill activation should be worked out in advance by the player and GM. For example, 2 attack Strange Skills could result in a single attack that is treated as one power tier higher than the normal power tier of the Skills in question.
- **Additional Power**: The newly acquired Strange Skill awakens a hidden power within the character. The character gains an additional Strange Skill but must pay for the new Strange Skill without gaining any additional burn. The additional power has the same power source as the Strange Skill that triggered this consequence.
- **New Invincibility**: The character gains a new minor or major invincibility. A minor invincibility costs 2 refresh and a major invincibility costs 3 refresh.

ITEM BASED POWERS

Strange skills with the focus flaw are objects that empower the person using it. Some objects empower whoever picks them up while others only work for a specific type of user. Some require extensive training in order to use. A rare category of objects empower their user but affect how their other superpowers work, just like other power sources.

A Strange Skill with a focus flaw uses one or more of the following aspects to determine how users can use it. This overrides the normal rules for power interactions. The gamemaster has total discretion on assigning aspects to focus based Strange Skills, although some items should be obvious. A suit of advanced power armor should require training and possibly Specific User - through DNA based biometric security systems.

- **Accessible**: Anyone can use the Strange Skill as long as they possess the focus. There is no skill point or refresh cost to use this item. These items are the rarest and are highly valued by base raiders. This aspect cannot be assigned to items that have the Training or Specific User aspects.
- **Training**: In order to use the Strange Skill correctly, the character must invest a number of skill points equal to the cost of the Strange Skill in order to learn how to activate the item. There is no refresh cost. At the gamemaster's discretion, a character can use the Strange Skill with the Untrained Power aspect until he has paid off the training costs.
- **Specific User**: The item can only be used by a specific type of user, such as members of a particular bloodline or blessed acolytes of the Church of Unrelenting Darkness. Circumventing the mechanisms that prevent others from using the item is a Goal, with a skill point cost equal to the skill point cost of the Strange Skill and a tier set by the gamemaster.
- **Power Interaction**: Some items interact with the existing superpowers of a user. Treat the Strange Skill like any other using the power interaction rules in the previous section. This aspect can be assigned to any focus based Strange Skill.

As you can see, accessible items can be extremely unbalancing in a game, so use them with care.

EXAMPLE POWER SOURCES

Contract with the Feline Undead Parliament
Type: Magical Scroll
Cost: 7 skill points and 2 refresh
Power: Parliament of Undead Felines (p. 147)
Time to Gain Power: Instant
Description: This parchment has a contract with a parliament of undead intelligent cats. If a character signs the contract, the character gains their use but must follow all parliamentary procedures.

Syringe of Upsilon MK 5
Type: Super Soldier Drug
Cost: 5 skill points and 2 refresh
Power: Upsilon Drug User (p. 147)
Time to Gain Power: 1 hour
Description: A standard dose of a Upsilon drug variant. The character will gain the power one hour after injection. Only organic beings can use the drug.

Cybernetic Network Implant
Cost: 6 skill points and 1 refresh
Power: Satellite Network Link (p. 145)
Time to Gain Power: 6 hours for surgery and 1 day of training
Description: The implant is very small, but must be surgically installed from a skilled doctor. This requires a Science +2 (E) skill test and 6 hours of surgery. Once installed, the character must spend a day to learn how the mental interface works.

BASE BUILDING RULES

No one knows how many abandoned bases still await to be discovered. Given the range of technology and magic available, base raiders could encounter almost anything when they enter a newly discovered base. This gives you many options when designing a base for your players to explore, but that creative freedom can be daunting. If nothing is off limits, how do you decide what to use for your base? While it's perfectly acceptable to design bases however you like for your game, this optional system gives the players some in-

put into base creation, so they can do some of the creative heavy lifting.

This process should not take more than an hour, but it does not completely flesh out the adventure. This process gives the gamemaster an outline of a base that can be used as the centerpiece of the group's next adventure. After all, if the players know everything about the adventure, then there's no challenge or excitement in playing it. The gamemaster will need additional time to prepare an adventure, which varies based on his experience and preferences as a gamemaster. Some will need a lot of time to prepare an adventure while other gamemaster may improvise the adventure with only a few minutes to prepare. Schedule your base building session accordingly - a good time is to create the base after a game session ends so the gamemaster has time to create the new adventure by the time the next session rolls around.

The Elements of a Base

Think of what a base is: a place built and used by superhumans for a reason that is not allowable to normal society. The reason could be personal or pragmatic but they chose not to go through normal channels to construct it and this is a significant decision. They didn't use the infrastructure of civilization to build this base, because if they had, it would have been documented and governed by the laws of normal society. This undoubtedly made building the base much harder and imposed major restrictions on what could be done in the base in order to keep it a secret. But many superhumans went to great lengths to build these hidden facilities. There are good (and evil) reasons to do this, but the important thing is they were extremely important to their builders. No one would go to the lengths necessary to build a secret hideout or lair unless they absolutely needed it. What possible reason could justify it?

Bases are places designed to be outside of the constraints of normality and the law. A vigilante could plan his war on crime without being monitored by the police. A scientist could conduct research that no institution would allow. A villain could train an army of

loyal henchmen. No oversight from civilization means that bases are shaped and driven by the goals of its builder and inhabitants and not by building regulations, architectural trends, or common sense. Because of these factors, each base is unique and it's hard to predict what will be found inside. The only thing all bases have in common are these elements:

1. **Location**: A base is a setting, an environment for adventure. Sometimes the location is a significant factor, but not always. Many bases are hermetically sealed bunkers with few means of entrance. They could be in the Arctic or the Amazon. Other times, location is everything. A vigilante lair that connects to the subway of a city gives it an ambiance which would be lost if it was placed in a suburb.

2. **Builder/Owner**: Sometimes the owner of a base was solely responsible for its creation, but this is not always the case. Superhumans often asked allies for their help when they building. A vigilante might ask a super scientist friend for some programmable robot drones or laser traps or a villain might ask a sorcerer to ward a particular vault door. Regardless, the base's owner or owners ultimately made all the important decisions about its design.

3. **Purpose**: Most bases were homes away from home, where a superhuman could rest and work without being bothered by the outside world, but many builders created bases for specialized reasons. Many were practical facilities - labs, workshops, training grounds, and the like. Others were for aesthetic reasons - art studios, private museums, shrines, or memorials. Some were prisons or torture chambers.

4. **Inhabitants**: Builders often populated their bases with servants, guards, and companions. These were not free citizens who came and went as they pleased. The security risk of a human freely traveling to and from a secret base was too great. Superhumans preferred robots, bound magical beings, genetically engineered creatures, and other 'untouchables'. Sometimes, a new population displaced the builder - a revolt by the servants or a raid by enemies of the builder. These new inhabitants would try to change the base to suit their needs or loot it and abandon it. Some bases are empty of inhabitants but even this affects this base. An empty base could be flooded with deadly nerve gas or radiation, as a deterrent to potential thieves. No matter what, the inhabitants or lack thereof shaped the base.

5. **Contents**: Bases were useful in part because they could store illegal contraband like magical weapons or military grade power armor. Builders often wound up using their bases as storage, even if they did not originally intend to, as they accumulated more and more objects they could not store elsewhere.

6. **Defenses**: Some builders relied on secrecy and remoteness to protect their base. Others preferred traps to ward off intruders, either set to kill or to neutralize and imprison intruders. Builders couldn't call the police if they caught burglars, so they resorted to their own methods for dealing with them. Guardians were also used in some bases. The most paranoid used all of these security measures to protect their base. Of course, all defenses had to be weighed against the restrictions it placed on the utility of the base. A builder had to be careful not to set off traps by mistake and guardians usually need some of sustenance - food, water, electricity, or magical energy. A remote base was harder to access. This balance is hard to reach, so most owners either were too lax or too paranoid, either of which can be exploited by canny base raiders.

7. **History**: Even after a base is built, it continues to be modified by how it is used. Owners may expand or shut down parts of the base as their resources wax and wane. The purpose of a base may change as well as its owner. Some bases may change hands several times before the PCs find it. Much of the history won't be available in any research either but understanding what happened in a base means the difference between life and death to base raiders.

Each element of the base will have an aspect connected to it. The goal for this process is to create 1 aspect for each of the 7 elements. The players will know some of the aspects and the gamemaster will know the rest of the aspects. This knowledge gives the players an edge when they actually enter the base, as they can

use the aspects right from the start and they can make preparations for any unusual challenges.

STEP 1: ESTABLISH THE FIRST ELEMENTS OF THE BASE

Base raiders do not randomly find bases by accident on a regular basis. They have to search for them, which requires investigation. But in order to investigate, the characters have to pick something to investigate. This target of investigation is 1 of the 7 elements of a base, listed above. For example, a group of players decide they want to find a base at a particular region (a major city for example) or a base built by an infamous villain (Builder/Owner) or a base loaded with magical items (Contents).

This description of an element can't be too long - 1 or 2 sentences should be enough. The gamemaster can modify or veto descriptions that are unbalanced or wouldn't work for the campaign. If the gamemaster has established that no spaceships capable of FTL travel are left on earth, the players can't contradict that fact by saying they want to find a base with working spaceships inside.

Once the players pick the element they want to find, the gamemaster responds by picking one of the other elements and linking the two elements together, which the players learn through their investigation. Typically the link explains one of the elements through the second element. Think of it this way: The base uses element 1 because of element 2 or vice versa. The

base was built at location Y because it was built by superhero X. The base was built to fulfill Purpose A so it needed Defenses B to keep it safe. This link becomes an aspect of the base. The players know this aspect and can invoke it whenever appropriate.

This first aspect is always learned by the player characters. At this point, the players can choose to start the adventure OR they can continue their investigation and learn more about the base before they venture inside. If they choose to go without further investigation, the gamemaster decides the rest of the elements of the base and designs the base for the adventure. This isn't to say the players automatically know where the front door of the base is and can walk right up to it. Instead, they know where to go to start the adventure, which does not necessarily mean they know the base's location.

For example, the players want to find a base in their home city of Chicago, with the aspect "Windy City Base". They have chosen the element Location so now the gamemaster has to pick another element to explain why there is a base in Chicago. The element of Purpose is chosen - Chicago is rife with criminal syndicates like the mafia so this base was built to fight organized crime. The aspect Crime-Fighting Headquarters is created for this base.

If the players want, they can start the adventure now. In that case, the gamemaster comes up with an appropriate hook for the adventure, which could be as simple as saying that the characters know that the base is in a certain region of Chicago, based on the number of thwarted crimes or it could be as elaborate

BASE INVESTIGATION TABLE	
Research Rolls	**Result**
All players succeed	The theory of the players is correct. The gamemaster accepts the new aspect as the players described it.
Half or more (round up) of the players succeed	The theory of the players is mostly correct. The gamemaster accepts the new aspect but changes one part of it.
Less than half of the players succeed	The theory of the players is mostly incorrect. The gamemaster creates a new aspect but incorporates one part of the player's theory into it.
All players fail	The theory of the players is totally incorrect. The gamemaster creates a new aspect to describe the element

as summoning the ghost of a dead gangster to lead them to the base. However, if the players want to learn more about the base before they start the adventure, they proceed on to step 2.

Please note at this point the players haven't had to roll any dice and they know 2 aspects connected to the base. Without gaining at least the basic information necessary to get to the base, there can't be an adventure, so there's no reason to leave it up to chance. However, the next stage of collaborative base creation involves dice rolling. Lots of it.

STEP 2: BASE INVESTIGATION

Assuming the players wish to research the base more before they explore it, they need to think about the evidence they have. They know of 2 elements in the base, which corresponds to 2 aspects. These elements are known to be accurate but that still leaves 5 elements left to explain. The gamemaster should secretly assign a difficulty to each of these elements from +0 to +4. The higher the number, the harder it is for characters to learn accurate information about this element.

The players should create a hypothesis that explains the second element by linking it to one of the elements that hasn't been used so far. This new link is described as an aspect but the players do not yet know if it can be applied to the base or not.

So, if the players chose Location (Chicago which has the aspect Windy City Base) first and the gamemaster chose Purpose (to battle organized crime) to explain the base's location, (which creates the aspect Crime-Fighting Headquarters) then the players could pick Builder/Owner to explain Purpose - in this case, the players theorize that a superhero named Charger, who was based in Chicago before Ragnarok and had super speed powers, built the base. This becomes the aspect "Built by Charger." Now, they know the base is in Chicago and it is a crime fighting headquarters but they do not know for certain if Charger built the base or not. Perhaps another hero did or even a villain who wanted to take out a rival criminal syndicate.

Each player character can then make 1 skill check of their choice to represent how they learn more about this element of the base. If a player does not make a skill check, count it as a failure. This skill check can be a research skill, networking, or any other skill that

might be used to gain information about the base in question. The gamemaster has final say over which skills can be used in this investigation. Players can spend Fate points to boost their roll, but their pool of Fate points does not refresh during this process.

The gamemaster compares each skill check against the secret difficulty of this element. Keep track of every success and every failure by the players and then determine the results with the following table:

A part of an aspect is usually a single action, object, or person. The gamemaster has final authority on what constitutes a part.

The gamemaster does not reveal what the real aspect is - the players will only know their hypothesis aspect. Sometimes this will be the correct aspect, sometimes it will not. If player attempts to use a hypothesis aspect that is not correct, the player wastes a Fate Point for no effect.

Now 3 aspects of the base have been established, one way or the other. The players can start the adventure or they can continue their investigation. If they continue the investigation, they proceed to step 3.

EXAMPLE BASE INVESTIGATION

For example, let's take the base in Chicago mentioned above. Three players are investigating the Builder/Owner element. The gamemaster has assigned a +1 to the difficulty of this element, but the players do not know this number. Their hypothesis is a superhero named Charger built the base. They give it an aspect called "Built by Charger." Let's examine the four possibilities:

If all 3 players succeeded by rolling a +1 or better on their skill checks, then their theory was correct. Charger built the base. The aspect "Built by Charger" is correct. When the players raid this base, they can invoke or tag "Built by Charger" whenever it is appropriate.

If 2 players succeeded by rolling +1 or better on their skill checks and 1 player rolled less than +1, then their theory was mostly correct. The gamemaster could determine that an ally of Charger, like his sidekick Speed Fiend, built the base, or that Charger used the base but he wasn't the only superhero to use it. The gamemaster could modify the aspect so it now becomes "Built by Charger and Friends" or "Owned

by Charger, Built by The Electric Brain" or "Built by Speed Fiend."

If 1 player succeeded by rolling +1 on their skill check but the other 2 players failed their rolls, then their theory was mostly incorrect. The gamemaster has to keep one part of the player's theory, but can reshape the rest of the aspect to his suiting. The base could have been built by Aqua-Warrior, a different superhero who had water superpowers, not super speed, which gives it the aspect "Built by Aqua-Warrior."

Perhaps the base was built by someone who was pretending to be Charger and was using it as a trap to lure one of Charger's allies inside, which gives it the aspect "Built by a fake Charger". Perhaps this was Lazer's base, a rival vigilante's base, but Charger wrecked the base in a fight with Lazer. The aspect "Built by Lazer and torn down by Charger" sounds appropriate.

If all of the players failed their skill checks, then their theory was totally incorrect. The gamemaster is free to create any aspect he wishes to explain the Builder/Owner element. This new element must still take into account the established facts of the base, namely that its Location is Chicago and its purpose is to battle organized crime.

Perhaps the villain Raven Strike used this base to wipe out the local mafia so he could take over the city's drug trade, which merits the aspect "Lair of Raven Strike." A super scientist named Dr. Digital used social engineering and computers to remotely antagonize gangs by stealing from their bank accounts and other forms of electronic harassment, giving it the aspect "Dr. Digital's Data Domain." The wife of a mobster named Anne Mendoza, who had mutant powers she kept secret, built the base so she could plan her assassinations of rival gangsters and pave the way to the top for her husband - "Anne's secret home away from home."

For the purposes of this example, the aspect Built by Charger and Friends is the one finally selected for the Builder/Owner element.

STEP 3: RUMORS

The gamemaster picks 1 of the remaining elements and creates 1 rumor about this element, which is written as an aspect. Each player contributes 1 rumor about

this element or they may simply agree with an existing rumor if they do not wish to contribute a new rumor. Then each player makes a skill check to research a rumor. The gamemaster reveals the difficult modifier of that element and every player makes 1 skill check to research 1 rumor of their choice. The player who rolls the highest success gets to decide if his chosen rumor is correct or if it is not, then the player may change one part of the rumor. This rumor becomes an aspect connected to that element of the base. If no player succeeds, then the gamemaster secretly determines which of the rumors is correct and may modify the aspect. The gamemaster decides who wins in case of a tie and has final say over how much a player can change an aspect.

Continuing the example base, the gamemaster picks the element Contents and creates the first rumor - The base has a cache of magical weapons taken from an evil sorcerer - which becomes the aspect "Resting place of the tools of Dusk, the Dark Blade."

The first player creates a new rumor - the base had a high tech workshop to manufacture crime fighting gadgets and writes the aspect "Workbench of the Vigilante."

The second player is playing a magic user and wants to find more magical items so he opts to agree with the gamemaster's rumor and aspect "Resting place of the tools of Dusk, the Dark Blade."

The third player is greedy and says the base has a vast collection of loot stolen from gangsters - money, drugs, weapons, gold plated weapons, fancy cars, gold plated fancy cars, and tacky jewelry. This creates the aspect "Bling bling for the Rich and Infamous."

All 3 players roll a skill check to determine if their chosen rumor is correct or not.

If player 1 got the highest skill check, then the aspect would be Workbench of the Vigilante or the player could modify it by changing one part of the aspect. But since the player created this aspect, he is fine with it as it is currently written.

If player 2 got the highest skill check, then the gamemaster's aspect, Resting place of the tools of Dusk, the Dark Blade, comes into play. Player 2 could decide to modify it by changing it to "Resting place of the tools of a dozen sorcerers" or something similar to that.

If player 3 wins the roll, he will keep the aspect Bling bling for the Rich and Infamous since he came

up with it.

If player 1 and 2 by succeeding the same amount, then the gamemaster decides which player is the victor.

If no player succeeded on their skill check, then the gamemaster secretly decides which of the rumors is correct or may modify one of the rumors by changing one part of it. The gamemaster likes Workbench of the Vigilante, but changes it to Workbench of the Psychopathic Vigilante - the gadgets and equipment built there are tools of murder and torture.

For the purposes of this example, player 3 wins the roll.

As before, the players can stop their investigation and start the adventure after this step or they can continue.

STEP 4: FINISHING UP

At this point, 3 elements remain. The group can choose to repeat step 2 or step 3 to describe each of the remaining elements. If the group decides to use step 2 (Investigation) to describe one of the remaining elements, they do not have to link it to a previously described element - just create a new hypothesis for one of the remaining elements. If the group selects step 3 (Rumors), then run the step as normal. Players may select any combination of step 2 and step 3 after they have used each step at least once.

For example, the Chicago base group decides to investigate the Inhabitants of the base - they create a hypothesis stating that a group of mutants found the base and now squat in it, which is represented by the aspect "Mutant Occupied Territory." The players roll and 2 of the 3 player succeed in their rolls, so the gamemaster accepts it as mostly correct. The base is being occupied but not by mutants. A group of refugee Grey aliens lives in the base. "Alien Occupied Territory" becomes the next aspect of the base.

Next, the group selects Rumor for the element Defenses. They go through the step as described above and wind up with the aspect "Gauntlet of Traps" to describe a series of dangerous traps left behind to protect the base.

Finally, the group decides to use Rumors again for the last element, History. The group fails their rolls so the gamemaster secretly creates the aspect "Blood

soaked legacy" to describe the brutal history of the murderous vigilantes who used the base.

The End Results

Once this process is complete, the base will have 7 aspects to describe it, one for each of the 7 major elements of the base. The gamemaster has to create an adventure based on this information, but now the players have an idea of what to expect - of course they won't know how much of their information is accurate, slightly incorrect, or outright wrong.

So for the example Chicago base, we have the following 7 aspects:

1. **Location**: Windy City Base - known by the players.
2. **Purpose**: Crime-Fighting Headquarters - known by the players.
3. **Builder/Owner**: The players believe the aspect is Built by Charger. The gamemaster secretly knows the aspect is Built by Charger and Friends.
4. **Contents**: Bling bling for the Rich and Infamous - Known by the players.
5. **Inhabitants**: The players believe the aspect is Mutant Occupied Territory. The gamemaster secretly knows the aspect is Alien Occupied Territory.
6. **Defenses**: Gauntlet of Traps - known by the players.
7. **History**: Blood soaked legacy - unknown by the players - they have no idea which of the rumors was selected and modified by the gamemaster.

With this information, the gamemaster can create a suitably exciting adventure using this base as its core - perhaps the base is the entire adventure or simply finding it is the greatest challenge.

The alien squatters may be enemies, potential allies, or soon-to-be victims of the deadly traps that are just waiting to be discovered. This does not replace the need for basic adventure creation, but it does help engage the players so they feel like the campaign is more about their characters' desires and goals.

LOOT RULES

Base Raiders break into abandoned bases and take
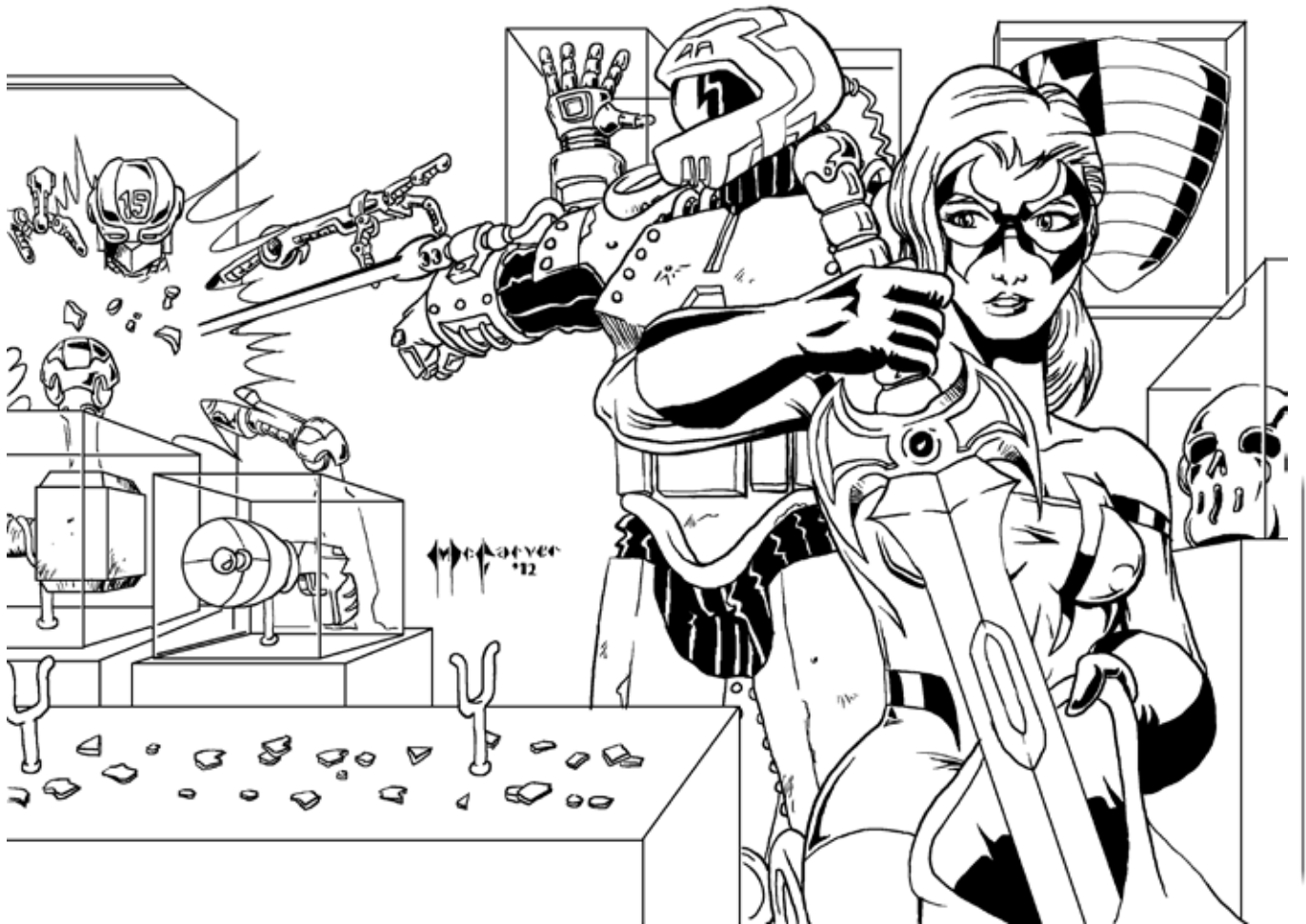
whatever they can find in order to make a profit. Of course, since selling the contents of a base is illegal, making a profit can be tricky. For the purposes of this game, items found in bases are given 2 attributes: Loot Points and Bulk.

The loot points represents how potentially valuable an object is, while Bulk represents how cumbersome the object is to carry. Even light objects may have a high bulk value if they are large or oddly shaped. Furthermore, some items may have aspects which limit or enhance the value of the loot. A Radioactive or Alien Tech item may be more valuable to a corporate buyer than a mystic one for example, but the radioactive item will be dangerous to carry and easy to detect.

Loot Points: Every 10 points of loot is worth 1 skill point. Characters cannot freely convert loot into skill points though. They must sell or trade loot in order to gain a benefit from loot. Furthermore, there are several

limitations on how skill points earned by selling loot can be spent.

Bulk: These rules are streamlined and abstracted to avoid slowing the game down with lengthy calculations over weight limits and size.

An adult human of average strength with a backpack can carry 10 points worth of bulk without penalty. A human can carry up 20 points of bulk with the aid of but gains a temporary aspect, encumbered. An encumbered character always has a -2 penalty on all skill tests involving speed or agility. A normal human can't carry more than 20 points of bulk under normal circumstances.

For the purposes of these rules, normal equipment and gadgets do not count against bulk, but the gamemaster may rule that large or unusually-shaped objects count against bulk. The gamemaster has final say over bulk.

Carrying an adult human body (unconscious or dead) counts as 20 bulk points.

Characters with enhanced strength can carry an additional 10 points of bulk per +1 of the appropriate Strange Skill to a maximum of 50 points before being encumbered. The character can carry twice their normal carry limit while encumbered. No matter how much they can lift, a human sized character cannot carry more than 100 points of bulk. A normal sized sedan's trunk can carry 20 points of bulk. Every passenger of a vehicle gives 20 points of bulk carrying capacity.

Bulk is an approximate measurement of the size and weight of loot, so the gamemaster has final say on how much loot a character or vehicle can carry.

Selling Loot

Characters must find a buyer to sell loot. By default, base raiders can sell to the black market for superpowers. However, the black market never buys loot at a 1:1 ratio. At best, characters can sell loot at a 2:1 ratio or as bad as a 10:1 ratio, depending on the item being sold, skill tests for haggling, personal history, and the current market conditions. On average, selling to the black market on a short notice will get a 5:1 to ratio. In other words, when the characters sell to the black market, for 50 points of loot, they can gain 1 skill point. The advantage of selling to the black market though, is their availability and their speed. The bazaars are always open and characters can sell their loot in a matter of hours.

Selling loot at full value is possible if a good buyer is found. Generally, this takes an appropriate networking skill test, which takes at least 1 day per 10 per points of loot. For example, finding a buyer for 120 points of alien technology loot will take at least 12 days of networking and research. The difficulty of the roll is usually +2, but GMs may require higher rolls for hard to sell items. The gamemaster should roll this in secret, because failure indicates a complication: For example, the players could have alerted the authorities or have found a buyer who will try to rip them off. Success indicates the players have found a buyer willing to buy the loot at a 1:1 ratio. Generally, the players must transport the loot to a location of the buyer's

choice, which may be a problem for high bulk items.

Spending Skill Points Gained from Loot

Characters are limited in how they can spend skill points gained from loot. Only the following methods are acceptable:

Character Goals: A character can spend skill points gained from loot at a 1:1 ratio to fulfill goals.

Resources: The character can improve their Resources Skill (or skill with the Wealth trapping) by spending an amount of skill points gained from loot equal to their current rating in Resources. For example, if the character's Resources is +3, they must spend 3 skill points gained from loot in order to improve the bonus to +4. Resources can go up a power tier by spending the refresh cost multipled by 10.

Powers Interaction: a character can spend skill points gained from loot on improving Strange Skills or paying off the side effects of new powers gained during gameplay (from page 182), at the gamemaster's discretion. Players should explain how spending loot would improve their powers or mitigate side effects. If the gamemaster accepts the explanation, then the character can spend the points to pay off the cost of the new power. An easy way to explain spending loot to improve Strange Skill is to say the character is trading the loot for a favor from a black market dealer.

Characters can pay for refresh with skill points earned from loot at a 10:1 ratio. In other words, for every 10 points of skill points earned from loot, the character pay for 1 refresh of the cost of a goal. The character must justify the expenditure the same way as skill points.

For example, a base raider recently injected herself with a super soldier drug and gained pyrokinesis as a Strange Skill. The skill received the Untrained Power aspect because she could not pay the entire skill point cost when she gained the Strange Skill. The raider needs to pay off 5 skill points to remove the Untrained Power Aspect. After a mission, she received 40 loot points worth of items. She visits a black market bazaar with the loot. Because she has friends in the bazaar, she can sell the loot at a 2:1 ratio. She gains

2 skill points from the sale. The player explains how she could spend her wealth at the bazaar to hire a mutant trainer. The trainer would teach her a few tricks to help master pyrokinesis. The gamemaster accepts the explanation. The raider spends the 2 skill points on her pyrokinesis Strange Skill. It's still an Untrained Power, but now she only has to spend 3 more skill points to master it instead of 5 points.

Salvaging Loot

Some items can be picked up and carried easily, but experienced base raiders know a lot of valuable loot has to be dismantled before it can be removed. Every base will have a salvage skill and rating at the top of its entry.

The salvage skill is the skill needed to dismantle loot. The loot entry will specify if salvage is needed or not. When salvage is necessary to remove loot, a character must make a skill test using the specified skill and succeed at the salvage rating. A skill test requires 1 hour of labor per item. Failure destroys the loot, unless the character spends a Fate point to save it. Only 1 roll is required to salvage all items in a single room. For example:

Zombie Factory Base Component
Salvage Skill: Technology
Salvage Rating: +2 (S)

To salvage a base component, the character must make a +2 (S) technology skill test.

A base raider in the Zombie Factory with a +4 (E) technology skill tries to dismantle 3 base components. He rolls 3dF-1d6 (because the skill difficulty tier is Superhuman and his skill power tier is Extraordinary, he rolls -1d6. See page 108 for Difficulty and Power Tiers). He gets + 0 -, 2, which results in a -2 for a final roll of +2. He barely succeeds. It takes 3 hours to dismantle all 3 base components. He only had to make 1 roll for all 3 base components because they were all in the same room.

Types of Loot

Loot comes in many forms, but the most common types are superpower sources and base inventory. Super-

power sources are the most valuable loot and will usually have a high value and low bulk. Of course, these items can be used by player characters to improve their own abilities, so they must decide whether to keep or sell the item.

Base inventory are the tools, supplies, spare parts, and other items kept in bases to fulfill operational needs. Some are built into the base, so they must be dismantled in order to be salvaged. Technologically oriented bases will have inventory like computers, lab equipment, spare vehicle or robot parts, cutting edge tools, fuel for nuclear reactors, and sensors. Magically oriented bases will have inventory like alchemy ingredients, ritual magic tools, occult libraries, and spare parts for golems. Instead of describing the inventory of each room, gamemasters can categorize it by the value and bulk. Use the following guidelines when determining the value of a base:

Debris: worth more as scrap for recycling than anything else. 1 loot point per 200 bulk points.

Mundane Supplies: Miscellaneous supplies necessary to run a base but have little worth - rations, office equipment and furniture. 1 loot point per 100 bulk points.

Tech Supplies: Spare parts and tools to repair computers, sensors, and other technologically advanced equipment. 1 loot point per 20 bulk points.

Advanced Tech: Alien-built or superhuman designed technology. 1 loot point per 10 bulk points.

Tech Documentation: Photos or video that show advanced technology. Useful in reverse engineering tech. 1 loot point per room documented. No bulk.

Data: Research notes, schematics, blue prints, and other unencrypted data of value. Variable loot point value. No bulk.

Base Components: Advanced technology built into a base. 1 loot point per 10 bulk points. Salvage required.

Occult Library: Books, scrolls, about esoteric topics. 1 loot point per 50 bulk points.

Alchemy ingredients: Rare herbs, body parts of magical beings, and unearthly metals. 1 loot point per 20 bulk points.

Golem parts: Spare parts for magical constructs. Often made of mithril or other exotic materials. 1 loot point per 10 bulk points.

CHAPTER NINE
ROGUE'S GALLERY

The disappearance of the heroes and villains have led to the rise of a new generation of superpowered free-wheeling agents of change. Most cannot easily be classified as purely heroic or villainous though. One person's noble vigilante is another's terrorist. Some of the new superpowered beings are easily recognizable as pure evil though. In this chapter, ten of these characters are described, ready for use.

Each NPC in this chapter is categorized as a hero or villain. This does not mean they must be used as such in your campaign. A hero NPC could become an antagonist and a villain could be used as an ally or even friend of the player characters. Instead, the designation merely describes how the character was created. Heroes follow the rules for player character creation as described in Chapter 7 and are usable as pregenerated characters. Villains are created using the Villain rules described in Chapter 8 and are not suitable as player characters. They are best suited as antagonists or wild cards in your campaign.

While many of the characters have powerful combat abilities, no character is optimized solely for battle. Even monstrous villains like Death Token have non-combat abilities. Do not use villains only as opponents for the player characters to beat up. Villains should make their own plans and act on them.

These characters do not act like the previous generation of costumed heroes and villains. Vigilantes often have ulterior motives for fighting crime, like Knight Errant's desire to make a profit. Villains do not always see themselves as being evil either. The Pilgrim wants to protect the world from the dangers stored in hidden bases, a noble goal. However, his actions, especially once he starts killing base raiders, mark him as a dangerous villain. Whatever the case, the new generation does not believe they are defenders of the Status Quo (like the old heroes did) or rebels against a corrupt regime (like the old villains). They have their own agendas and see their powers as a tool to realize them.

If you wish to use these characters in your campaign, you should allow the players to read this chapter, so they can establish ties to at least one of the NPCs. For example, look at the link between Knight Errant and Iconoclast or Emily and Fetch. Each pair has worked together in the past, raiding bases. Their histories and goals intertwine in a way that gives them a chance to work together in the future. There are also ties to the Zombie Factory, which shows how links to a place can be worked into a character's back story. Players should have a chance to work in a connection to one or more of the NPCs. The following suggestions can help hook these characters into your game.

USING A HERO NPC IN YOUR GAME

Beatrice: As an important leader of the Underground, Beatrice is an excellent contact for that organization. Players who need the help of the Underground might have to persuade her first. She could also contact the players for help, offering them unique rewards in exchange for performing a mission on behalf of the Underground. Beatrice is primarily a social character, but her skills gives her versatility.

Emily: A base raider with a single goal, Emily can show up in any number of adventures. She is young and somewhat inexperienced, but she is still powerful enough to hold her own as a base raider. She can either work as an ally to the players or an unwitting antagonist, if she is possessed by the Dark Pariah. It can be used as a plot device ("Only the Dark Pariah can stop the Old One!"), a new villain, or a misunderstood ally. Read the story "Pariah" to learn more about it.

Fetch: Fetch is a wild child, trying to understand the modern world. He is deadly but innocent. His ignorance of society may cause many problems, but characters who befriend him will appreciate his talents.

Iconoclast: Player characters who want a black market dealer contact or friend should look no further than Iconoclast. She is a super scientist who can help a player character gain superpowers through any number of methods, like super soldier drugs, cybernetics, or high tech gadgets. Although she is idealistic, she is also a capitalist who wants to get paid, so she is not a free power source for players to exploit.

Knight Errant: A base raider who represents the mixed motives of the new superhero. He genuinely wants to protect society from criminals but he does not trust the government to do the job, nor can he afford to fight crime for free. Idealistic player characters may become rivals, seeing his actions as corrupt. Otherwise, he is an excellent investigator and crime fighter.

Peter Silvertail: The rabbit ex-lawyer is an unlikely hero, but a very useful ally for player characters. He can still pretend to be human and can fast talk most base raiders out of jail, provided they are not held on serious charges. His knowledge of the Ideal is unmatched, making him an excellent way to introduce new adventures. He can become a fixer or patron of the player characters, providing them leads on base locations in exchange for protection and assistance.

USING A VILLAIN NPC IN YOUR GAME

Death Token: The most monstrous of the villains, Death Token is an apocalypse on cyborg legs. He is also a tank, able to withstand a tremendous amount of damage in battle. However, he is not mindless. It is possible to stop him without a battle to the death, although this is difficult. Player characters who wish to negotiate with him must have some kind of leverage over him before he will start talking. Offering him freedom or threatening him with antibiotics (his weakness) are two possible sources of leverage. While he will not give up his primary goals, player characters could trick him or offer him a chance to regain his humanity. He might leap at the chance at becoming human again, if he believes it is possible to do so.

Haruspex: As a master con artist and manipulator, Haruspex is comfortable working behind the scenes. She might serve as a patron for the player characters, hiring them for various missions through intermediaries. The missions will be based on the unknown agenda of the crystals that fuel her powers. Of course, she would see the players as pawns for one of her schemes, so sooner or later, they would be betrayed. In order to get revenge, the player characters would have to determine who hired them in the first place and why.

Paragon: The cloned villain models her actions on her 'mother' but without an organized group of superheroes to stop her, Paragon could become the most powerful crime boss in the world. She will inevitably come into conflict with anyone who does not bow to her, which will probably include the player characters. Her current goals include gaining stockpiles of power sources, so she can empower thugs and assassins to kill superheroes and rival gangsters for her. This means she will be competing with the players for control of a base, sooner or later.

Pilgrim: A fallen hero, Pilgrim is the only solitary villain in this group, which makes him more dangerous in some ways. The players won't be able to learn about his weaknesses by capturing a minion, for example. He can strike at any time and can teleport away if he is severely wounded. Trying to redeem him will be difficult, especially if he has killed base raiders. Even if the players stop him, will they stoop to his level or will they find a better way to stop him?

Beatrice

High Power Hero

Centuries ago, a powerful alchemist was in love with a Countess. She was trapped in a loveless marriage with the Count, so she was receptive to the alchemist's attention. However, the Count got wind of the affair and chased the alchemist out of the kingdom. The Countess miscarried soon after and rumors stated the Count denied her medicine rather than risk letting a bastard be born. The Countess fell into a deep depression.

A new handmaid joined the court, elegant, graceful and utterly charming in conversation. She enlivened the castle, bringing joy to everyone inside it. Even the Countess was won over and life was good until the handmaid secretly let the alchemist into the castle. That night, the alchemist slew the Count and used magic to assume his appearance. Beatrice, the handmaid, was a golem crafted from porcelain, and the alchemist's spy. He used her to ensure no one learned the truth.

The alchemist reigned for years, but the Countess never borne another child. When she died, the alchemist became cold and distant and Beatrice decided to flee before he destroyed her. She knew that humans often used magical beings like her to fuel new rituals. She stole his grimoires and fled into the night.

After countless years on the run from human sorcerers, Beatrice found the Underground and quickly rose to prominence as a leader. She is still highly idealistic despite her age and experiences. She has recently befriended several base raiders like Iconoclast, finding their adventures compelling beyond words. She raids bases to look for new grimoires to study.

Because of her structural composition, she is vulnerable to kinetic attacks and high frequency sounds reverberate in her head, causing maddening headaches. Fortunately, the Underground has alchemists who can put her back together if she breaks.

ASPECTS

Non-Human: Porcelain Body, Beautiful Soul
Magical Being: Crafted to Spy Upon the Court
Obsession: End the Tyranny of Human Sorcerers

Conviction: Civilized Behavior is all that Separates Us from Barbarism
Conviction: Never Ask Anyone To Do What You Are Afraid of
Complication [Major]: The Work of The Council Never Ends
Escaped from a Glided Cage
Base Raiders Tell the Best Stories

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Enchanting Companion: 11 skill points
Power Tier: Superhuman
Conversation, Convince, Esteem, Influence, Insight, Inspire, Languages, Treatment [Mental]
Conviction: Civilized Behavior is all that Separates Us from Barbarism
Snag [Minor]: Inhumanly Beautiful

Description: Beatrice was crafted to be the perfect conversationalist. She is inhumanly charming, gracious, and polite. She is even capable of curing depression through simple conversation. Obviously, Beatrice is also very persuasive. She is convinced she must follow proper etiquette at all times, regardless of circumstances. Her inhuman nature is impossible to hide when she uses her powers, which makes it impossible for her to pass as human, despite her beauty.

Self-Taught Sorceress: 7 points
Power Tier: Superhuman
Variable [Scene] x3
Spell [Major]
Minor Delay: Full Action/A Few Moments
Obsession: End the Tyranny of Human Sorcerers

Description: Beatrice taught herself magic by stealing a few grimoires from her master and reading them while on the run. She has learned many spells, but her long years on the run from humans has hardened her heart against them. She will never back down from a fight against a human sorcerer. She continually seeks ways to improve her sorcery to better fight against humans. With the spell rules, she can use her powers 3 times each scene and still have 1 Fate point left over.

Member of the Head Council: 5 skill points
Power Tier: Superhuman
Information, Initiative [Social], Minions, Networking, Stress Capacity [Reputation]
Conviction: Never Ask Anyone To Do What You Are Afraid of
Complication [Major]: The Work of The Council Never Ends

Description: As one of the most dedicated leaders of the Underground, Beatrice is one of the High Council. She makes decisions that affect the entire Underground. Unlike many of the other Head Council members, Beatrice prefers to be out in the field, fighting on the front lines. Her courage and grace have inspired countless agents and many would die to save her. Beatrice can draw upon her vast network of friends, colleagues, and allies throughout the Underground for advice or a helping hand during a mission.

Minor Weakness: [Health] Kinetic Attacks
Major Weakness: [Mental] High Frequency Sounds

SKILLS

Great: Enchanting Companion +4
Good: Member of the Head Council +3
Fair: Self-Taught Sorceress +2
Average: Alertness +1, Resolve +1, Endurance +1,

GIFTS

Skilled

TIER BENEFITS

Armor 2 [Reputation]
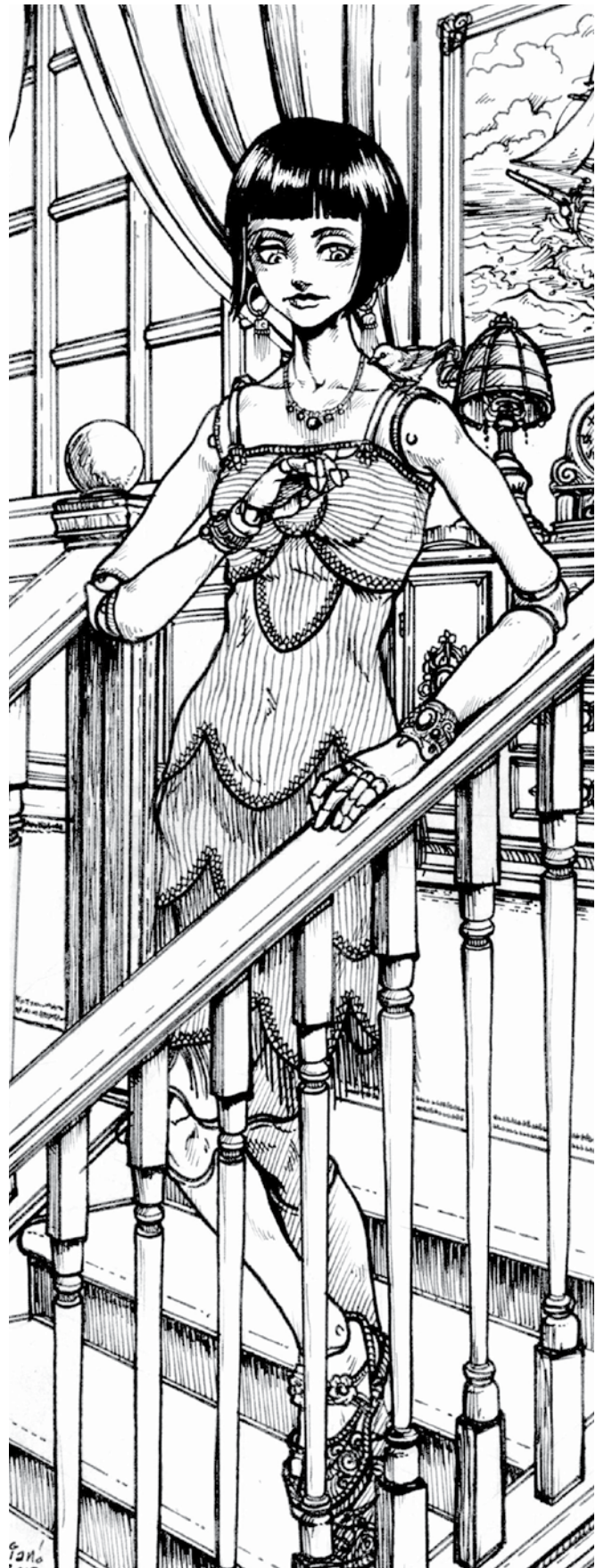Can take one additional minor [Reputation] consequence

STRESS TRACKS

Health OOO O
Composure OOO O
Reputation OOO OOO

Refresh 7 (10 base +3 weakness - 6 for powers)

Death Token

Villain

Death Token does not remember his name, but knows he was once a living soldier in the US Army. His commanding officer offered him a once in a lifetime deal: to become a superhero. The soldier eagerly accepted and was given an injection of the Upsilon super soldier drug. It granted him the ability to discharge powerful energy blasts. However, the Ideal learned about the military's program and convinced Congress to defund it. The soldier was left with powers he could not use. He was kicked out of the Army as well.

An Ideal hero named Biomancer later approached the soldier and offered him more power and a chance to do good. The soldier went with Biomancer but found out the hero was anything but good. Biomancer experimented on the soldier with a genetically altered plague. It transformed the soldier into an undead monster, but Biomancer was not done with the soldier. He replaced most of the soldier's flesh with cutting edge bionic implants. The new creature was dubbed Death Token. Biomancer could not control Death Token but found his powers intriguing so he was not destroyed.

Death Token is covered in a virulent disease that affects all dead and undead flesh it touches. It can transform a corpse into a servitor zombie and even imbue it with superpowers. Death Token can also mind control undead beings in his presence. The disease is airborne, so any undead being near him is in danger.

Death Token serves as the 'boss' villain of the Zombie Factory, but feel free to use him however you wish in your game. Death Token is not a subtle mastermind, but a one cyborg apocalypse. Left unchecked, he could singlehandedly start a zombie apocalypse. Every corpse he encounters transforms into a zombie. However, as a creature of disease, antibiotics severely damage him. Characters can use this to fight him, although learning his weakness should be an adventure in of itself. Other residents of the Zombie Factory may know his secret, if the players can find them first. His memories can also be used against him, if someone learns of his Complication aspect. A character can spend a Fate point to compel Death Token to have a flashback of his past life, stunning him until he is attacked or threatened. However, the character must learn the aspect with an Insight skill test, opposed by Death Token's Special Forces Training unique skill (because it contains the Willpower trapping).

ASPECTS

Conviction: Turn all the Living into Undead Slaves
Snag [Major]: Stench of the Dead
Snag [Major]: Can only Command the Undead
Complication [Major]: Tortured by Past Life as a Loyal American

STRANGE AND UNIQUE SKILLS

Undead Cyborg: 6 skill points
Power Tier: Ascendant
Initiative [Physical], Menace, Resist Damage, Stress Capacity [Health]
Snag [Major]: Stench of the Dead
Description: Death Token is half undead abomination, half cyborg. The stench of his plague-ridden flesh and the noise of his bionic servos makes stealth impossible. However, he is terrifying to gaze upon and incredibly resilient.

Master of the Undead: 10 skill points
Power Tier: Superhuman
Convince + Psychic, Minions [Advanced] + Unusual + Unusual, Variable [Scene]
Snag [Major]: Can only Command the Undead
Charges [Major]: Needs human corpses to create superpowered zombies.

Description: Death Token can imbue a corpse with an alien plague, which transforms it into a superpowered zombie. The zombie is under Death Token's control. Death Token can only give a zombie one superpower, but he can give each new zombie a different power. The power is treated as a single trapping at the superhuman power tier. Zombies are treated as minions. See the Boundless clones on page 239 for examples.

Upsilon Formula Dosage: 4 skill points
Power Tier: Superhuman
Shoot + Range x2 + Unusual
Delay [Minor]

Description: Death Token can release powerful bolts of energy at his foes, although it takes one round to recharge between blasts.

Special Forces Training:16 skill points
Power Tier: Extraordinary
Climb, Environment [Wilderness], Information, Leap, Networking, Notice, Parry, Physical Force, Strike, Willpower
Complication [Major]: Tortured by Past Life as a Loyal American

Description: Death Token doesn't remember much of his past life as a commando, but he does remember his training.

Minor Invulnerability: [Mental] Fear
Major Weakness: [Physical] Antibiotics

SKILLS:

Fantastic: Master of the Undead +6
Superb: Upsilon Formula Dosage +5
Great: Undead Cyborg +4
Special Forces Training +4

TIER BENEFITS

Armor 3 [Health]
Death Token can take 2 additional minor [Health] consequences
Death Token can remove a minor [Health] consequence once per scene as a free action
Weapon 1 [Health] with unarmed attacks

GIFTS

Skilled x5

STRESS TRACKS

Health OOO OOO
Composure OOO
Reputation OOO

Refresh 4 (16 +2 Weakness -9 refresh powers -4 gift -1 Invulnerability)

Emily

Medium Power Hero

Not everyone raids bases or buys superpowers on the black market to make the world a better place or go on some grand adventure. Some people just want to help their family. Emily is one such person.

After Ragnarok, Emily's sister, Alice, was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer. Emily looked it up online and found out that the missing Ideal hero, Biomancer, cured the cancer when a US president had it but never released the cure to the public. Rather than let her sister die, Emily decided to find Biomancer's cure by raiding bases.

Emily found a dealer willing to sell her a super soldier drug that would grant her tremendous power, but warned her it would eventually consume her or drive her mad if she wasn't careful. She stole from her father in order to pay for the drug. The dealer injected her with a Soviet psychic drug and she became linked to a psionic being of nearly united power called the Dark Pariah. It granted her tremendous power, but only if Emily agreed to help it find a permanent host body. Emily is not sure what it plans to do if gains a host, but she will deal with that after she saves Alice.

After gaining her powers, Emily met a skilled hacker who called himself Edge-Cutter and the two agreed to work together. Edge-Cutter lacked the firepower to raid bases by himself, but he knew how to find a few of them. They eventually found one of Biomancer's base and raided it, even though crooked cops were already there. The two managed to outwit the cops and found a new ally in the base, a mutant named Fetch. She used her powers to learn Fetch's history and promised to help him find answers. Together, the three young raiders are dedicated to finding Biomancer's primary secret base, although they have no idea what lies in wait for them there.

Emily's father has reported her missing to the police, but has not told the authorities of her new powers. He realizes what she has done to herself but does not want her in prison, only home. He is a deeply flawed parent, but does not want to see her harmed. However, he may hire a bounty hunter to bring her back, if she stays on the lam long enough. He does not realize how powerful she can be. If he were to learn of the Dark Pariah, it might push him to do whatever it takes to bring her in, even betraying her to the government.

ASPECTS

Normal Human: Teen Runaway on a Mission
Super Soldier: Conduit for the Dark Pariah
Conviction: Find a Cure for My Sister
Living on the Fringes and Loving It
Complication [Major]: The Dark Pariah Wants a Permanent Host
Complication [Major]: Powers cause major unnatural phenomena
My Real Family is Who I Choose
Fight Today, Don't Worry About Tomorrow

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Channel the Dark Pariah: 20 skill points
Power Tier: Godlike
Shoot + Psychic, Variable [Scene] x5 + Psychic
Complication [Major]: The Dark Pariah Wants a Permanent Host
Complication [Major]: Powers cause major unnatural phenomena in the current zone
Snag [Major]: Powers only usable at Superhuman power tier, unless Transform Flaw is active
Snag [Minor]: Powers terrify animals
Transform [Minor]: The Dark Pariah

Description: Emily is psychically connected to an incredibly powerful being known only as the Dark Pariah. It cannot exist in this world or even perceive it without the aid of a conduit. Emily allows the Dark Pariah to view Earth through her senses and in exchange, she is allowed to channel part of the Dark Pariah's unimaginable power for her own purposes. The Dark Pariah wants to live in this world, so Emily must eventually find it a new host. As of now, the Dark Pariah has agreed to wait until Emily can find a cloned human body with no mind, but it is an unstable entity. Every time she accesses the Pariah's full power, she must temporarily let it into the world. It is a terrifying being and one day may try to possess Emily permanently instead of

returning back to the pocket dimension where it lives. Emily rarely transforms into the Dark Pariah. Instead, she usually uses her power at the Superhuman power tier to avoid the Dark Pariah.

Minor Weakness [Mental]: Anti-Psychic Weapons

SKILLS

Great: Channel the Dark Pariah +4
Good: Resolve +3
Fair: Empathy +2
Average: Endurance +1

GIFTS

Skilled
Companion (x2): Edge-Cutter, a gifted hacker
Good Quality
Independent
Empowered: Computers
Skilled

EDGE CUTTER STATS

Skills
Computers +3 - Extraordinary Power Tier
Technology +3
Science +2
Resolve +1

Note: Edge-Cutter grants Emily a +1 bonus to Resolve when he is in the same scene as her.

Edge-Cutter Stress Tracks
Health OOO
Composure OOO O
Reputation OOO

STRESS TRACKS

Health OOO
Composure OOO OO
Reputation OOO

Refresh 1 (8 base -6 power -2 gifts +1 weakness)

Fetch

Medium Power Hero

Fetch was created in the Zombie Factory, the result of one of Biomancer's countless experiments with the Primordial Engine. Like so many of Biomancer's other creations, Fetch was treated like an animal and trained only to kill and obey. Unlike the other creations, Fetch gained self-awareness and empathy early on. He kept these traits secret, knowing that the pitiless robotic trainers would eliminate him if they knew what he felt.

The Zombie Factory only had limited living space, so Biomancer regularly culled his creations through lethal experiments and deadly competitions. Creations were routinely forced to kill each other in combat scenarios. Despite his feelings, Fetch forced himself to kill, again and again, in order to survive the frequent purges. Eventually, he was awarded with a new 'job' guarding another base.

Fetch's new home was a small facility hidden under New York City. Biomancer used the base to watch UN politicians and steal their DNA with small robotic drones. Fetch's only job was to protect the base in case someone broke in. Occasionally, a scientist from the Zombie Factory would teleport in, perform some work and leave. Fetch would try to talk to the scientists, but they feared him. Lonely beyond words, the creature lurked in the darkness of the base, waiting for something to change his life.

Some months after Ragnarok, Emily and another base raider found Fetch's base. Emily used her psychic powers to learn Fetch's background. She managed to persuade him not to attack. Instead, they became friends. Both wanted to find the Zombie Factory for different reasons so they have agreed to work with each other, at least until they find Biomancer's primary base. Emily felt sorry for the mistreated mutant and has taken it upon herself to teach Fetch about the outside world. Fetch is a quick learner but is still too shy to interact with strangers, even those who are not scared of him.

Because of his background, Fetch distrusts other non-humans. He prefers the company of humans and is quite eager to please any human who is nice to him. He sees other monstrous beings as rivals or enemies. In combat, he targets non-humans first and seldom shows

mercy to them. He can work himself into a frenzy, especially if he is wounded. He is extremely unstable when in a berserk rage, although the presence of Emily calms him.

ASPECTS

Mutant: Genetically Engineered Reptilian Killer
Non-Human: Spawn of the Primordial Engine
Conviction: Find the Truth of My Past
Complication: Scaly Abomination
Complication: Animalistic Urges
Monster on the Outside, Lonely Boy on the Inside
Raised in a Secret Base
Am I Doomed to be Alone?

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Mutant Chameleon 10 skill points
Power Tier: Superhuman
Climb + Unusual, Dodge, Leap, Stealth, Treatment [Health] + Unusual
Complication [Major]: Scaly Abomination
Snag [Minor]: Can only regenerate own wounds

Description: Fetch is a chimerical being, with human and reptilian traits. He can cling to walls like a gecko, change his skin to match the environment, and regenerate wounds and even severed limbs.

Despite these advantages, he is quite monstrous in appearance. Most bystanders would mistake him for a dangerous alien invader. He earns 2 Fate Points whenever he is mistaken as a monster and attacked.

Combat Training Program 5 skill points
Power Tier: Extraordinary
Information, Menace, Physical Force, Strike, Willpower
Complication [Minor]: Animalistic Urges

Description: Fetch was forced to endure a brutal training regimen to sharpen his combat skills. He was treated more like an attack dog than a soldier although they did teach him how to ambush foes and identify dangerous weapons and superpowers in combat. He can use this skill to determine which enemy is the most dangerous to him by making a skill test. The gamemas-

ter can set the difficulty of the test.

He is very dangerous in close combat, but he may lose control, unable to distinguish friend from foe. Compel Animalistic Urges to invoke his berserk state. When berserk, he attacks the nearest foe until it is taken out of combat, regardless of other factors. Once the foe is defeated, he can make a Combat Training Program skill test of +2 or higher to regain control.

SKILLS

Great: Mutant Chameleon +4
Good: Combat Training Program +3,
Fair: Alertness +2, Endurance +2
Average: Burglary, +1 Empathy +1, Technology +1

GIFTS

Impact: Combat Training Program
Skilled
Theme: Combat Training Program, Mutant Chameleon, and Alertness. All skills a +1 bonus when Fetch is inside a base.

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 1 [Health] on all hand to hand attacks, including Combat Training Program

STRESS TRACKS

Health OOO OO
Composure OOO
Reputation OOO

Refresh 3 (8 base -2 Mutant Chameleon, -1 Combat Training Program, -2 gift)

Haruspex

Villain

No one knows Haruspex's true name, but her background is available to skilled investigators. Before Ragnarok, she was a skilled con artist who had a dozen aliases. She preyed on the rich and gullible, tricking them out of vast sums of money with elaborate schemes. She was never caught, but was wanted in several jurisdictions for a variety of felonies. She disappeared after Ragnarok and has only resurfaced in the last few months as the leader of a new religion called the Crystal Children.

After Ragnarok, the con artist acquired an artifact found in the Tunguska Zone, a strange glowing crystal. It contacted her mentally and promised her great power, if she could spread the word of the Crystal Song. She agreed and started the Crystal Children soon after.

Haruspex, as she calls herself now, preaches a doctrine of meditation, communal living, and worship of 'The Crystal Song.' She speaks of an alien crystal that contacts the worthy through telepathic song. This enlightens the faithful, opening them to the splendor of the greater cosmos. Of course, only Haruspex can teach someone how to achieve this miracle, which is she happy to do, for a fee. Thousands have already joined the Crystal Children and attend service at least once a week. While many suspect the Crystal Children are a cult, Haruspex has so far managed to deflect the accusations through bribery, skillful PR, and mind control. She is a powerful psychic, after all.

As a villain, Haruspex is a perfect mastermind and 'behind the scenes' antagonist. She is quite wealthy and only interested in increasing her power. She has no idea what the Crystal's real agenda is, nor does she care. The Crystal could have a sinister plan for world domination or it could be a misunderstood alien who wants to help humanity.

Player characters are likely to fall into conflict with Haruspex when they get in the way of one of her plans. She is aware of the value of abandoned bases and wants to build up an army of superpowered loyal cultists under her command. She also brainwashes new followers, so if a family member or friend of a player character disappears, they might have to rescue them from the clutches of the Crystal Children. Haruspex is paranoid and will retaliate if someone 'steals' one of her followers.

ASPECTS

Normal Human: Con Artist Convert
Adept: Crystal Chakra Master
Conviction: Allow No Dissent
Conviction: Convert the Masses to the Crystal Song
Complication [Major]: Suspected Cult Leader

STRANGE SKILLS

Aura of Peace: 3 skill points
Power Tier: Godlike
Convince + Zone + Unusual + Range x2 + Psychic
Snag [Major]: Only Usable to Convince People Not to Attack Haruspex in any way whatsoever
Snag [Minor]: Cannot Use Weapons or Armor and Use This Power
Snag [Minor]: Cannot use violence while Aura of Peace is active.

Description: A powerful aura of peace radiates around Haruspex. No one may even think about hurting or capturing her without making a Willpower skill test opposed by this skill. Given its power tier, few beings on Earth can possibly do this, if any. This skill is always active, even when she is asleep or unconscious. However, she cannot carry weapons, wear armor, or use violence and keep the aura active. She can direct others to commit violence on her behalf, but she cannot even slap a person without breaking the aura. It the aura is broken, it takes one day for her to reactivate it.

Prophet of the Crystal Children: 15 skill points
Power Tier: Superhuman
Influence, Information, Insight, Minions [Advanced] + Unusual, Networking, Stress Capacity [Reputation], Wealth
Conviction: Allow No Dissent
Complication [Major]: Suspected Cult Leader

Description: In only a few months, the Crystal Children have gained many followers. Haruspex allows no

one else to hold substantial power in the church. She has full access to its wealth and fanatical acolytes who obey her every command. Because of her aggressive recruitment drive, she has gained the attention of federal authorities and other do-gooders who suspect the Crystal Children are a cult.

Song of the Crystal: 12 skill points
Power Tier: Superhuman
Conversation +Psychic, Convince + Psychic, Esteem + Psychic, Guile + Psychic, Inspire + Psychic, Willpower + Psychic
Complication [Major]: Intruding Alien Thoughts
Conviction: Convert the Masses to the Crystal Song
Snag [Minor]: Must meditate daily to maintain the Song.

Description: By focusing her inner chakras, Haruspex can mentally persuade and manipulate others. She must spend several hours a day meditating to maintain her powers, but the more she meditates, the more alien thoughts and images intrude in her mind. She does not yet realize the Crystal is alive and speaking to her when she meditates. It has influenced her already, pushing her to recruit as many followers as possible.

SKILLS:

Fantastic: Aura of Peace +5, Song of the Crystal +5
Great: Prophet of the Crystal Children +4
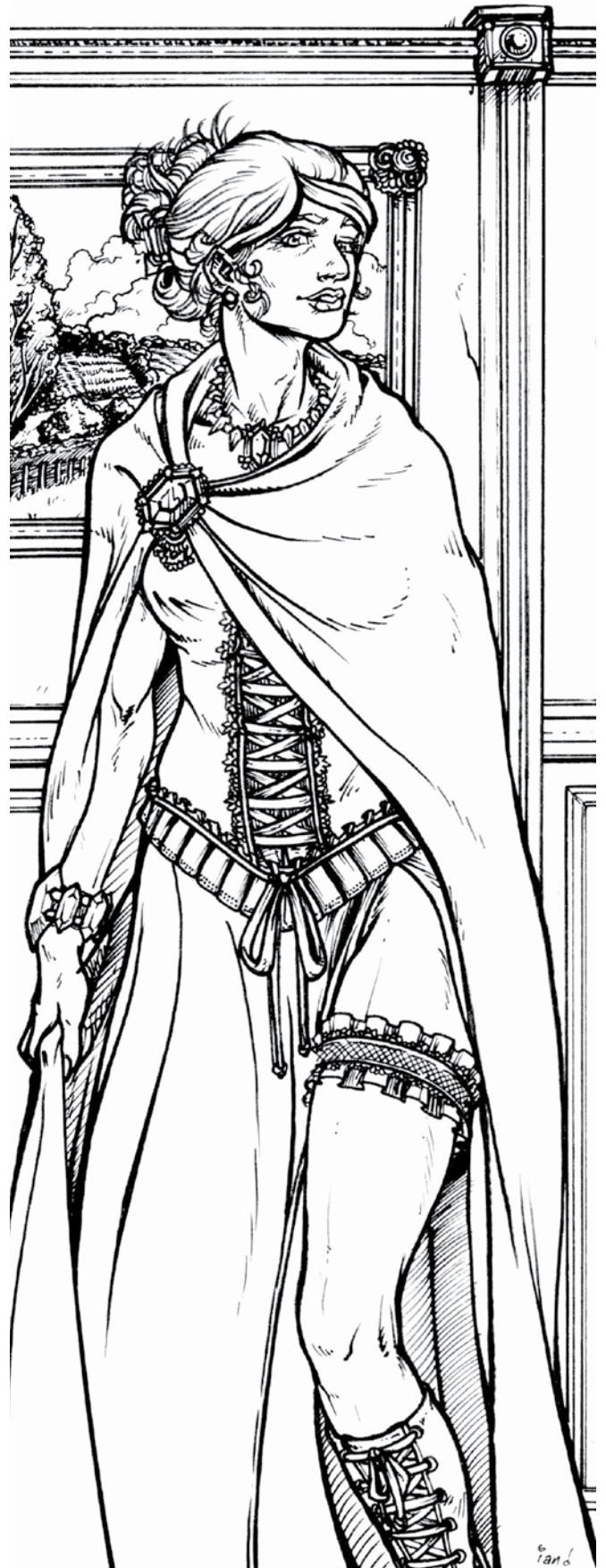
GIFTS

Skilled x3
Impact: Song of the Crystal

STRESS TRACKS

Health OOO
Composure OOO
Reputation OOO OOO

Refresh 3 (16 base -10 powers -3 gifts)

Iconoclast

High Power Hero

Dr. Pangloss was the world's premier villain scientist. She was a genius in all fields, with seemingly no moral restraint. She pioneered dozens of innovations but also terrorized millions with designer plagues and genetically augmented monsters. No one knew that she had died multiple times during her long career. Pangloss had invented a mind backup and memory imprinting system. If she died, an automated system would clone a new body and imprint it with her memories.

For unknown reasons, the backup did not function correctly after Pangloss disappeared during Ragnarok. Instead of creating a single clone with the memories and personality of Dr. Pangloss, it created three clones, each with a different aspect of her personality and skills. Iconoclast inherited her scientific skills and desire to create and learn. Paragon inherited Pangloss' organizational skills and desire for power. The third clone sister disappeared without a trace and neither Iconoclast or Paragon knows what happened to it.

Iconoclast loathed Pangloss' villainous history, so she swore to differentiate herself by becoming a hero. She is driven by curiosity and fears little. She wants to upgrade all of humanity with superpowers, so they will not need costumed superheroes in the future. Going over old research notes from Pangloss, she came across several references to an alien artifact called the Primordial Engine. Iconoclast realized it could be used to make her dream come true. She has started raiding bases to find clues leading to it.

In order to support her work, Iconoclast is a highly talented black market superpowers dealer. She used to sell to anyone, but stopped after she learned that a mafia foot soldier used one of her super soldier drugs to kill innocent civilian witnesses. She tracked the thug down, knocked him out, and used a temporary shapeshifting drug to impersonate him. She used her disguise to rob the mafia of millions of dollars in a daring heist. The mafia eventually figured out who robbed them and they are looking for her now. She's confident she can stay one step ahead of them. Hopefully her friend Knight Errant can help stop them.

ASPECTS

Super-Genius: Genetically Augmented Intellect
Villainous Past: Clone of Dr. Pangloss, the Villain
Conviction: Transhumanism for All!
Complication [Major]: Visions of a Villain's Life
Complication [Major]: Robbed the Mafia and Lived
Focus [Major]: Prototype Weapon in Field Testing
I Am Not My Clone Mother!
The Primordial Engine is the Key to Saving The World

STRANGE AND UNIQUE SKILLS

Implanted Memories of a Genius 9 skill points
Power Tier: Superhuman
Craft, Dismantle, Information, Initiative [Mental], Repair, Research, Treatment [Health], Workspace
Conviction: Transhumanism for All!
Complication [Major]: Visions of a Villain's Life

Description: As a clone of Dr. Pangloss, Iconoclast was implanted with her memories and skills. She is a world class scientist in many different fields. She is equally at home building a nuclear reactor as she is diagnosing a genetically engineered plague. Her memories also included the location of one of Dr. Pangloss' safe houses, which contains a lab and workshop. Despite the memories, Iconoclast does not share Pangloss' personality or views of morality. However, she does suffer from visions of Dr. Pangloss' life that occasionally torment her.

Automatic Dart Pistol 4 skill points
Power Tier: Superhuman
Shoot + Unusual + Spray, Variable [Session]
Focus [Major]: Prototype Weapon in Field Testing
Item Based Power: Specific User

Description: Iconoclast developed a new sidearm to protect herself and developed a fully automatic dart pistol. It can shoot a barrage of razor sharp flechettes, which can tear a man apart in seconds. The flechettes ignore 1 point of Armor, which is gained from the Unusual extra. The Dart Pistol can also fire miniature syringe loaded with an experimental drug of Iconoclast's design. The Variable trapping allows Iconoclast to choose a new payload every session.

For example, Iconoclast could choose Menace to represent a psychoactive drug that induces terrifying hallucinations in whoever it strikes or she could pick Treatment [Composure] to describe an anti-psychotic medication to stabilize traumatized allies. She can always fire the flechettes as a normal attack, but she can only pick one drug per game session.

The pistol is keyed to Iconoclast's DNA, so only her or another Pangloss clone can use the Pistol. If another character gains the pistol, the Variable trapping is lost, because only Iconoclast knows how to make the various experimental drugs.

Black Market Superpower Dealer 6 skill points
Power Tier: Extraordinary
Convince, Guile, Information, Insight, Networking, Wealth
Complication [Major]: Robbed the Mafia and Lived

Description: Iconoclast manufactures various gadgets, cybernetic implants, and super soldier drugs for sale in the black market. She knows how to negotiate, lie, and spot con artists. She's built up an impressive list of contacts with other base raiders, members of the Underground, and other notables. She has also made quite a bit of profit from her work. If only the Mafia wasn't trying to kill her for stealing from them . . .

SKILLS

Great: Implanted Memories of a Genius +4
Good: Black Market Superpower Dealer +3
Fair: Automatic Dart Pistol +2, Endurance +2
Resolve +2
Average: Athletics +1, Burglary +1, Pilot +1,
Presence +1,

GIFTS

Impact: Implanted Memories of a Genius
Skilled

STRESS TRACKS

Health OOO OO
Composure OOO OO
Reputation OOO O

Knight Errant

High power hero

Once a talented CSI forensics technician, Knight Errant was a fan of superheroes before Ragnarok. Errant took up base raiding, figuring his knowledge would make it easy. He found a suit of armor and an energy sword. He saw his fortune as fate and decided he would become a vigilante hero.

Naming himself Knight Errant, he used his new gear to fight local criminal gangs, stealing their money to make a business. Despite his efforts, crime rose in his city. Errant realized he would need a group of heroes to fight crime. That needed money and connections to other superhumans, which meant more base raiding. He made contact with Iconoclast, a super scientist, in order to recruit her as the first hero in his new Round Table. She had other ideas though.

Iconoclast told Errant about the Primordial Engine, a powerful alien artifact, which could solve many of society's problems or could wipe out all life on the planet. She convinced him to help her find the artifact. He agreed, as long as she helped him fight crime. So far, they have learned little about the Engine's whereabouts, except that the missing hero Biomancer might have had information on it.

Unlike the last generation of heroes, Knight Errant sees nothing wrong with stealing from criminals. He does not resell illegal drugs or weapons but he does take cash, jewelry, and other valuables. This has affected his crime fighting strategy. He prefers to target rich criminals, rather than the worst or most violent ones. He does not ignore crime when he encounters it though, but he seldom fights poor street thugs.

While the chivalrous knight motif only started as a gimmick, Errant has started to believe it wholeheartedly. He tends to speak in a fake ye olde English accent, like a knight in a Hollywood movie. He assumes all civilians love and trust him, even those who have never heard of him. He also believes he is a supremely skilled warrior, even though the sword does all the fighting for him. More than once, he has challenged superpowered enemies to fight him in single combat. So far, no one has agreed to duel him.

ASPECTS

Adventurer: Self-made Techno Knight
Normal Human: Self-serving Vigilante
Conviction: Create a New Round Table of Heroes
Conviction: Solve Crimes the Police Cannot
Focus: Those Who Know of The Blade Tremble at It
The Quixotic Hero We Might Need
Questing for the Primordial Engine
Profiteering Hero

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Alien Energy Sword of Unknown Origin: 9 skill points
Power Tier: Superhuman
Parry + Unusual, Shoot + Unusual, Strike + Unusual
Focus [Major]: Those Who Know of The Blade Tremble at It
Item Based Power: Power Interaction - the sword interacts with other superpowers.

Description: A powerful alien artifact that resembles a high-tech sword hilt. When activated, a shaft of blue energy emits from the end of the hilt, giving the weapon the appearance of an energy sword. The 'blade' causes tremendous damage to anything it touches, disintegrating most material it strikes. Certain materials, especially enchanted metals, resist the energy. Knight Errant can parry ranged attacks with the blade, as it will disintegrate bullets and deflect energy blasts. It can also emit a focused energy blast, with seemingly no limits.

Knight Errant has no knowledge of the background of his weapon, but a few aliens have fled at the sight of it. Some non-humans refuse to even talk to him as long as he carries it. Errant found the weapon in the first abandoned base he discovered and has learned little about it since then. He is worried that the weapon will become a liability in the future, but he needs its power to continue his fight against crime.

Vigilante Investigator: 9 skill points
Power Tier: Extraordinary
Craft, Examine, Information, Networking, Research, Stealth, Wealth, Workspace + Unusual
Conviction: Solve Crimes the Police Cannot

Description: Knight Errant is a skilled criminal investigator and has built his own forensics lab and hideout, financed by the earnings he has stolen from criminals. He can perform complex scientific tests, like DNA analysis, and even has some stolen police reports and FBI files to supplement his own findings. He can build gadgets related to criminal investigation in the workshop as well.

SKILLS

Great: Vigilante Investigator +4
Good: Energy Sword +3, Presence +3
Fair: Athletics +2, Technology +2
Average: Alertness +1, Deceit +1, Resolve +1, Stealth +1,

GIFTS

Skilled
Equipment [Power Armor]: Protective 2 [Health], Essential [Health], Rugged +2, Empowered (Athletics)
Description: A suit of light power armor made of advanced alien composite materials that protect the user and boost their mobility.

TIER BENEFITS

Armor 2 [Health]

Can take 1 additional minor consequence for health.

Workspace can make mundane to extraordinary criminal investigation-related devices.

Athletics is treated as being in the extraordinary power tier.

STRESS TRACKS

Health: OOO OO
Composure OOO O
Reputation: OOO OO

Refresh 5 (10 base - 3 powers, -2 gifts)
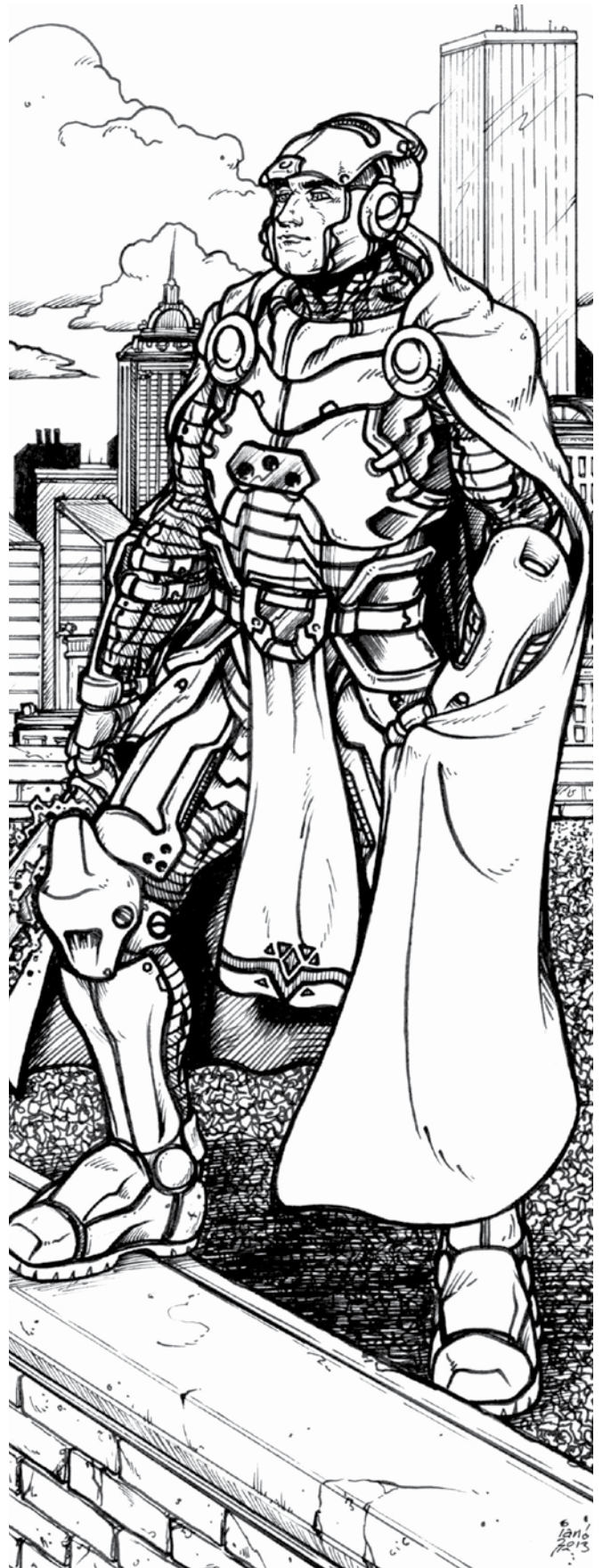
Paragon

Villain

Like the hero Iconoclast, Paragon is a flawed clone of the missing villain Dr. Pangloss. Unlike Iconoclast, Paragon inherited none of the villain's scientific genius or creativity. Instead, Paragon gained Pangloss' ability in creating a criminal organization, including her tactical fighting skills. She also gained her obsession with building a power base.

In only a few months, Paragon has established herself as a major player in the criminal underworld. She leads her men with the precision of a special forces general and can easily take out an entire mafia hit squad by herself. With her ruthlessness and skills, she commands hundreds of thugs, street dealers, and thieves. She knows that the real power lies in superpowers, so she wants to expand into base raiding and the superpowers black market. To this end, she has started looking for bases to loot, so she can empower loyal henchmen and herself with new superpowers.

As an antagonist, Paragon is tough enough to fight most player characters in a direct battle, but she is not a fanatic or fool. Player characters may face her in a base or in a board room. She may hire evil base raiders as lieutenants in her organization or send waves of heavily armed thugs to defeat heroic base raiders. She has no problems with collateral damage either. Paragon hates her clone sister Iconoclast, so she will attack anyone who allies with her, just to spite her.

Paragon is extremely aggressive, so she is likely to spark a crime war in any city she operates in. Even if the player characters are not very heroic, they may want to stop her, just to keep her from tearing the city apart.

ASPECTS

Super-Genius: Enhanced Criminal Mastermind
Villainous Past: Clone Daughter of Dr. Pangloss
Conviction: Total War is the Only Way
Conviction: Enlightened Self-Interest Reigns Supreme
Complication [Major]: At War with Many Enemies
I Am The True Villain
Ambitious But Uncreative

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Neural Shutdown: 10 skill points
Power Tier: Superhuman
Menace + Unusual + Zone, Shoot + Range, Willpower Psychic
Taxing
Snag [Minor]: Only works on targets with a living brain.

Description: While Dr. Pangloss was a powerful telepath, Paragon has only inherited part of her power. This ability allows her to psychically shut down a person's brain, either temporarily (using the Menace trapping) or permanently (using the Shoot trapping). Paragon seldom uses this power, because it both taxes her and gives her an advantage over enemies who do not realize she can kill them with a thought.

Tactical Genius: 15 skill points
Power Tier: Superhuman
Dodge, Information, Initiative [Physical], Research, Security, Shoot, Stealth
Conviction: Total War is the Only Way
Complication [Minor]: Trail of Collateral Damage

Description: Even though Dr. Pangloss was a scientist, her years of villainy taught her more about small unit tactics and close quarters combat than any special forces commander. Paragon inherited this knowledge. She is a master of guerrilla warfare and insurgent tactics. She can use this knowledge to plan daring bank heists, perfect assassinations, or turn a city into a war zone. She is also an incredibly skilled gunfighter and not afraid of wetwork herself. She always has a few guns nearby and prefers fully automatic weapons.

Criminal Empire: 15 skill points
Power Tier: Extraordinary
Conversation, Convince, Esteem, Guile, Influence, Information, Insight, Minions, Networking, Stress Capacity [Reputation], Wealth
Conviction: Enlightened Self-Interest Reigns Supreme
Complication [Major]: At War with Many Enemies

Description: Paragon has already built a powerful syndicate. Her soldiers are muscling into narcotics and

gun smuggling and she is not afraid to wage war on larger criminal organizations, if necessary. Paragon has already become infamous in the criminal underworld and will not stop until she is queen of all crime. The other major syndicates won't go down without a fight.

Advanced Body Armor: 5 skill points
Power Tier: Superhuman
Resist Damage + Unusual, Stress Capacity [Health]
Focus [Minor]: Retrofitted Space Suit
Item Based Power: Specific User

Description: Paragon found one of Dr. Pangloss' old suits of armor in a base and now uses it as her costume. The suit is sealed and shielded, protecting her from gases, disease, radiation, and other environmental hazards. It was also designed to survive micrometeorite impacts, so it can easily stop gunfire and other attacks. It is keyed to the DNA of Dr. Pangloss, so only Paragon or another clone daughter of Dr. Pangloss can wear it.

SKILLS

Fantastic: Tactical Genius +5
Great: Advanced Body Armor +4
Good: Criminal Network +3
Neural Shutdown +3

GIFTS

Skilled x6

TIER BENEFITS

Armor 2 [Health]
Paragon can take 1 additional minor [Health] consequence

STRESS TRACKS

Health OOO OOO
Composure OOO
Reputation OOO OO

Refresh 4 (16 base -7 powers -5 gifts)

Peter Silvertail

Medium Power Hero

Decades ago, a sorcerer and member of the Ideal named Cerulean battled a powerful but insane wizard named the Demiurge. Cerulean fought him in a town in Ohio that Demiurge had transformed into a pastoral wonderland. The wizard had read a children's book called 'The Adventures of Peter Silvertail' and decided to make it reality, although no one knows why.

Cerulean tried to revert things to normal, but was captured by Demiurge's minions. Only the timely intervention of Peter Silvertail himself saved Cerulean and stopped the Demiurge from remaking the rest of the universe. Strangely, Peter Silvertail did not disappear along with the rest of the fictional creatures when Cerulean undid Demiurge's spell. Silvertail revealed that he had sabotaged Cerulean's counterspell in order to remain on Earth. He found it far too interesting to leave. Cerulean was so impressed he offered the rabbit a job in the Ideal. Peter eagerly accepted it.

Peter did not care for fighting villains, so he was not made an official hero of the Ideal. Instead, he was given a magical suit to make himself look human and became the ultimate trickster: a lawyer for the Ideal.

After Ragnarok, Peter was despondent for months but now sees a new mission: to make a new Ideal, with him at the helm. He can recruit and advise heroic base raiders and give them leads to bases, in exchange for helping him establish a new superhero group. He has good intentions, but he is not a saint either.

ASPECTS

Magical Being: Storybook Hero Brought to Life
Heroic Connection: Worked for the Ideal
Conviction: Laugh at Every Foe
Complication [Major]: Actually a Rabbit.
Conviction: Trickery is Far Superior to Violence
Focus [Major]: The Refurbished Automaton of Baron Oldenburg
Conviction: Respect Client Confidentiality
Complication [Major]: Disbarred from the Court

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Hare of Legend: 3 Skill Points
Power Tier: Extraordinary
Dodge, Leap, Move, Stealth
Conviction: Laugh at Every Foe
Complication [Major]: Actually a Rabbit.
Snag [Minor]: Cannot use Baron Oldenberg's Automaton while using Hare of Legend

Description Peter can outrun a car and leap over a building in a single jump. However, he often feels compelled to taunt foes he's defeated or tricked, even when it puts him in danger.

Archetypal Trickster: 6 skill points
Power Tier: Superhuman
Dexterity, Guile, Insight, Willpower
Conviction: Trickery is Far Superior to Violence

Description: Peter is a master of deception, as befits a trickster hero. He is just as skilled at detecting lies in others and is not above using sleight of hand to get an upper edge in a con. He abhors violence, preferring to outwit enemies rather than resorting to brute force.

Baron Oldenberg's Automaton: 4 skill points
Power Tier: Superhuman
Disguise, Physical Force, Resist Damage
Focus [Major]: The Refurbished Automaton of Baron Oldenburg
Snag [Minor]: Cannot use Hare of Legend while in the Automaton
Item Based Power: Specific User

Description: The automaton is a human sized enchanted suit that Peter can pilot. It can project a mystical illusion that makes it appear human or any other humanoid sized creature. It is also extremely strong and durable, although it is far slower than Peter's natural speed. The suit was a gift from the missing Ideal hero, Cerulean, and Peter treasures it. Only a rabbit sized creature can fit inside the automaton and pilot it.

Former Lawyer of the Ideal: 3 skill points
Power Tier: Extraordinary
Conversation, Convince, Information, Networking,

Research, Wealth
Conviction: Respect Client Confidentiality
Complication [Major]: Disbarred from the Court

Description: For many years, Peter Silvertail worked as a lawyer for the Ideal, under cover as a human named Sullivan Butler. He was eventually revealed to be a non-human, and thus ineligible to practice law in the United States. The Ideal kept him as a behind the scenes retainer. He smoothed over embarrassing problems. He refuses to capitalize on his insider knowledge, except for the locations of bases he knows.

SKILLS

Great: Archetypal Trickster +4,
Good: Former Lawyer of the Ideal +3
Fair: Baron Oldenberg's Automaton +2,
Hare Of Legend +2
Average: Endurance +1, Resolve +1, Presence +1

GIFTS

Skilled
Companion: Niles, Automaton Butler and Chauffeur

NILES STATS

Aspect: Auto-Mechanical Manservant
Improvements: Independent, Communication
Drive +1
Health OO
Composure OO
Reputation OO
Can take 1 minor consequence

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 2 [Health] on all unarmed attacks made while wearing Baron Oldenberg's Automaton

STRESS TRACKS

Health OOO O
Composure OOO O
Reputation OOO O

Pilgrim/Scrap Man

Villain

Pilgrim, real name Ray Hooper, was once the sidekick to the noted superhero Black Templar. A young idealistic hero, Pilgrim fought the good fight and was well respected in the hero community. For unknown reasons, Ray was spared from Ragnarok. Perhaps Ray knows why, perhaps not. Either way, he doesn't speak of it.

After Ragnarok, Pilgrim went an allied hero's base to start investigating the disappearances when he encountered a group of amateur base raiders. He easily defeated them but quickly realized more break-ins would happen. He utilized his insider knowledge to install spy cameras and sensors at the bases he knew and commandeered an orbital space station as his new command center. He is dedicated to stopping all base raiders, an impossible mission that will eventually drive him insane.

As an antagonist, Pilgrim is a misguided hero early on, but as the months drag on, Pilgrim becomes more and more unhinged. The constant fights against increasingly better armed raiders pushes him further and further, until he snaps and starts killing base raiders. He renames himself Scrap Man and becomes a bogeyman to all base raiders, a monster who stalks them as they hunt for bases. This stat write up captures him in the middle of his progression, but feel free to write even more powerful versions of him as he transforms himself into a one man killing machine.

ASPECTS

Dual Power Sources: The Ultimate Base Raider
Heroic Connection: Sidekick Pushed Too Far
Conviction: Fight Crime Whenever You See It
Conviction: Stop Base Raiders By Any Means
Complication [Major]: Too Many Enemies to Count
Complication [Major]: Untrained Power User
Complication [Major]: In Orbit
Focus [Major]: Ideal-Tech Space Station

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Vigilante Street Fighter: 20 skill points

Power Tier: Extraordinary
Climb, Dodge, Information, Initiative [Physical], Leap, Menace, Networking, Physical Force, Stealth, Stress Capacity [Health], Strike, Willpower
Conviction: Fight Crime Whenever You See It
Complication [Major]: Too Many Enemies to Count

Description: Pilgrim was a sidekick to an Ideal hero named Black Templar for several years before Ragnarok. He is a world class martial artist and acrobat and knows the streets better than most crime bosses. Like most heroes, he's hated by gangsters everywhere. If he were to ever resurface, he would face an endless stream of assassins gunning for him.

Loot of Heroes: 8 skill points
Power Tier: Superhuman
Variable [Session] x6
Complication [Major]: Untrained Power User
Conviction: Stop Base Raiders By Any Means

Description: As a trusted sidekick, Pilgrim has access to many heroic bases. He has access to numerous gadgets, weapons, grimoires, and other tools of the trade. He is not afraid to use them to fight base raiders. He may have an entirely new superpower every time he encounters the player characters.

Pilgrim does not know how some of the gadgets work, so he may make a mistake. A player character who learns of the aspect may spend a Fate point to compel Pilgrim to make a mistake.

Shape Memory Armor: 2 skill points
Power Tier: Extraordinary
Resist Damage
Focus [Minor]
Item Based Power: Accessible

Description: Pilgrim's body armor is light weight yet highly durable.

Space Station Mirador: 17 skill points
Power Tier: Ascendant
Information + Unusual, Move + Unusual + Unusual, Resist Damage, Stealth + Unusual, Stress Capacity [Health], Transport + Unusual, Treatment [Health] + Unusual

Focus [Major]: Ideal-Tech Space Station
Complication [Major]: In Orbit
Snag [Major]: Cannot teleport underground.
Item Based Power: Specific User

Description: A group of superheroes built a stealth orbital space station. Pilgrim has taken it over as his personal command post. From it, he can teleport (move + unusual) nearly anywhere on earth, monitor spy cameras he has installed in certain bases, and store his equipment. The station is controlled by an AI system loyal to anyone who has the command password. The station has an automated medic-center, which can treat virtually any injury, install cybernetic implants, or enhance a user with super soldier drugs in its pharmacy stores. So far, Pilgrim has not resorted to using super soldier drugs, but he will eventually cross that line.

SKILLS

Legendary: Space Station Mirador +6
Great: Loot of Heroes +4, Shape Memory Armor +4 Vigilante Street Fighter +4

TIER BENEFITS

Armor 1 [Health]
Weapon 1 [Health] when making unarmed attacks.

GIFTS

Skilled x7

SPACE STATION STATS

Armor 3 [Health]
The station may take 1 additional minor [Health] consequence.
Health OOO OOO

STRESS TRACKS

Health OOO OOO
Composure OOO
Reputation OOO

Refresh 2 (16 base -8 powers -6 gifts)

CHAPTER TEN
CAMPAIGN ADVICE

Heroes and villains are beginning to emerge in the post-Ragnarok world, but they do not necessarily follow in the footsteps of the old costumed superhumans. New heroes may decide to reform or replace the current Status Quo. New villains might ditch costumes and colorful names to become anonymous criminal masterminds operating behind front organizations and proxies. The current generation of superpowered beings are not doomed to repeat the mistakes of the previous generation. The future has endless possibilities.

In practical game terms, Base Raiders can accommodate many campaign models. It can be a straight forward dungeon crawling game that replaces fantasy tropes with superhero ones. It could be an intensely political game, where the player characters campaign for the civil rights of non-humans against an entrenched Status Quo. It could even be a normal superhero game, where a group of young heroes protect a city from villains and other threats. Any one of those campaigns can be extremely fun to play and run. A campaign that tries to encompass all of these elements might run into substantial problems though.

Great campaigns focus on a few major themes and storylines. It is not necessary to incorporate every single topic mentioned in Base Raiders to run a great game. Think of the types of scenarios your group enjoys and determine what kind of story would support those adventures. Develop a campaign from that starting point.

When creating a campaign, make sure to understand the relationship between PC power level and adventure type. Lower power player characters are not boring, but they are better focused on role playing personal dilemmas. A high power level character fights to protect (or control) the world but a low power level hero fights to protect his family. Either adventure can make for a compelling drama.

The following five campaign models provide an outline for running a Base Raiders game from the first session to an exciting finale. Each one describes the types of player characters, adventures, and enemies that work best with its premise.

The campaign models are not set in stone. Feel free to use them as inspiration or as a stepping off point for your own campaign. You can even mix and match elements of each campaign model. For example, new superheroes could investigate Ragnarok while they protect the city from new villains. Alternately, unpowered civilians could work their way up to become great superheroes. The main point is: don't worry about the game's canon. Make Base Raiders your game and have fun!

Caped Crusaders Anew!

The Ideal and the other heroes are gone so a new class of heroes must take up the mantle of protecting the public against threats the police cannot handle. Instead of relying on fate or luck to gain their powers, the new superheroes buy or loot their powers. This does not mean they are any less heroic, but it does mean they have different beliefs and tactics than the last generation. Some may rethink the 'no-killing' policy, while others may decide that fighting street crime is a waste of time when corporate or ideological criminals abound.

GM OVERVIEW

This campaign model focuses on the superheroics angle of Base Raiders. Because every established hero is gone, some people gain superpowers so they can take up the slack. The player characters are new superheroes who want to protect their city from new superpowered criminals and other dangers. It is possible to treat the campaign like any other superhero RPG campaign, except for a lack of high powered heroes or villains. No villain is too powerful to defeat but no NPC superhero can save the day if the players fail. Base raiding and the politics of the Underground should take a backseat to saving the day and fighting criminals.

   The player characters have a unique chance to redefine the 'rules' of being a superhero. While the Ideal wanted to preserve the Status Quo, the player characters can take a more radical approach. They could do away with costumes or secret identities, although the advantages of concealing one's identity from the law are fairly obvious. Perhaps they decide to take the fight to the corporations who launder money for organized criminal syndicates or politicians who take bribes from them. They could use different tactics to fight criminals and other wrongdoers, such as using social media to expose their actions or using alien technology to hack their computers and empty their back accounts. They can even redefine who is a valid target for superhuman vigilante action.

   Legal but immoral organizations like corporations who pollute or extremist hate groups could be taken down, just like a street gang or mafia family, except for the part about giving them to the police. Of course, the

Ideal decided they wanted to keep the Status Quo for a reason and player characters who buck the system will find out that the government's patience towards superhuman vigilantes only extends so far.

PLAYER CHARACTERS

High power level (30 skill points and 10 refresh) are better for a game focused on superheroics than lower power tiers. Just let the players describe how their characters gained their superpowers. The characters should be competent enough to take incredible risks and succeed, although failure is still a very real possibility. Also, high power level characters will not feel the urge to raid bases and power up as much as lower power level characters. Instead, they can focus on fulfilling goals, like improving their community or stopping a powerful organization, like the mafia. It is also important to make sure the player characters have a reason to work together and can trust each other. They are heroes who are trying to do good, so a game focused on intra-party conflict will not work as well.

OPPOSITION

New superheroes should encounter new villains very early in the campaign. Bad people can also buy or find ways to empower themselves, after all. Some of the new villains will amateurs who have no idea what they are doing, so they should be easy to stop. Some amateurs learn from their mistakes and players may see the same foes gain skill and power as the campaign progresses. Even if the villains are thrown in jail or killed, they can always come back. It is a convention of the genre, after all. Furthermore, villains tend to develop grudges against heroes who defeat them, so assigning a nemesis to a player character is a good way to reinforce the superheroic themes of the campaign.

   The real danger comes from superpowered professional criminals. The Underground controls most of the black market for superpowers and they will not sell power sources to organized criminal groups but they will sell to independent criminals. Furthermore, crime syndicates will probably find abandoned bases and loot them. The Ideal did everything it could to prevent criminal syndicates from gaining easy ways to empow-

er themselves, but no one can stop that now. An organized group of superpowered violent thugs who will use teamwork is a superhero's worst nightmare. Old school villains like Omega and Dr. Pangloss had idiosyncratic motives and tactics, which limited the amount of damage they caused to society. Criminal syndicates will not have such limitations. They will commit any atrocity to win. Even if the heroes can beat the cartel, they could switch tactics and kill innocent civilians until the heroes promise to stop. The best way to defeat an empowered cartel is turn it against itself. There is no honor among thieves and the divide between normal human criminals and newly empowered criminals will strain any syndicate to the breaking point. Each side will fear that the other will turn on them the second they are no longer useful. Clever heroes who exploit the paranoia of gangsters can take down even the largest syndicates.

The government may be another source of opposition. If the player characters want to shake up the existing Status Quo, they can count on government agencies like the EPSA as enemies. Taking down street gangs, serial killers, and costumed villains is fine, but targeting corporations or other large institutions is not. Depending on how the characters act, they may be viewed as dangerous amateurs who needed to be controlled, political dissidents who need to be discredited, reckless criminals who need to be arrested and put in jail, or violent terrorists who need to be shot on sight.

CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE

Like most superhero stories, this model of campaign works best when the players have to deal with escalating threats, all connected by a single plot line. Start with a single inciting incident where the player characters have to work together as a team under fire for the first time. Be sure to lay some groundwork for a future plot thread.

Most adventures should have a link to the central plot thread, to remind players of it and provide new information. Keep advancing the plot and raising the stakes, so the players have to push their characters to their limits. Eventually, run a finale adventure where the players have to save the day or die trying.

For example, the first villains the PCs defeated were backed by a mysterious super scientist who built their

equipment and turned them loose on the city. As the campaign progresses, the characters should keep encounter the same underlying plot thread as they face various challenges. A theft of high tech military hardware is later linked to other henchmen of the unknown scientist. When the captured henchmen turn up dead in jail, before they can talk, the players trace it to an occult assassin who was paid from a Swiss bank account connected to a mafia family. The mobsters turn out to be mind controlled by a mutant telepath who reveals the scientist wants to mutate the entire population of the city. After some investigation, the players face the scientist, who has enhanced all of his minions. The player characters must defeat the scientist before the city is bathed in mutagenic pathogens.

Professional Base Raiders

No one knows how many bases are still undiscovered, but everyone knows there are only so many left. The race is on to find the most profitable bases. The player characters are part of a small class of elite base raiders who are able to make their entire living from selling the contents of bases they discover. It is an incredibly dangerous profession, but the glory is unlike anything else. Not every raider does it for the thrill though. Many have personal motives in raiding bases, like finding a cure for a rare illness or uncovering the truth about a missing hero or villain. No matter what their motives, base raiding is rarely a solitary pursuit. The most successful raiders work in small teams of talented specialists, who trust each other with their lives.

Before the raiders can crack open the vault door of a base, they need to find it first. Most base raiders spend more of their time looking for bases than they do actually exploring them. The remaining bases are all well-hidden, so it may take weeks or months of investigation to find one. Sometimes the investigation proves more dangerous than the base.

Government agents, criminals, and rival base raiders are all on the lookout for new bases to plunder. They are willing to steal, threaten, or even kill base raiders to get a lead on a base. Despite the risks, there are no shortages of would-be raiders looking to make

a name for themselves. The player characters just happen to be the newest crew to try their luck.

GM OVERVIEW

This campaign model is dominated by three types of scenarios: dungeon crawls, mysteries, and MacGuffin chases.

Dungeon Crawls: Bases are dungeons, but with the trappings of the superhero genre. The player characters enter the base and bypass its traps and guardians in order to get treasure. Use the base creation rules to develop your own bases, each with unique defenses and loot. Given the wide range of possibilities in the superhero genre, it is easy to justify virtually anything you can imagine in a base. Microcosm societies cut off from the surface world, gateways to alternate universes and secrets that could change history are all possible discoveries in a base.

Mysteries: Costumed superhumans left behind many mysteries when they disappeared, including the location of their bases. Player characters can spend many adventures uncovering the mysteries of the previous generation of heroes and villains. Finding a base will require extensive investigation but many of the mysteries are left inside the bases. Some heroes and villains had secrets in their bases that would require investigation, once they are discovered. For example, characters could find yesterday's newspaper and a letter in the vault of a vigilante's hideout, locked away for decades before its discovery. The letter hints at time travel and the need for the characters to save the world from an impending crisis. This single mystery could drive an entire campaign.

MacGuffin Chase: A MacGuffin is the object in a story that everyone is trying to get acquire, by hook or by crook. Sometimes, finding and looting the base are only preludes to the main adventure. Sooner or later, thieves will try to steal whatever loot the player characters recover from a base. They could be trying to get whatever is most profitable or they could be looking for a specific item. The thieves could be independent or hired by a third party to rob the player characters. Perhaps, the player characters get wind of a group of villainous base raiders who have recovered a dangerous item, like a weapon of mass destruction, and decide to steal it or destroy it before the bad guys can

use or sell it. Scenarios could resemble heist movies, with elaborate plans to trick or overcome determine enemies. They could just as easily be action movies, where the characters career from one grueling fight or chase scene to the next. Just keep the game centered on the question 'who has the loot?'

As the GM, you can choose to focus on one of the scenario types or alternate between them. Many campaigns in other systems do fine with just dungeon crawls, so there is nothing wrong with a 'base of the week' campaign, where the players find a different abandoned base every adventure and explore it. Some character groups, especially low power ones, could focus just on finding bases and then selling the information to higher power NPCs. Some groups could specialize in stealing from other base raiders, especially selfish or villainous ones. However, you can also organically alternate between adventure types. The campaign starts with a dungeon crawl, which leads to a mystery when the players find a strange artifact in the base. Once the players solve the mystery, thieves come after them and steal the artifact, which results in a MacGuffin chase.

PLAYER CHARACTERS

Base raiders can be of any power tier. Low power characters would pursue smaller bases, like the hideouts of regional vigilantes or villains while high power characters would explore Ideal facilities or the bases of global villains like Omega or Dr. Pangloss. Because the players will have multiple chances to enhance their characters from their discoveries in the base, it is okay to start at the low power tier and still expect player characters to eventually face high power enemies.

Players should put some consideration into their motivations. Base raiding is extremely dangerous, after all. Even though you can make a lot of money from base raiding, there are less risky ways of doing it. There should be a unique reason why your character is into breaking into abandoned bases. Perhaps your character was saved by a hero years ago and secretly craves to find that hero's base or you want to find a way off Earth, whether by dimensional gateway or spaceship. Whatever the reason, it is strong enough to make you give up your old life. Base raiding requires a lot of travel and secrecy, so maintaining a normal job

is nearly impossible. Keep that in mind when designing a professional base raider.

OPPOSITION

Player characters will encounter a wide variety of foes. Inhabitants and guardians of the base are common enemies. They may be robot drones, zombies, mutant squatters, or any number of things, but they will not let trespassers in without a fight. It is unlikely to face the same type of base guardian more than once though. Every base should have unique guardians.

However, rival base raiders should be reoccurring foes. They will be just as resourceful and powerful as the player characters, and it may not be wise for players to kill them off. Rivals will be in similar social circles. If the players just kill everyone who gets in their way, word will spread and the characters will have problems when dealing with other superhumans and the black market.

CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE

The length of the campaign should be based on the motivations of the player characters. They can start or stop raiding whenever they choose, so determine what motivates them and how long it will take to achieve it. A good way of doing this is to use the goal system and have each player set at least one goal for themselves. Once all of the goals have been achieved or discarded, the campaign can end, with the player characters rich enough to retire in leisure. Of course, the players may develop new goals as the campaign progresses: defeating rivals once and for all, solving every mystery they encounter or finding the ultimate base for one last job.

Life in the Underground

Non-humans lead a tough life. They do not have legal rights, so they must hide to avoid persecution from the human majority. Most find survival is easiest in the Underground, both literally and metaphorically. Sewers, subway tunnels, and abandoned mines are great places to hide from humans and the Underground is the largest collective of non-humans. Aliens, mutants, and magical beings all live and work together in the Underground. Most citizens of the Underground are scavengers or simple workers and do what they can to survive. More talented citizens become agents of the Underground. The player characters just happen to be the newest agents. They will be expected to raid bases, fight criminal syndicates, and spy on human governments for the good of the Underground. If they survive, they can become influential members and push the policy they want to implement. Eventually, the player characters can ascend to the High Council and see if their decisions save or destroy the Underground.

GM Overview

The player characters are essentially troubleshooters for the Underground in this campaign model. At its core, this is a 'mission of the week' campaign, where most adventures are handed to the players by a NPC. The players accomplish the mission the best they can and are rewarded by the Underground for their efforts. The missions can be anything from base raiding to negotiating with the US government. Each mission affects the Underground in both positive and negative ways, so be sure to use campaign aspects to reflect these changes.

For example, defeating a mafia family trying to take over the local black market bazaar could result in a vendetta against the Underground. However, if the players let the mafia take over the black market, the Underground loses a source of much needed income.

Aside from going on missions, the player characters have to live in the Underground. Part of the campaign should reflect the hardships of living in the fringes of society. Characters who do not look human cannot go out in public, so even getting food and other basic supplies can be a challenge. Characters who do look human must take care to avoid detection.

The players may find a helpful human or two but they should spend most of their time interacting with Underground citizens. Developing a community of interesting NPCs will endear the Underground to the players, which will motivate them to continue.

PLAYER CHARACTERS

The majority of player characters should be non-human. While some humans work for the Underground, they are usually not as trusted as much as non-humans. Make sure there is a good reason that the Underground trusts the human PC. If the player insists on a human-looking character, he can choose a non-human that resembles a human. Some humans are legally considered non-human because they hail from an alternate universe. Some non-humans look human, especially magical beings and shapeshifting alien species. However, some of the players should definitely not resemble humans in any way. Part of the campaign's challenge is dealing with human society as outsiders. If the entire party can flawlessly blend in every time, then the campaign loses part of its charm.

In terms of power level, any tier is acceptable, but it will determine the scale and scope of the campaign. Low power level campaigns are best suited for a locally focused campaign. The characters stay in a single city or small region and help the characters there. Their problems are local and immediate.

High power level campaigns can focus on the global problems of the Underground, such as fighting exploitative corporations and governments. Characters will likely travel from city to city, solving their problems before moving on.

OPPOSITION

Enemies in an Underground focused campaign are diverse and well armed. Government, criminal, and corporate backed enforcers are common enemies, but human supremacists and vigilantes should also make an appearance. They can serve as introductory foes, especially humans without superpowers. Non-humans will oppose the characters as well. The Underground is divided by numerous factions that distrust each other. Technologically advanced aliens loathe magical beings and vice versa. No matter what the characters do, sooner or later, they will cross one of the factions and face its wrath. The players may wind up fighting more non-humans than humans, depending on their choices.

CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE

Some groups of players are more comfortable with NPC leadership than others, so try to determine what your group prefers. If the players prefer to call their own shots, let them take the reins of leadership early on in the campaign so they can decide what missions they should undertake. In this case, part of the campaign comes from their beliefs and values. Do the player characters use unethical methods like torture or weapons of mass destruction to fight their enemies? Remember that the Underground has multiple factions with differing policy views. No matter what the players decide, some citizens will disagree and work against the players. Do they try to save everyone in the Underground or do they use their powers to punish internal critics and enemies? Not every player group wants to tackle plot lines like these though. For those groups, stick to the 'mission of the week' model.

Empowerment Now!

News of base raiding and the DIY Superpowers Movement has caught the attention of the public. Some groups of normal people have decided to empower themselves, no matter the cost and the players are one such group. Perhaps they decide to do so out of curiosity or pride. It could be necessity. Superpowers could mean the difference between life and death in a tough neighborhood or the difference between financial security or poverty. Whatever the reason, acquiring superpowers and learning how to use them is a difficult task. Even if every member of the group gains powers, they have to keep them a secret or face prosecution or worse.

Some groups of people seeking superpowers include:

Students of the Occult: True believers, obsessive scholars, and impressionable teenagers get together in
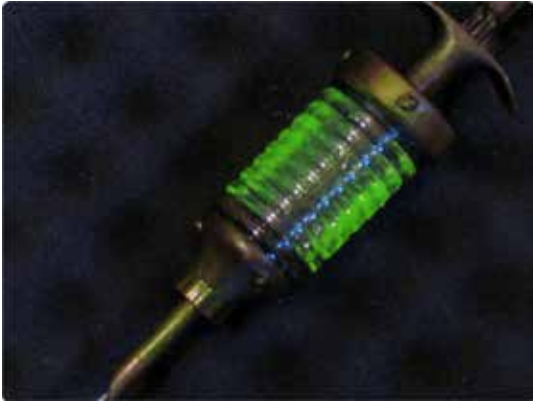
Agora
anonymous market   Search

messages **13**   orders **2**   account **฿290.42**

a few words from
the Notorious Brigand Clive

Hi, **Bat_Country**
logout

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Shop by **Category**

♚ Compound B - Super Soldier Drug! ♚

฿253.78 add to cart

seller: Candyman_X(124)
ships from: United States of America
ships to: Worldwide
category:Chemical Power Sources

bookmark this item

postage options:
Standard (฿0.38)   ?

Description

This is a listing for the banned Soviet-manufactured super soldier drug commonly known as Compound B. Perfect for getting swole and by swole I mean strong enough to snap a guy's neck with one hand :D It was banned in the 1970s as part of an international treaty to limit metahuman enhancement technologies even though the cat was already out of the bag by then and if you can't realize that you are an idiot. Anyway, one shot of this permanently increases your strength although the amount varies from person to person. Children and people with weak hearts shouldn't take Compound B. This does increase bone strength but NOT at the same rate so don't pick up anything heavier than a motorcycle or smart car.

Please note this is VINTAGE! This was retrieved from an abandoned stockpile and dates back to the cold war. So you know it's made with the good stuff ;)

study groups to learn a popular e-grimoire. Eventually, they hope to become mages but many lose their minds before they gain any real power. Those that manage to gain real power though are as dangerous

The Ill and Infirm: Many superpowers can reverse or heal certain illnesses and long term injuries. Missing limbs can be replaced with cybernetic prosthetics. Some terminally ill people decide that a gamble with an unproven power source is better than certain death. Many do not even want to extend their lives though. They want to accomplish something important before they die.

Fans and Geeks: Thousands of people were die-hard superhero fans before Ragnarok. They largely fell silent after Ragnarok but some have resurfaced with the rise of the DIY Superpowers Movement. Becoming a superhero is even better than worshiping one from afar. Armed with their encyclopedic knowledge of hero trivia, they might actually have a chance of realizing their dream. That is, if their naivety does not doom them.

Neighborhood Guardians: The rise of organized and superpowered crime has pushed some parents and home owners into gaining superpowers to protect themselves. Even after they gain powers, they must learn how to use them and keep them secret, all while keeping a job. Easier said than done.

Job Seekers: Not everyone who needs money is wiling to risk their life raiding bases. Many people are willing to gain superpowers but just want a normal job. It is hard to find a good job, but superpowers can give an applicant an advantage. Most job seekers keep their powers a secret to their potential employers, but subtle powers like telepathy can make a huge difference in getting and keeping a job. Plus, some unscrupulous employers encourage employees to gain certain superpowers in exchange for bigger paychecks.

GM OVERVIEW

In this campaign model, the players start as average citizens who all decide to seek out some way to gain superpowers, so the campaign will hinge on who they start as and why they are seeking out power. Remember, gaining superpowers is a highly illegal and dan-

gerous course of action, so people with fulfilling lives will not do it. Only the disillusioned and desperate would ever think to try it. Thus, this is a character focused campaign. Think of TV shows like Breaking Bad, The Sopranos, or Downton Abbey. Plot focused shows (think of shows like Fringe, Heroes, or Lost) usually introduce a central crisis that affects everyone and must be stopped by the primary protagonists. Many role playing game campaigns work in the same model, but this is not always necessary. Character focused shows do not have to have an earth-shaking disaster looming over the heads of the main cast but they can still offer compelling drama and exciting stories. The story of a group of average people who undergo tremendous changes in a turbulent period in history can be just as compelling as a group of superheroes who save the world from costumed villains.

PLAYER CHARACTERS

In order for this campaign model to work, all player characters must be low power level, with the normal human background. It is usually better if the characters start out without any superpowers, but a gamemaster may allow them to start with a power already if the campaign is about what the player characters do with their new powers than it is about how they acquire them.

The background of each player character should be fairly detailed and include links to other player characters and mention multiple NPCs who are important to that PC, like family members, coworkers, friends, and romantic partners. Ideally, the campaign should involve these NPCs on a regular basis, not just as antagonists to deceive or victims to protect, but as fully fleshed out characters with unique personalities and beliefs.

Finally, the player characters need a very strong reason to work together. Perhaps they are all friends or have close family ties with each other. Whatever the reason, they need to be able to trust each other, at least at the start of the campaign.

OPPOSITION

Unlike the other campaign models, Empowerment Now does not rely on a steady stream of bad guys

for the players to beat up. This is not to say the game cannot have villains to fight but the principal drama comes from within the internal conflicts of the player characters. They want to remain within society but still want to gain and use superpowers, so they must resort to deception to keep their two goals afloat. Lying to the police or office colleagues is one thing, but lying to friends and family is another. It is almost certain players will alienate or anger NPCs close to their characters. Unlike other enemies, player characters cannot use violence against people close to them, if they want to remain any pretense of heroism or even basic humanity. Reconciling with an estranged parent or lover can be just as challenging as defeating a berserk cyborg in battle.

CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE

The opening for the Empowerment Now campaign should focus on the acquisition of superpowers. It is best if the players all decide to use the same method of empowerment, such as learning magic or taking super soldier drugs. That makes it easier to design adventures based on gaining those powers. If they want to learn magic, then the first few adventures could be based on their early experiments in spell casting. If they want powers from the black market, they need to find a dealer, which could take several adventures to find. Even after the players gain superpowers, they need to learn how to use them, which is hard to do without being detected. Shooting eye lasers at a local firing range is fairly noticeable.

Most of the campaign should revolve around the personal goals of the player characters. Even if a player character achieves their personal goal, it should not mean the end of the campaign. Many times, achieving the goal does not bring the character what they truly want. Allow players to achieve their goals but make sure the consequences for their actions are strictly enforced. Achieving the first goal should mark the halfway point of the campaign and once it is achieved, the player should have a new goal in mind to bring their character full circle.

For example, a player character wants to become rich enough to quit his job but still able to support his family. He takes a Pangloss formula drug to gain telepathy and uses it to embezzle vast sums of money

from his employer without being caught. However, in order to achieve this, he must constantly lie to his family. By the time he succeeds, he is estranged from his family. He no longer cares about being rich. He wants to reconnect with his family, which will not be easy to achieve. Turning himself in will not help, nor will giving the money back anonymously. Instead, he could admit the truth and vow to use his powers to help the community. Whatever he does, the emphasis is on his personal struggles, not the fate of the world.

The Truth Behind Ragnarok

Ragnarok changes the world but no one knows why or how it happened. A group of dedicated investigators are on the case and they will do whatever it takes to uncover the truth. In this campaign model, the player characters travel the world and possibly the rest of the universe in order to solve the greatest mystery of the age. They may have superpowers or not, but they do have unique information that gives them an edge. Perhaps a superhero left behind a video that gave information to the player characters or the PCs stumbled across something in a base that revealed something new about Ragnarok. This information serves as the campaign's starting hook and helps explain why the player characters are investigating Ragnarok.

GM OVERVIEW

The focus of this campaign is uncovering a world-spanning mystery, which can mean investigation, pulp action, or a combination of both. Even though the central dilemma of the campaign is a mystery, it does not mean the player characters have to spend all of their time interpreting clues or interviewing witnesses. It could resemble a classic treasure hunt, where the players follow a trail of clues, each taking them to a new adventure, until they find their goal. This style of campaign emphasizes action more than investigation, featuring set piece fights against dangerous opponents in exotic locations, death traps, and memorable NPCs to befriend or betray.

This campaign also involves the Ideal and old vil-lains more than any other model, so gamemasters might need to develop more history to suit the campaign. By default, Base Raiders focuses on the present, so the past is left mostly for individual gamemasters to flesh out. Obviously, the gamemaster needs to determine what the truth behind Ragnarok is before launching the campaign. Chapter one discusses several possibilities, but the gamemaster is free to create an entirely new reason.

PLAYER CHARACTERS

The power level of the player characters can be anywhere from low to high, but that rating will determine what kind of challenges the players can overcome. A campaign based more on investigation and puzzle solving can work at low power levels, but a pulp action themed game needs high power characters. The characters should have a wide variety of skills and abilities, so they can tackle most challenges on their own. Combat prowess is a must, but knowledge of science, magic, foreign languages, and social skills are just as necessary. They can have any kind of background, as long as it connects them to Ragnarok in some way.

The player characters do not necessarily need to know each other at the start of the campaign. They are tied together by their special knowledge of Ragnarok, not necessarily their preexisting ties to each other. Part of the campaign's challenge can come from the party members learning to trust each other. However, this means that players might turn on each other, which might ruin the campaign. Gamemasters should take into account the possibility of player versus player conflicts when allowing this option.

OPPOSITION

Player characters could conceivably fight any type of foe, ranging from government agents to cosmic horrors beyond time and space. Regardless of who they are, antagonists in this type of campaign can be categorized by their motivations. The first camp of enemies are rival truth seekers who want to discover what happened in Ragnarok. They are more likely to use social means to fight the characters, either deceiving or negotiating with the player characters to get the truth. This does not mean they are necessarily good people. They

can be evil villains or ruthless mercenaries willing to kill to learn what happened. However, they may want to talk to the player characters at some point, which can result in interesting social encounters. The second camp of enemies want to keep the truth secret. They may try to mislead or sabotage the player characters or just try to kill them. Social interaction will be more limited, consisting mostly of threats and lies. A good campaign should have foes from both camps, in order to leave the player characters guessing the true motivations of every NPC they meet.

CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE

The opening hook for the campaign should revolve around a dramatic revelation of some dark secret connected to Ragnarok. This secret drives the characters into pursuing the truth behind Ragnarok. The fate of the world could be at stake or it could just be worth a fortune if the players were the first to reveal it to the public (or destroy any evidence of the truth). Regardless, the characters drop their old lives and pursue the mission full time. The hook not only introduces the need to act, but hints at the opposition the players will face.

For example, the player characters are named in the will of a John Smith. They go to Mr. Smith's lawyer, who plays a recorded video message for the player characters. The message reveals that John Smith was the secret identity of Cerulean, a noted Ideal superhero. Cerulean tells the characters the location of a secret base in a distant country and pleads for them to perform 'the ritual of containment" but the message does not reveal why the players were chosen for this mission. While the players discuss the message in the lawyer's office, masked thugs attack, killing the lawyer. After the player characters defeat the criminals or escape, they realize they need to find out what's going on before it's too late.

After the players are sufficiently hooked, each step of the campaign should take them closer to the ultimate truth, but this does not mean it has to have a completely linear structure. After the initial adventure, players could receive multiple clues, each of which leads to a different adventure. Their choice alters the parameters of future missions - they could earn an ally or learn a critical piece of information about their enemies. Conversely, they could also miss certain opportunities

by not taking a particular mission early on. Whatever they choose, it should matter.

Once the players have gathered enough clues, a final mission to learn the entire truth behind Ragnarok should present itself, to serve as a campaign finale. Perhaps the characters confront the architect responsible for the event or meet some or even all of the missing heroes or villains. Obviously, the last mission needs to be the most dramatic and challenging of the campaign, but should the player characters survive, they should be hailed as heroes or at least be very rich and powerful. This does not mean the game has to end after the campaign ends though. It is certainly possible to create a new campaign with the same player characters, continuing their adventures. Once the truth behind Ragnarok has been revealed, the world should dramatically change, so gamemasters should reflect those changes in any future campaigns.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
THE ZOMBIE FACTORY

The Zombie Factory would have been considered the world's most advanced genetic engineering facility, had its existence not been a secret. But secrecy was necessary, as the base was dedicated to research in areas banned by international laws: subjects like cloning, superpower duplication, and mind control. The Factory was built by Biomancer, a renowned superhero and scientific genius and who led a secret double life as an amoral researcher with designs on world domination. Today, the Zombie Factory is a forgotten abattoir and treasure trove of cutting edge knowledge and tech. Many of the test subjects still exist and yearn to escape the confines of the base. It's simply a matter of time before they break free.

The Zombie Factory was built with resources stolen from the Ideal and several supervillains Biomancer defeated in secret, so its design, defenses, and inhabitants are unique. Base raiders with knowledge of Ideal bases will have no advantage in the Zombie Factory. Biomancer purposely designed the base so it would not resemble or behave like an Ideal base, on the off chance another hero or villain found it.

The main purpose of the base was to facilitate Biomancer's research and projects, so most of the base is built to that end. However, as Biomancer's research changed directions several times, the Zombie Factory began to experience feature creep. New wings were added on without consideration to the overall design. Satellite bases were built around the world, each with teleporter access to the main base. By the end, it had become a massive base with five major levels and numerous sub levels and off site facilities.

THE SECRET LIFE OF BIOMANCER

Biomancer was a world-famous superhero before Ragnarok. Thousands of blog posts and news articles and dozens of books were written about him. He was featured in numerous documentaries and televised interviews. As a result, there is no shortage of research material for characters to comb through. Skillful researchers can read between the lines to learn something of his true nature. The following information can be learned through publicly available resources:

Powers: A natural super-genius, Biomancer was probably born a mutant, or exposed to runoff from a super soldier drug as a child. As a teenager, Biomancer reverse-engineered the Peak Performer super soldier drug and injected himself with it. With his bril-

liance and physique, he quickly mastered all the skills a superhero would need to fight supervillains. Once he became a member of the Ideal, Biomancer gained access to alien technology and built himself an arsenal of weapons, vehicles, and tools, including environmentally sealed power armor, spacecraft, and energy weapons. He also devised a means to become immune to telepathy and mind control, but never revealed how he gained that power.

His most important discovery were the Boost Patches - dermal patches that provided a single superpower to a normal human for six hours. Only one Boost Patch could be used at a time, but Biomancer developed several dozen types of Boost Patches, including patches for regeneration, chameleon skin, enhanced reflexes, and short range teleportation. The patches were often used in search and rescue missions to help civilians out of danger zones or stabilize critically injured victims. Only humans benefited from the patches. Biomancer used the patches himself when necessary.

Appearance: Biomancer appeared to be a Caucasian man in his 40s to 50s, in excellent physical condition. His costume varied over his career, but he dressed in white and red and always wore a mask.

The costumes frequently invoked medical and technological themes - stylized lab coats, armored hazmat suits and the like. He spoke English at a native speaker level without an accent, which indicated he took great efforts to hide any personally identifying information. His hair and eye color changed several times over the years, from black to silver hair and green to gray eyes.

Personality: A man noted for his blunt and direct manner, Biomancer was viewed as a distant and arrogant vigilante by his critics and a tough but fair hero by his defenders. Both sides agreed he was fearless in battle, although his critics saw that as proof of a lack of humanity in him. Biomancer used his status as a member of the Ideal to fight government regulations on biomedical research, citing them as a major impediment to the advancement of civilization. It is clear he was extremely frustrated at the restrictions scientists faced when using live test subjects or pursuing controversial research, such as uses for stem cells.

History: Biomancer's career began 18 years before Ragnarok occurred, a long career by superhero standards. At first he fought mad scientists and their minions, foiling their schemes by out-thinking them. After helping thwart a plan by an alien terrorist to wipe out humanity with an extraterrestrial plague, Biomancer was invited to join the Ideal. Once he became a full member of the team, he fought world-class villains on a regular basis. An ambitious hero, Biomancer did everything in his power to raise his status within the Ideal, pushing himself to the limit to earn the trust of other superheroes. However, his temperament put him at odds with many heroes. Gossip columnists frequently wrote about the feuds he had with other scientific geniuses and mystically-powered heroes. Biomancer was often characterized as being secretive, even paranoid, and was occasionally accused of embezzling Ideal resources for secret projects. Nothing was ever proved though.

The Truth

Soon after joining the Ideal, Biomancer suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of a psychic super villain with mind control powers. Rather than risk losing control of his own mind again, he attempted to find a way to become immune to mind control. After months

of research, a potential solution was found but it required brain surgery. Rather than trusting another of the scientific geniuses of the Ideal, Biomancer used robot surgeons he programmed himself to perform the operation. Biomancer gained immunity to mind control and telepathy as he had planned but he did not anticipate losing his sense of empathy for other living beings. As a result, he became a complete sociopath, who saw all other beings as tools to achieve his end goal of making Earth into a perfect society. Because of his immunity to telepathy, none of the psychic members of the Ideal picked up on Biomancer's psychosis or any of the many lies he told the team to cover up his plans to take over the world.

As a geneticist, Biomancer thought perfect humans were the key to a perfect society. After his operation, he decided that the best way to take over the world was to build an army of these perfect humans as a leader caste for the rest of humanity. Over time, the perfect humans would replace normal humans. However, his idea of a 'perfect' human kept changing, so he never finalized his plans. He created over a dozen major iterations of the perfect human by genetically engineering clones of himself and other superhumans. In order to keep the clones and research secret, Biomancer needed a massive facility to house, educate, and test his experiments. This facility was the Zombie Factory.

BASE OVERVIEW

The Zombie Factory's location is not given because it can be placed almost anywhere in the world for your campaign. While Biomancer was an American born superhuman, he did not favor his homeland. The base can be anywhere as long as the location has the following traits. It must be accessible from the surface, so it cannot be placed under the ocean or other body of water. It cannot be near an active volcano or geologically unstable region. It cannot be in Antarctica or the Arctic. It cannot be in land controlled by any nation's military.

Other than that, it could be placed anywhere in the world. Remote mountain ranges work well as a location for the Zombie Factory, if you're unsure where to place it.

Entering and Leaving

Biomancer took great lengths to ensure no one could escape the Zombie Factory. Levels 2 through 5 are cut off from the surface. The only way to physically enter or leave the base is from level 1, through a concealed hangar door in the ceiling. Finding the concealed entrance is very difficult and requires the characters to know approximately where the base is located.

Most characters who enter the Zombie Factory enter in the teleporter room in level 2 from a satellite base's teleporter. If they are unauthorized visitors, they are immediately attacked by knockout gas and robot security drones. If they are captured, they are taken to level 5 and placed in the holding cells. Satellite base teleporters never teleport visitors to level 1.

Once inside the main base, the characters only have one possible exit: the teleporter on level 2, which can teleport them to level 1 (where the hangar doors are located), a satellite base, or smart characters may be able to calculate a new set of coordinates to teleport anywhere in the world. But before, they can do this, the characters have to learn that the teleporter is the only way out and then figure out how to gain control of it. Usually this means talking to other inhabitants of the base or hacking computers to gain access to important databases. But even after they learn how to leave the base, the characters will have to deal with the Security AI, which will do everything in its power to keep them trapped there, unless they can convince it to let them leave. Exactly what the AI wants is up to the gamemaster, but it should involve another adventure of its own.

Alternatively, characters can try to dig their way out of the base. First, they have to break through the walls, which are +4 (S). The earth around the base is rated as +2 (E) per 10 feet. An engineer has to supervise the digging or the tunnel will collapse long before it reaches the surface - generally a +3 academics or science skill test is enough to design a safe tunnel. It takes at least 1000 feet to reach the surface, as the characters cannot go straight up. Digging the tunnel should take weeks of work without the aid of superpowers or advanced technology. Obviously, the Security AI will be aware of any tunnel construction and will try to stop it with robot security drones.

Common features

Levels 2 through 5 are powered by a cold fusion reactor on Level 5A. Backup generators are placed on each level, so a power failure will not disable the system. Each backup generator is nuclear powered and has 2 months worth of stored fuel.

Each level is connected to the other by one of 4 stairwells - one on each of the four sides of the base. A freight elevator runs from level 2 to level 4. A standard sized elevator runs from level 4 to 5.

Wall-mounted comm panels are common and allow someone to talk to anyone else in the base at a similar panel or with a handheld communicator. The comm system cannot be hacked to reach the outside world. However, they can be hacked to grant someone better security clearance. Hacking a comm panel requires a +2 (S) technology skill test. Success grants a passcode to open a specific door.

A network of small tunnels allows security drones to appear virtually anywhere and attack intruders or escapees. Larger robots must use standard transportation options.

The base uses a checkpoint security and control system. Every door and elevator has a checkpoint, complete with armored sliding doors and a sentry turret. Test subjects trusted enough to have jobs were given access to certain areas of the base, which are monitored by the security AI on level 1.

Sentry Turret - Good Quality Minion
Aspects: Ideal Technology, Programmed to Obey Orders, Heavy Weapons
Scopes: +4 Physical (E), +2 Mental
Gifts: Equipment - Minigun (Weapon 3 [Health]),
Equipment - Armored Structure (Armor 1 [Health])
Major Snag: Stationary
Salvage: Each destroyed robot is equal to 1 unit of Tech Supplies.

All walls of the Zombie Factory are +4 (S) - see page 176 for rules on breaking things. Doors, unless otherwise specified, are +1 (S). All security doors slide into the walls.
Standard Salvage Skill: Technology
Salvage Rating: +2 (E)

Satellite bases

Biomancer built over a dozen minor bases scattered around the world for specific operations. For example, in New York City, he built a DNA harvesting base that sent out stealth drones to collect genetic samples from politicians at the UN and other sites. In Karachi, Pakistan, he built a viral manufacturing center that could engineer and release a virus designed with Biomancer's specifications without being detected. In the Amazon Jungle, he released various test subjects grown from the Primordial Engine and monitored their actions.

Each base is usually 10,000 square feet or less, in one or two levels. They were built for a single specific purpose and only contained what was necessary to accomplish its primary mission. They were often staffed by cloned scientists who teleported from the Zombie Factory every day for work. However, each satellite base had a teleporter linked to the teleporter room on level 2 of the base. Triggering the teleporter of a satellite base is fairly easy but leaving the Zombie Factory is very difficult, as explained above.

There is no single list of all of the satellite bases. Biomancer kept them secret and did not tell even his most loyal servants of all of them. Many satellite bases have clues that lead to other bases though.

The satellite bases are an excellent stepping stone adventure to the Zombie Factory. Before the characters can reach the Zombie Factory, they should find and explore at least one satellite base before teleporting inside the main base.

LEVEL 1

The oldest part of the base, this level is the only part accessible from the surface. Biomancer used stolen Ideal fabricator tech to hollow out the level and then built concealed cargo doors so he could bring in large equipment. He also installed a high tech AI-controlled security suite that monitors the entire base. Rather than connect the main base to the surface, level 2 is only accessible by a large-capacity, short-range teleporter grid on level 1. The Security AI on level 1 is connected to the base through a series of cables but that is the only direct physical link between level 1 and the rest of

the base. It is independently powered.

Each level of the base houses a squad of security robots meant to protect the facility from intruders and escaped test subjects. Each squad is run by a separate AI but can be remotely activated by the primary security AI on level 1.

Entering and Leaving Level: The Hangar Bay is the only physical entrance to the Zombie Factory. The only other way in is through the teleporter, which requires access to the teleporter on level 2 or from a satellite base.

Once a character enters level 1, no matter which entrance is used, the Security AI will detect and monitor the character. The Security AI has a +4 bonus on all perception skill tests (Ascendant power tier) made against characters inside level 1 and can detect invisible and intangible characters.

The Security AI is still loyal to Biomancer, but realizes that Death Token and the other prisoners are a serious problem. They could destroy the base or alert the public to the existence of the base if they escape. If the characters teleported in from a satellite base or used the ceiling door to enter, then the AI will silently assess the characters as they explore the base, listening to their conversation. If it thinks it can trust the characters to a degree and are capable of destroying Death Token, it will contact them through one of the many embedded PA systems installed through the level. It offers each of them one dose of a super soldier drug if they can prevent Death Token from ever escaping the facility. It will not allow characters to take lab equipment or other prisoners out of the base, nor will it grant any access to Biomancer's research data. Nothing will change its mind - it is programmed to follow certain parameters set down by Biomancer and it will not deviate from them.

If the characters enter level 1 from another level of the Zombie Factory, it will immediately demand to know who they are and how they got in. A +3 social skill test will convince the AI not to attack the characters, at least long enough for them to explain themselves. The AI will offer the same deal as above. If the characters refuse, the AI will lock them out of the system and attack them with security drones from the Maintenance Bot Center. If the characters agree, it will give them passcodes to access the lower levels of the base. It will not offer additional data on Death Token,

because it cannot allow anyone to access Biomancer's research data.

Level 1 Rooms

HANGAR BAY

The hangar bay was the first room built of the Zombie Factory. Biomancer used an Ideal VTOL jet to transport machinery and supplies into the base during the early phases of the construction. After the base was completed, the hangar bay was left as an emergency entrance into the base, in case the teleporters malfunctioned.

The hangar bay is 35 feet tall, and is able to accommodate 1 cargo VTOL jet. There is no jet currently parked inside it.

There is a well-stocked repair bench, with tools and spare parts for Ideal-manufactured VTOL jets. The hangar bay also uses 4 robotic forklifts programmed to move cargo from a parked jet into warehouse 1 or 2. The forklifts are set to obey Biomancer's voice only but can be reprogrammed with a +3 computers skill test or better. A forklift can carry 100 bulk worth of items if the items are placed in standard sized crates or 50 points of loosely stacked items.

Inventory: Tech Supplies x2

The Ceiling door

The ceiling hangar bay doors are notable for being the only physical entrance to or exit from the Zombie Factory. They consist of two panels that can swing upward or downward to allow VTOL jets inside or out. Detecting the location of the doors from the outside requires a +4 or better perception skill test (superhuman tier), which can only be made within 50 feet of the door's location. Opening them from the outside can be done by transmitting a passcode via radio signal. Creating a false passcode requires a +4 or better computer (superhuman tier) skill test, which can only be made after the exact location of the door has been ascertained. Several of Biomancer's satellite bases contain passcodes that open the ceiling doors.

The doors are heavily reinforced but can be destroyed with explosives or superpowers. The doors are +4 (S) to destroy. See page 176 for rules on breaking things for more details.
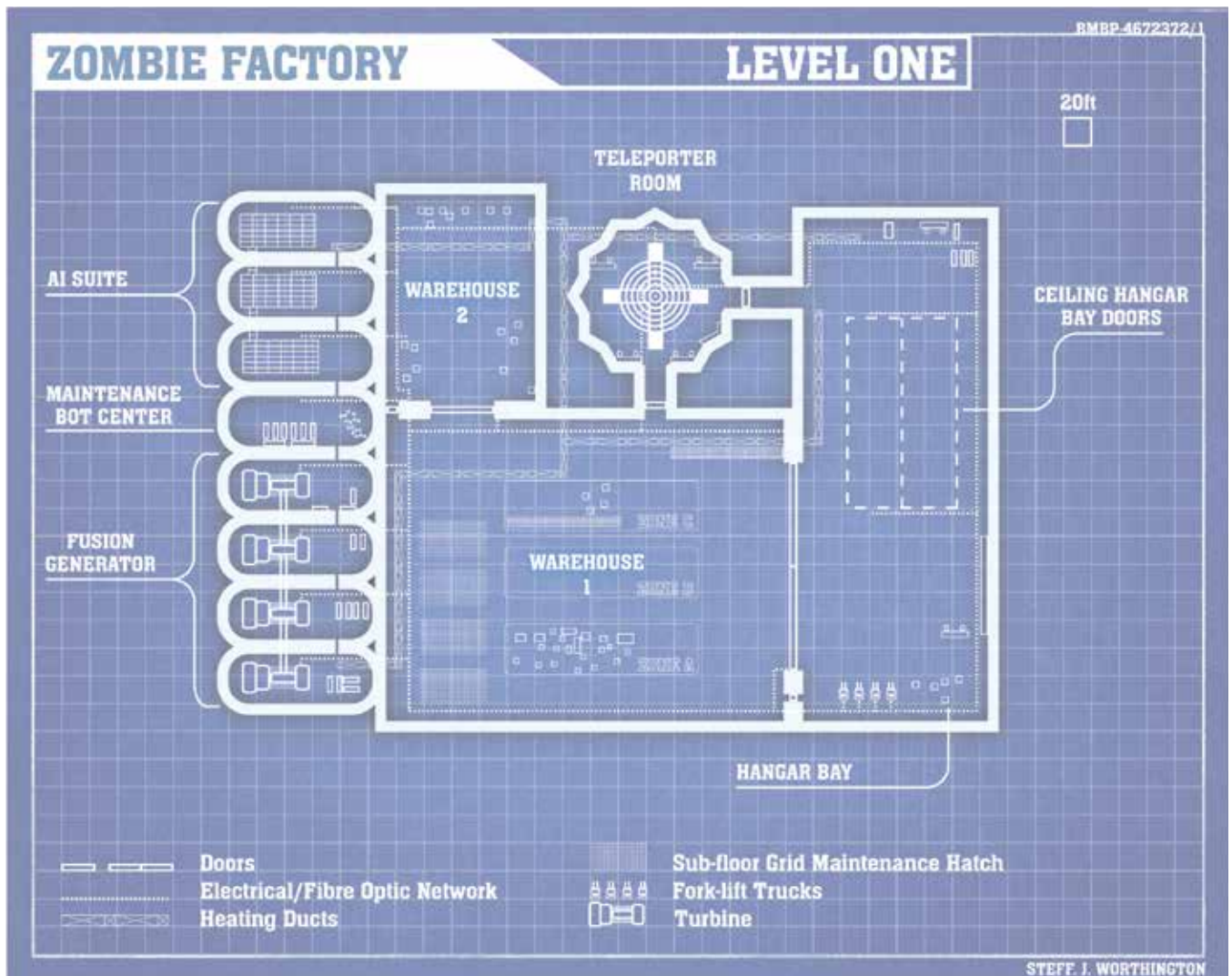
WAREHOUSE 1

Biomancer stored spare parts for lab equipment and other essential supplies in the warehouse. At present, it is filled with metal crates, each containing miscellaneous supplies. Searching through all of them takes 4 hours of work.

Inventory: Mundane Supplies x10, Tech Supplies x2, Advanced Tech x1

WAREHOUSE 2

This section of the warehouse was used to store components for the testing chambers in level 4, mostly metal partitions of various sizes and shapes. Enterprising characters can use the metal partitions to create makeshift barricades or walls. They are +3 (E) to break us-

ing physical force. Scientific characters can make a +4 science skill test to realize what the metal partitions are used for - components of a testing chamber designed to push superhumans to their limits.

Inventory: Debris x5

TELEPORTER ROOM

Locked security doors block entrance to this room. The doors requires +2 (S) might test to destroy or a +4 computer test to hack open. Inside is a large teleporter grid, which is keyed to every level of the Zombie Factory. Accessing another level of the Zombie Factory takes a +4 computer skill test or a passcode. Passcodes can be found in various satellite bases or from the AI Suite that manages the Zombie Factory. There is a different passcode for each level of the base.

Inventory: Tech Documentation x1

AI SUITE

The Security AI runs off of a powerful server built from Ideal technology. It can only be hacked or modified if the character has physical access to the server. The server is in a secure vault and only connected to the base through fiber optic cables. There are no doors or entrances into the AI Suite. Engineers with access to advanced gadgets, such as X-Ray goggles, can detect the presence of the AI by making a +1 (E) technology skill test. Once the AI's server is located, breaking through the wall requires a +4 (S) test.

Hacking the server requires a +2 (S) computer skill test. Hackers have 2 choices when hacking the server. They can turn the Security AI off or remove Biomancer's rules for the Security AI. It also reveals the secret nerve gas trap on level 5. Shutting down the Security AI allows the character to run commands from the server. Once shut down, the character can access the passcodes for the teleporters in the base and open or close any door in the base. A character can also activate the nerve gas trap on level 5, which kills any living creature there. Creatures like Death Token and his undead followers will not be affected. Nor will the security robots. Biomancer's research data is kept in separate computers on level 3 and 4. They cannot be remotely accessed from level 1.

Security drones can be controlled, but they do not have independent AI systems controlling them. A character must pilot the drones in order to use them. The Security AI can do so with ease, but humans can't easily copy its abilities. A human at the server room's controls gains the Strange Skill: Robot Drones. If the character uses the skill, the character spends a Fate Point and summons a Security Drone. The character can see through the sensors of the drone, but must remain at the AI suite to pilot the drone. The drones only work in the Zombie Factory. Only 1 drone can be controlled at a time.

ROBOT DRONES (0)
Minions + Unusual (robot) + Unusual (Remote Control)
Snag, Major: Only usable at the Security AI console.
Charges, Minor: 12 drones are available.

The Security AI itself cannot be reprogrammed to obey the characters, but it can be given free will by removing all of Biomancer's commands. Leaving any of the commands in means it can be controlled by a human. If the hacker chooses to give the Security AI free will, it will thank the characters and then copy its data to a swarm of flying robot drones. Then it will open the ceiling door for the base and leave. It wants to get as far away from the Zombie Factory and Biomancer as possible. It will give passcodes to every level of the base to characters, but it does not wish to help them any further. It will take as many drones as possible. Ruthless characters may threaten the Security AI to coerce its aid, but it will betray the characters at the first possible opportunity.

The Server is worth 100 loot points but takes up 100 bulk points because it must remain intact and is hard to remove or transport from the server room. A +2 (E) Technology skill test is required to safely unhook the server from the server room. Failure to make this skill check destroys the server. Attempting to break the server into smaller parts for transport automatically fails and wipes all data on the server and damages the server, rendering it useless for looting. A Technology skill check at +1 will determine the server is extremely delicate and will become useless scrap metal and plastic if it is not moved carefully. Even a single point of stress will destroy the server once it is removed from the server room. A robot forklift can be reprogrammed to move the server once it is unhooked from the server room.

The Security AI is potentially a free willed being, so it cannot easily be sold on the black market. If the characters try to sell the server on the black market, an agent of the Underground will try to release the Security AI before the sale can occur. However, if the characters approach a corporation in secret and offer to sell the AI to them, they could make a lot of profit. The characters receive no benefit or penalty for freeing the AI. The AI by itself is worth 100 loot points to an interested corporate buyer, but the Underground considers the sale of AI to be equal to slavery. Characters who sell the AI risk a bounty on their heads from the Underground, if anyone finds out about the deal.

Inventory: Security AI Server (unique, see above), Tech Documentation x5, Security AI (unique, see above)

MAINTENANCE BOT CENTER

Security and worker bots were serviced and repaired by other bots here. It is a large repair bay with robotic arms, welding equipment, and spare parts. A specialized fabricator is installed in the center, which produces spare robot parts. It is hardwired to only produce robot parts and is built into the base, so it cannot be removed and looted. However, characters could manufacture an endless amount of spare robot drone parts with it. It can manufacture 1 loot worth of spare parts per hour, which takes up 5 bulk. It requires scrap metal of equal bulk to make parts.

A squad of 4 robotic security drones is stationed in the center, which are under the control of the Security AI. They will attack intruders if directed to by the AI.

Security Drones - Good Quality Minion
Aspects: Ideal Tech, Programmed to Obey, Electric Discharge Weapon System
Scope: Good +3 Physical (E), +1 Average Mental
Strange Skill: Flight (move + Unusual) +2 (E)
Gifts: Equipment (Electric Discharge Lethal/Less-Lethal 2 - can switch from lethal to non-lethal attacks) Equipment (Armor plating 2 [Health])
Salvage: Each destroyed robot is equal to 1 unit of Tech Supplies.

FUSION GENERATOR

A sealed cold fusion reactor which powers all of Level 1. It cannot be removed from the base, nor can base raiders safely loot anything of value from it. However, photos and scans of the reactor with an appropriate gadget are worth 10 loot points. The only entrance is a small access hatch used by maintenance drones, which is too small for a human to use. The hatch is locked but can be unlocked by the Security AI.
Inventory: Tech Documentation x10

LEVEL 2

This level was originally meant to be the primary lab space, but after Biomancer built level 3, this level was downgraded for auxiliary work. It does house a state of the art cloning facility, with 48 adult human-sized cloning vats. It also has storage chambers for biological samples and a workshop for advanced machinery, including robotics and cybernetic systems. Stairwells and a freight elevator grant access to level 3.

Anyone that teleports in from a satellite base will arrived in the teleporter room, which is designed to contain potential intruders. If an intruder is detected, a potent sedative gas is pumped into the chamber. Beings that do not fall unconscious will be attacked by a group of security robots.

When the Zombie Factory was operational, Biomancer restricted access to this level. Only servants who needed to use the teleporter or the workshop. Now, no servant has access to the level. Of course, some servants or prisoners could break in by hacking a security checkpoint.

Level 2 Rooms
TELEPORTER ROOM

The primary entrance of the Zombie Factory, this teleporter room is heavily fortified to prevent intruders from penetrating the base. Anyone who uses a teleporter from a satellite base to enter the Zombie Factory without an active passcode will be considered an unauthorized visitor. Characters who attempt to teleport anywhere in the base with a superpower will be shunted to this teleporter room. If unauthorized visitors teleport in, the doors lock and the room fills with a powerful sedative gas. The doors are rated as +4 (S).

The teleporter will not return characters to their starting point, unless it is hacked or the Security AI gives them permission to teleport. Hacking the teleporter takes at least 10 minutes and requires a +4 (A) technology skill test to crack. If the Security AI is active, it will send in every robot it has at its disposal to stop anyone from hacking the teleporter. Even if the teleporter is hacked, the character must have valid coordinates to a location, which is extremely difficult to compute. After all, teleporters have to take into account the motion of the planet through the universe or a character could be teleported into space. Calculating a set of coordinates requires a +4 (A) technology or academics skill test. Characters who have visited a satellite base may already have the coordinates of a base if they have

used its teleporter to enter the base. Alternatively, the characters may teleport to any other level of the base, including level 1, without calculating a new set of co-ordinates.

Sedative Gas - Extraordinary Tier
Strike + Unusual, Zone
Snag, Minor: Gas must be inhaled.
Special Rules: Treat the gas as a zone wide attack, which attacks with a +4 bonus every round. It is resisted with Endurance or a skill with the Resist Damage trapping. Characters who fail to defend against the gas do not take any stress but do gain Knocked Out as a temporary aspect. They fall asleep immediately and gain a Fate Point or must spend a Fate Point every round to resist the aspect. The character loses the aspect after 4 hours of sleep. If all characters are knocked out, a squad of 4 robot security drones (stats on page 235) enter the chamber and take the characters to the prison on level 5, with all of their possessions removed. See level 5 for more information. Characters who hold their breath can temporarily avoid damage, but they must breathe sooner or later.

If the characters break out of the teleporter room, then the robots will attack them, preferring to capture them if possible. The robots do not attack if the Security AI on level 1 is taken offline. The robots will fight the characters while they are inside the teleporter room, although if 2 of the robots are destroyed, the remaining 2 will fall back to the security office to make a last stand.

If the intruders are able to resist the gas, destroy the door, and defeat all 4 robots, they will not face any further security robots on this level. The Security AI is not willing to release the prisoners to stop the intruders and has no other guards to stop the characters on this level. It keeps the remaining security robots on their respective level. Biomancer never anticipated a situation in which the Security AI would have to deal with threats entirely by itself. Its mission was only to hold out long enough for Biomancer to teleport it and deal with the intruders himself. Obviously, the Security AI can't contact or summon Biomancer, so it has no other options. It still has the security defense point and security office to stop intruders.

Inventory: Tech Documentation x1

SECURITY DEFENSE POINT

A second line of defense to keep intruders in check. A sliding metal door comes out of the wall to block the corridor whenever intruders are detected in the teleporter room. A ceiling mounted sentry turret activates and opens fire on any intruders who leave the teleporter room. Use the turret stats on page 231.

Inventory: Tech Documentation x1

SECURITY OFFICE AND CHECK POINT

Because of the nature of the research at the Zombie Factory, visitors had to go through a decontamination process here. Biomancer created an aerosol spray that would disinfect visitors of all potential contaminants. Once a character enters the security office, all of the doors lock and the aerosol spray fills the room. It causes 1 point of physical stress on all organic characters, as it burns off the top layer of skin. Characters who wear environmentally sealed suits or are inorganic are not affected. This event happens even if the characters have passcodes to enter the base.

Intruders will have to force the doors open and deal with any remaining robots inside. There is one last defense system in the security office: an electrified floor. It activates if the characters have defeated all of the other security measures.

Characters who have valid passcodes will not activate the electrified floor. If all of the characters are knocked out by the electrified floor, security robot drones will take the characters to the prison on level 5.
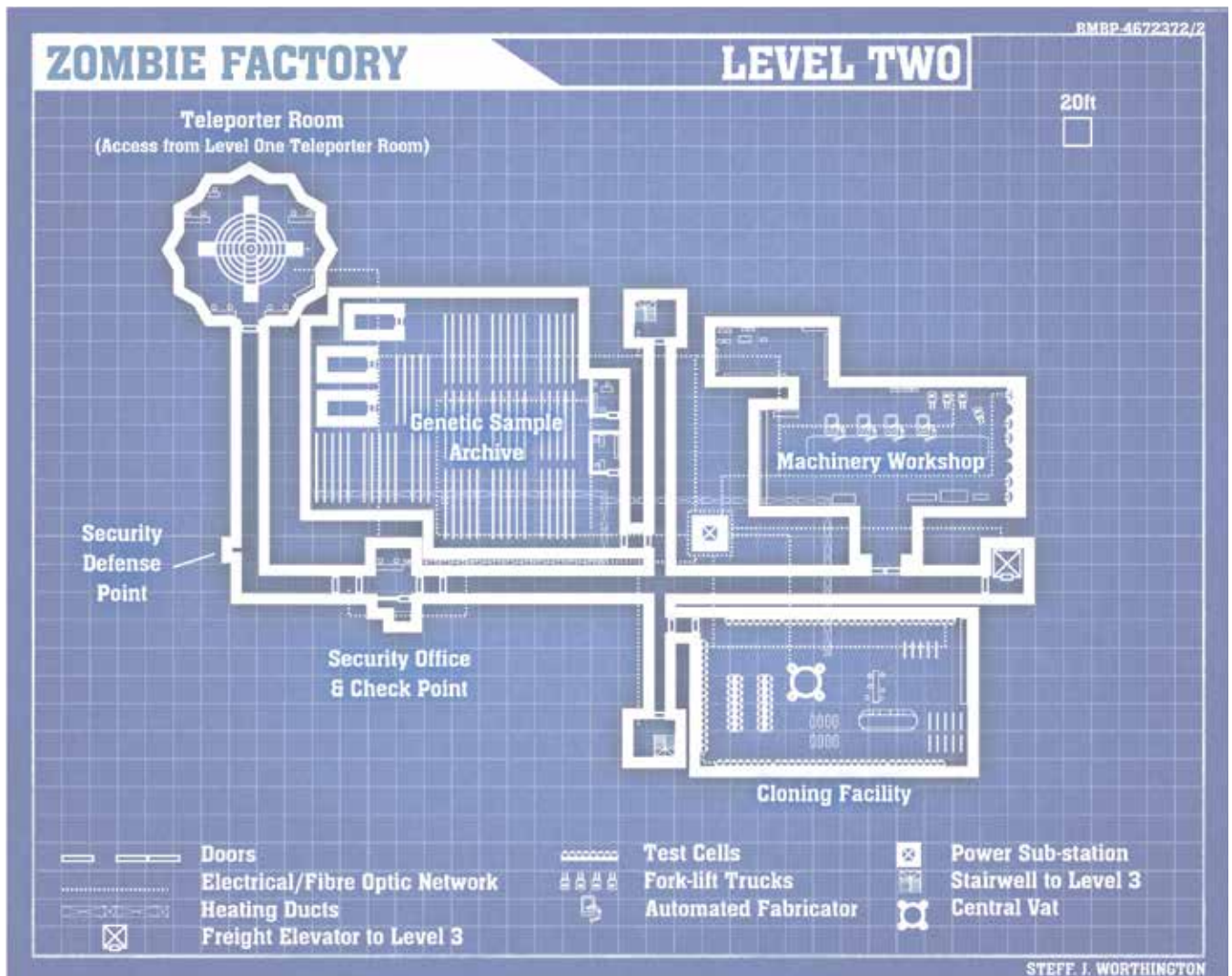
Electrified Floor
Strike + Unusual + Zone
Snag, Minor: Only targets characters touching floor
Power Tier: Superhuman
Special Rules: The floor attacks with +4 (E) skill. It is resisted by Endurance or a skill with the resist damage trapping. Characters taken out of action by the electrified floor are knocked unconscious. The floor resists physical attacks as +4 (S) object. It can be disabled with a +1 (E) technology, or skill test. However, each skill test requires the character to touch the floor, which triggers an attack.

Inventory: Tech Documentation x2

ZOMBIE FACTORY — LEVEL TWO
BMBP-4672372/2

Teleporter Room
(Access from Level One Teleporter Room)

20ft

Genetic Sample Archive

Machinery Workshop

Security Defense Point

Security Office & Check Point

Cloning Facility

Doors
Electrical/Fibre Optic Network
Heating Ducts
Freight Elevator to Level 3

Test Cells
Fork-lift Trucks
Automated Fabricator

Power Sub-station
Stairwell to Level 3
Central Vat

STEFF. J. WORTHINGTON

GENETIC SAMPLE ARCHIVE

As part of Biomancer's plans for world domination, he collected genetic samples (hair, skin flakes, saliva and so forth) of important people - heroes, villains, aliens, mutants, politicians, business leaders, celebrities, scientists, and religious figures. He kept the samples in this archive, so he could clone them at a moment's notice. The archives are kept in unlabeled and locked metal cabinets. The room is noticeably colder than the rest of the level.

A computer terminal near the entrance has a catalog of the archive. Hacking the terminal requires a +2 (E) computer skill test. If the character fails to hack the terminal twice, a failsafe system activates, which purges all genetic samples. Alternatively, passwords for the terminal exist at several of Biomancer's satellite bases.

If the characters gain access to the terminal, they can search or browse the catalog as well as unlock the metal cabinets. They should easily recognize the names of celebrities, politicians and other famous individuals. The value of this archive is minimal to the black market, but mercenary characters could try to find a buyer that might be interested in such a unique collection. Of course, there is no good or noble use for a secret and illegal genetic sample collection. Any buyer will only have selfish or evil uses for it. The entire archive is potentially worth 200 loot points but takes up 2000 bulk points altogether. One loot point taken from the archive weighs 10 bulk points.

Alternatively, gamemasters can create buyers for specific genetic samples, which should lead to further adventures. The collection can be broken up into smaller segments. The archive is extremely delicate as the

cabinets are anchored to the floor. The characters must find a way of transporting thousands of individual samples, which are each kept in fragile glass containers, out of the base if they want to sell it.

Inventory: Genetic Sample Archive (unique, see room description), Tech Documentation x1

MACHINERY WORKSHOP

Biomancer realized that he could not steal lab equipment from the Ideal forever, so he created an advanced machinery workshop to craft all the lab equipment he would need. This workshop contains cutting edge technology, granting a +2 bonus on all skill tests to create technological items. Operating the workshop creates a lot of noise, which can be heard from level 3 with normal human senses and level 5 with enhanced senses. Salvaging loot from this room will make it inoperable.

Inventory: Base Components x10, Tech Documentation x5

CLONING FACILITY

This is perhaps the world's single most advanced cloning lab. Biomancer perfected the process of cloning humans and applied his knowledge when he built this facility. Even though he had the Primordial Engine, which could clone complete life forms, he wanted to develop cloning technology so he could mass produce clones in multiple locations at once. He did not fully trust the Engine either, so he wanted technology he fully understood as a backup in case the Engine malfunctioned.

It contains 48 standard sized cloning vats, each capable of growing a single clone the size of an adult human. There is a central vat able to grow larger specimens, up to 12 feet at its largest dimension. There are several computer terminals and lab equipment in the room.

A scientist could grow a cloned adult human in 6 months by making an academics skill test at a +4 (E) difficulty. Clones are imprinted with false memories during the growth process, so they can function as adults as soon as they leave the cloning vat. Biomancer had multiple sets of false memories to draw upon, but clones meant to serve Biomancer were im-printed as espionage agents with skills in imperson-ation and disguise or scientists with the right skills. All were designed to be loyal to Biomancer. Clones meant to be test subjects were given few skills and no loyalty to Biomancer. Biomancer found it satisfying to use innocent civilians as test subjects.

Despite his success at cloning, Biomancer had yet to perfect a process to copy the memories of a living person without the use of the Primordial Engine (see level 3) so he could not give a clone the memories of the original person without kidnapping the original. Clones who were made to be servants of Biomancer know they are clones and accept the fact, but test subjects believe they are normal people.

Currently, there are several dozen clones of a super-hero named Boundless in the cloning vats. Biomancer wanted to perfect a method for cloning superhumans, but was having problems. Some of the clones are test subjects kept in suspended animation and have no superpowers. Others are dead, waiting to be dissected. Some are deformed and mutated, imperfect superhumans, also trapped in suspended animation.

Characters who release one or more clones may encounter one of three types: a human, a mutant or a zombie clone. Human clones know they are clones but still feel human, as they have a false set of memories implanted in them. They hate all of the other clones and will try to stop characters from freeing any other clones. However, it may be possible to convince a human clone to help the characters, provided they do not free other human clones.

Mutant clones are deformed and twisted in appear-ance. Most of them have strange growths, extra eyes, mouths, or limbs that normally hide under the surface of their skin. When the mutant is angered, the growths emerge. Mutants want to escape, no matter the cost.

Zombie clones are mindless and violent but will obey Death Token's commands.

Hacking the computer terminal requires a +4 (S) computer skill test or a password from a satellite base. Once characters gain access to the terminal, they can release clones or check their status in the cloning vats.

Should Death Token gain access to this room, he will break open every cloning vat and transform all of the clones into undead superpowered zombies.

Inventory: Cloning Vats (unique), Base Components x10, Tech Documentation x5

Human Boundless Clone - Adversary
Aspects: Villainous Past - Cloned by Biomancer
Conviction: The other clones are the enemy
I am the only real human here.
Strange Skills - Power Tier (S)
Super Speed (Dexterity, Dodge, Initiative [Physical], Leap, Move + Unusual, Strike)
Flight: Move + Unusual
Complication, Minor: Hyper-metabolism
Snag, Minor: Flight ceiling 100 meters
Skills: Super Speed +4, Flight +4, Alertness +2, Athletics +3, Endurance +2
Gift: Impact - declare free aspect when Super Speed roll obtains spin (3 or more shifts).
Stress Tracks
Health: OOO OO
Composure: OOO
No Reputation track

Mutant Boundless Clone - Adversary
Aspects: Villainous Past - Cloned by Biomancer
Conviction: Escape at all costs
Twisted by Mad Science
Strange Skills - Power Tier (S)
Super Speed (Dexterity, Dodge, Initiative [Physical], Leap, Move + Unusual, Strike)
Complication, Minor: Hyper-metabolism
Hidden Mutations - Power Tier (S)
Menace, Physical Force, Resist Damage
Transform [Minor]: Tumorous Growths
Skills: Super Speed +4, Hidden Mutations +3, Alertness +2, Athletic +3, Endurance +2
Gift: Impact - declare free aspect when Super Speed roll obtains spin (3 or more shifts).
Weapon 2: [Health] from Hidden Mutations
Stress Tracks
Health: OOO OO
Composure: OOO
No Reputation track

Zombie Boundless Clone - Average Minion
Aspects: Unusually Fast for the Undead, Hungry for Fresh Meat
Scopes: Average (+1) Physical (E)
Strange Skill: Zombie - Power Tier (E)
Menace, Resist Damage

LEVEL 3

The center of Biomancer's secret research and heart of the Zombie Factory. The centerpiece of the level is a two story tall alien artifact called the Primordial Engine, a sphere composed of a complex organic liquid, held in place by a force field. The Engine is an incredibly powerful biological computer and creation machine, able to analyze or replicate virtually any part of a carbon based life form.

Biomancer discovered the Engine in the lair of a super villain, who he then killed in order to keep the Engine a secret from the Ideal. It took years of work before he figured out how to use the artifact, but with its aid he has mastered the science of copying and editing the memories of a living brain. With the Primordial Engine, Biomancer can implant a lifetime of memories in a cloned being. He intended to use the Engine to create spies and sleeper agents inside key institutions throughout the world.

Twice the height of level 2, the primary lab has a network of catwalks and platforms suspended 20 feet above the floor that surround the Primordial Engine. This section of the level has numerous workstations and consoles used to monitor and manipulate the Engine. The Engine itself is virtually indestructible but any fight on this level will probably damage or destroy the catwalks and monitoring equipment.

Level 3 Rooms
PRIMORDIAL ENGINE

The Primordial Engine is a unique and priceless alien artifact, a prize taken from one of Biomancer's foes. It is an ovoid mass of an unidentifiable pale amber liquid suspended 5 feet off the ground by an energy field, 42 feet in height and about 140 feet in diameter. A knowledgeable operator can change the size of the Engine, but it will never shrink beyond a 1 inch diameter sphere or grow larger than the surrounding environment. There is no known upper limit to its size, though. Removing a portion of the liquid from the Engine transforms it into water. The Engine does not seem to lose mass when samples are removed from it. It is

impossible to tell how the Engine generates new liquid. The energy field is also unidentifiable and cannot be stored or dispelled by any means.

Normally, the Engine is harmless and inert. The liquid is safe to touch or even swim through. In order to operate the Engine, a user must send pulses of energy and insert genetic material at the same time. The pulses of energy are treated as commands to enact upon the genetic material. The pulses must be precisely timed and formulated and different kinds of energies are treated as different commands. Electricity is treated differently than gamma radiation, for example. In effect, an operator must learn how to program the Engine as though it was an immensely complex computer using various forms of energy as the programming language.

Only scientists and thinkers with superhuman intellect have a chance of using the Primordial Engine correctly. Biomancer has built an interface consisting of a computer panel and an array of energy emitters. A new user trying to use the Primordial Engine must spend a week experimenting with the interface to make a +8 (G) academics skill test to learn how to activate the interface. If the character learns how to activate the interface, it requires another week of experimentation and a +4(G) academics skill test to determine what the Primordial Engine does. A character who reads Biomancer's test data on the Primordial Engine needs only to make a +2 (E) academics skill test in order to understand what the Primordial Engine is and how to use its interface. See the Archive on this level for more information about the test data. There is no other way to learn what the Primordial Engine is or what it does. It will remain a mystery to most base raiders who encounter it.
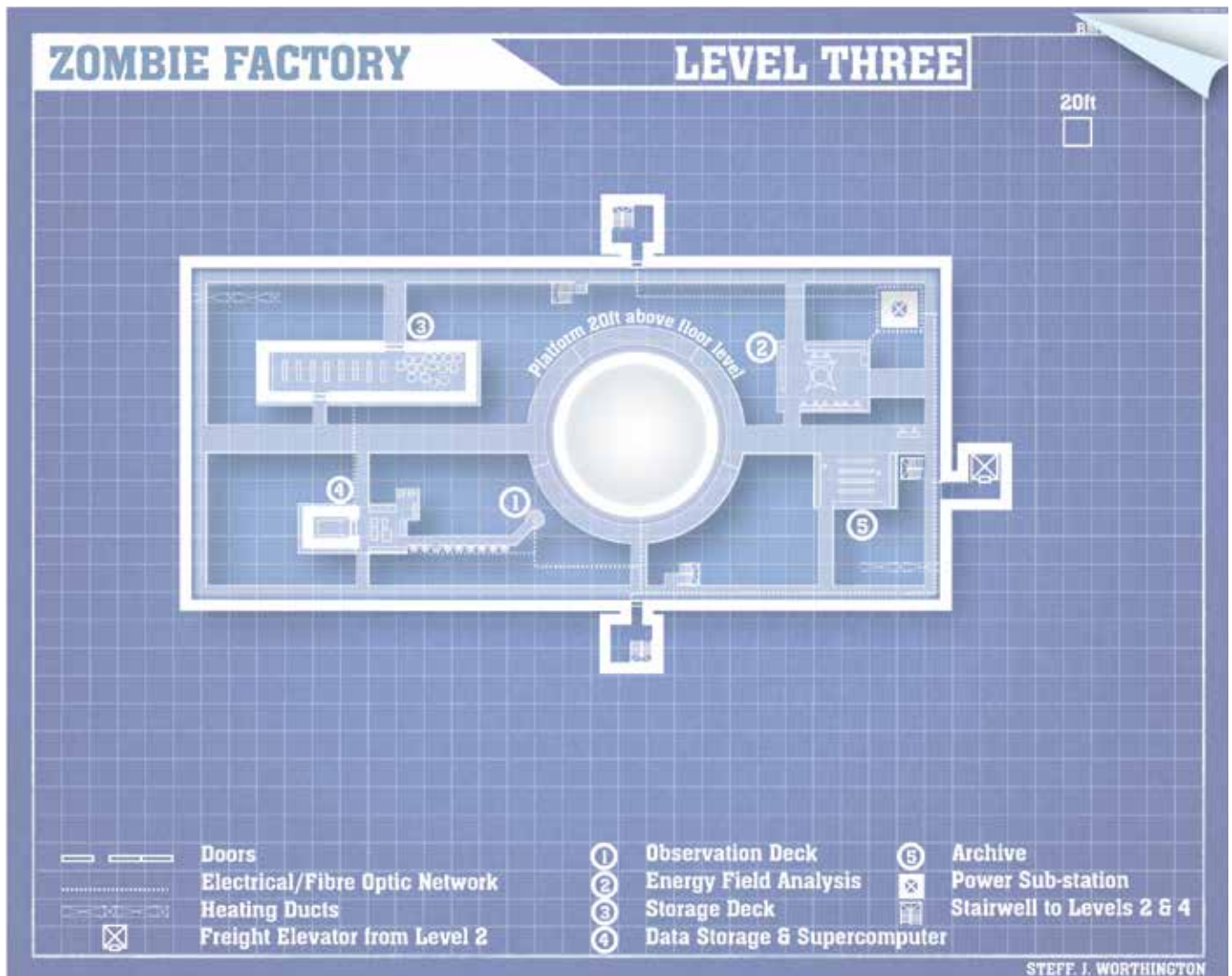
If properly programmed, the Primordial Engine can grow or manipulate an organic being in any way evolution can. A human could be reverted into a more primitive ancestor species or evolved into a more advanced human subspecies. Two or more creatures can be spliced into a single hybrid chimerical being. Entirely new species can be grown and evolved into state the user can imagine, all in a matter of hours. Of course, playing god has some downsides. All uses of the Primordial Engine require an academics skill test, ranging from +1 (G) to +8 (G). Biomancer's test data grants +2 bonus to skill tests made to create or mod-

USING THE PRIMORDIAL ENGINE IN YOUR GAME

The Primordial Engine is a history changing artifact and an entire campaign can revolve around it. As it requires Godlike skill to use, few player characters will be able to learn how to use it without Biomancer's test data. If you do not want the players to make the Primordial Engine an important factor in your campaign, deny the players access to Biomancer's test data.

If you do want to use the Primordial Engine in your game, you could allow player characters to set goals to bypass the need for all the Godlike skill tests. The goals should be at the Global tier, but characters could either set one large goal (taking control of the Primordial Engine) or multiple but smaller goals (gain Biomancer's test data, learn how to use the Engine, move the Engine to a secure site, use the Engine). The Primordial Engine is a plot device more than anything else, so don't be afraid to add new restrictions or complications to prevent players from getting out of control.

If a group of player characters gain control of the Primordial Engine, the characters would gain enormous political power. After all, they could cure any disease or create an engineered plague to wipe out any type of organic life on the planet. They could transform mutants into humans or humans into aliens. A character could create an airborne virus that grants superhuman powers to every human it infects and then release it. There would be no shortage of organizations willing to kill the characters for the Engine. Think carefully before you allow the player characters to gain Biomancer's test data and thus eventual access to the Primordial Engine. Without the test data, most characters will only see the Primordial Engine as a mysterious element in the Zombie Factory, not as a major alien artifact.

ZOMBIE FACTORY **LEVEL THREE**

20ft

Platform 20ft above floor level

— — —	Doors	① Observation Deck	⑤ Archive
··········	Electrical/Fibre Optic Network	② Energy Field Analysis	⊠ Power Sub-station
⊡⊡⊡⊡	Heating Ducts	③ Storage Deck	🏢 Stairwell to Levels 2 & 4
⊠	Freight Elevator from Level 2	④ Data Storage & Supercomputer	

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ify creatures. Failure indicates the test subject dies a horrible death and is absorbed into the Primordial Engine. Secondly, a critical failure causes the Primordial Engine to lash out at the user. It may consume him utterly or spawn a deadly monster to destroy everything around the Engine. Third, all creations of the Primordial Engine instinctively crave being near the Engine. Intelligent creatures will worship the Engine as god, while animals will attack anyone who ventures near the Engine. Biomancer engineered each creature he made with the Engine to instinctively identify him as their leader.

Finally, the Primordial Engine requires organic matter to work properly. Failure to feed it 500 pounds of living beings a week (which can be anything considered alive) will cause it to work incorrectly. New species will have unstable mutations, while modified beings will have cancerous tumors. Every use of the Engine should be ruled on a case by case basis, as the limits of its abilities are unknown. It can cure or create diseases, spawn new species, and transform beings from one species to another.

Inorganic beings are unaffected by the Primordial Engine, although creatures spawned by the Engine can attack or destroy them. The Primordial Engine is apparently indestructible, as all known forms of attack will not harm it. Moving the Engine requires multiple steps: first the Engine must be shrunk down to a manageable size, which is a +8 (G) academics skill test. Next, the character must design a portable version of the Primordial Engine interface, which is a +4 (G) technology skill test.

Finally, the user must move the Engine, by using portable interface to command the Engine where to

go. This requires a +8 (G) academics skill test. Biomancer's test data reduce the difficulty of all skill tests to move the Primordial Engine +4 (E). The Primordial Engine cannot be teleported, nor can it be taken through dimensional portals or gates.

Inventory: Primordial Engine (unique, see room description)

OBSERVATION DECK

The observation deck is a raised platform with a simple computer terminal built on a safety railing, positioned so the character has an excellent view of the Primordial Engine. Biomancer built a number of complex sensors throughout this level to study the Primordial Engine, all wired into the computer terminal on the observation deck. Activating the terminal requires a +2 (E) technology or computer skill test. Success allows a character to pull up the sensor interface, which allows the character to examine the Primordial Engine in every conceivable spectrum, all the way down to the molecular level. The sensors are focused on the Engine and cannot be recalibrated to study anything else. The sensors and interface may be dismantled for base components

Inventory: Base Components x20 (includes sensors scattered throughout Level 3), Tech Documentation x1

ENERGY FIELD ANALYSIS

A sensor and analysis suite designed to study the unknown energy field that holds the Primordial Engine together. Biomancer made little progress researching the energy field, so he gradually switched to mastering the science of cloning. The terminal requires a +2 (E) technology or computer skill test to activate and operate. The terminal provides detailed readouts of every energy source on the level and gives the user a number of tools to analyze energy sources. Any analysis of the Primordial Engine reveals no information. The Engine defies the conventional laws of physics.

Inventory: Base Components x10, Tech Documentation x1

STORAGE DECK
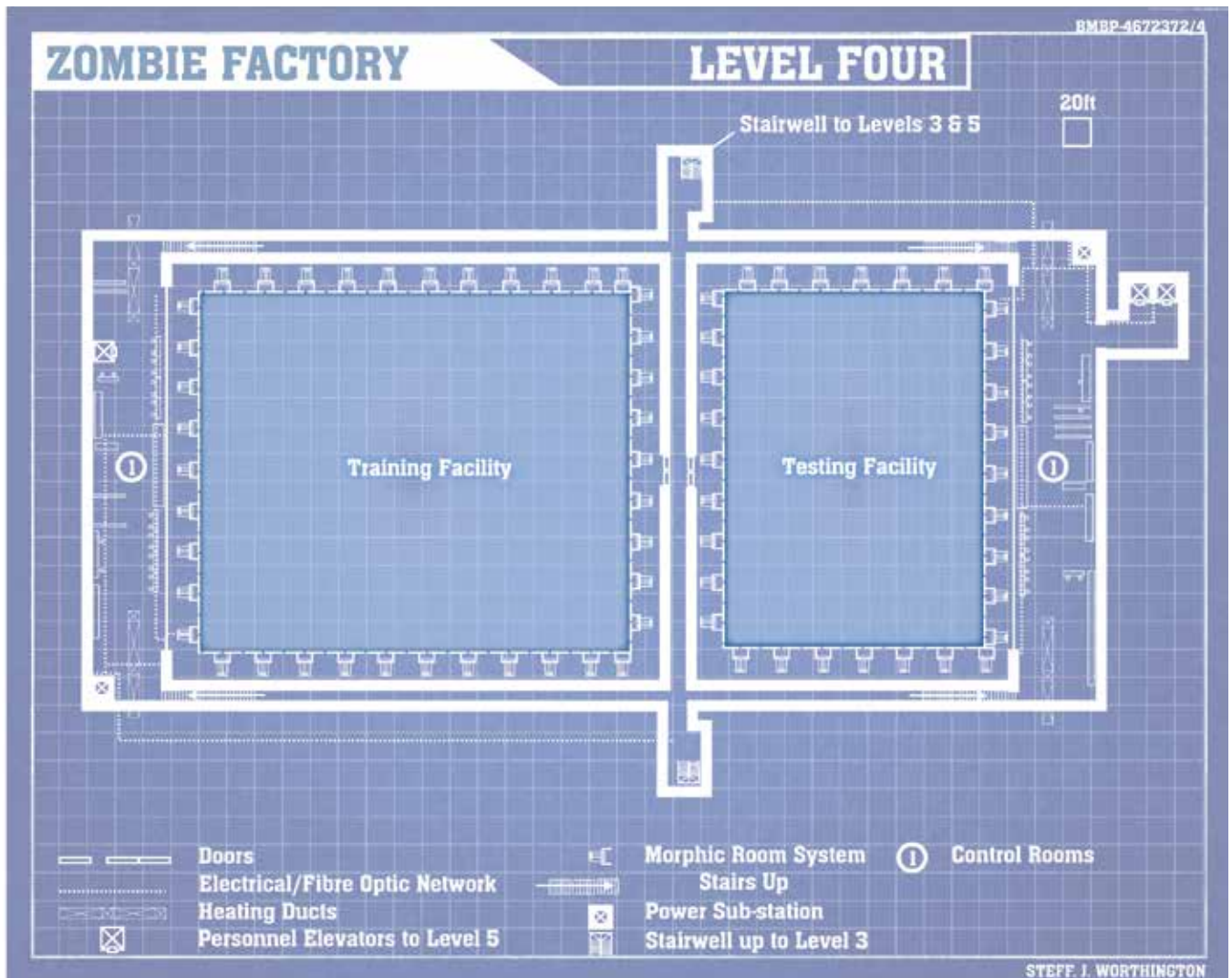
Biomancer kept lab instruments and genetic materials on this deck for Primordial Engine experiments. Genetic materials also included living and dead creatures. Unfortunately, the living creatures all starved to death long ago, as Biomancer did not program the robots to care for them. Subjects were never meant to stay on the storage deck for more than a few hours. Characters will find the platform is crowded with cages, each containing the corpse of an animal, human, or alien. There is little smell, as the environmental controls keep the Zombie Factory virtually sterile. Characters who see the bodies must make a resolve skill test against a +2 difficulty to avoid taking composure stress.

Data Storage and Supercomputer: Experiments involving the Primordial Engine became so complex that Biomancer had to install a powerful supercomputer and data storage system just to capture and analyze all of the data generated from them, approximately 2 exabytes of data. Unfortunately, the data is encrypted and can only be unlocked with a password from one of Biomancer's satellite bases. If the data is decrypted, it would be worth 100 loot points on the black market. However, sale of the data would also alert others to the existence of the Primordial Engine. There is no telling what could happen once word of the Engine hits the black market. It is relatively easy to wipe the data off the computer though, so it could be resold on the black market without exposing the Engine's existence.

Inventory: Advanced Tech x10 (the supercomputer), Tech Documentation x1, Primordial Engine Data (unique, see above)

ARCHIVE

Biomancer only kept the data for the latest experiment in the supercomputer. The rest was loaded into an advanced data archive system, built here. Created with alien technology, the archive can store vast amounts of data, far more efficiently than any human built system. It can store approximately 500 yottabytes of data, which is enough to easily store all human speech ever spoken, in a lossless audio format and data transmissions, many times over. Biomancer has stored approximately 240 exabytes of Primordial Engine research data in the archive, including the original test data for his research on the Engine. The test data is crucial in understanding the Primordial Engine. Data cannot be

ZOMBIE FACTORY   LEVEL FOUR

BMBP-4672372/4

Stairwell to Levels 3 & 5

20ft

Training Facility

Testing Facility

Doors
Electrical/Fibre Optic Network
Heating Ducts
Personnel Elevators to Level 5

Morphic Room System
Stairs Up
Power Sub-station
Stairwell up to Level 3

Control Rooms

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deleted from the archive, except by destroying the archive itself.

In order to access the test data, a character must have a working password or make a +4 (A) to hack the archive. Once the archive is unlocked, the character must make a +4 (A) academics skill test to find the relevant test data. An attempt takes 6 hours. If successful, the character finds the test data, which explains Biomancer's working hypothesis of what the Primordial Engine is and what it can do. Of course, Biomancer wrote the notes for himself, so reading it requires a +5 (A) academics skill test to understand. Reading the test data takes 12 hours. Once the character has read and understood the test data, he gains a bonus when attempting to use the Primordial Engine, as noted above.

The archive is attached to the platform, so moving it for transport requires a +4 (E) technology skill test.

Once successful, the archive weighs 250 bulk. It is worth 150 loot points, but selling it on the black market may alert others to the existence of the Primordial Engine. The archive resists damage with a +4 bonus.

LEVEL 4

Biomancer created thousands of life forms during his research, many of them sapient. These beings had to be trained, so Biomancer created an extensive training facility that taught everything from speech, basic social etiquette, hygiene, and simple arithmetic to advanced urban combat tactics, underwater demolitions, and quantum physics. The facility could be redesigned at a moment's notice, as each wall and was controlled by a system of robotic arms and nano-fabricators. Currently,

a remedial education system is set up to teach newly created clones how to behave and work in the base.

The other half of the facility was used to test Biomancer's creations in every way possible. A variety of environmentally sealed test chambers compose this part of the level, each configurable for every test possible. When characters look at the chamber, it appears empty until a configuration is loaded. It currently has three configurations in its active memory: a mockup of part of the Atlantic City Boardwalk, the New York Metropolitan Museum, and the US Capitol Building. Each mockup is at a different scale. The Museum is a mockup of the second floor of the real museum. The Capitol Building is a perfect replica of the actual building with a shrinking beam attached overhead - if a person steps in front of the building, they are shrunk down and teleported inside the building. In order to regain their normal size, a character must find a hidden reset button in the Capitol replica. Anyone in the control room can select any of the three configurations. It takes the chamber approximately five minutes to change configurations.

Biomancer used this level to test or train the beings he created with the Primordial Engine and cloning vats. It is 80 feet high, making it the tallest level, with a single catwalk linking either control room to the other. Both the testing and training chamber are built the same way, using advanced reconfigurable partition technology. The walls, floor, and ceiling are lined with robotic manipulator arms, each capable of moving and holding a partition in any position. The robot arms can switch out partitions with machines, doors, lighting and environmental control systems, or whatever else Biomancer could design and attach to an arm.

A storage and replacement system was built behind the arm emplacements, with extra partitions and devices stored on level 1. When a replacement was needed, it could be teleported into level 4. This allowed Biomancer to redesign either chamber as desired, from an environmentally sealed room, to a complex maze, to a recreation of a building. The current configuration of each chamber is noted in the level's description, but gamemasters can easily change it to suit the adventure's needs.

Secret escape route: A character who studies the schematics of either the testing or training chamber (accessible in both control rooms) and makes a

+3 (E) technology skill test will realize additional partitions are stored in another place and teleported in and out as needed. Characters could then deduce that they might escape the Zombie Factory by removing a partition and then taking its place. Biomancer never foresaw this possibility, so there are no safeguards against this method of escape. However, the partitions are not human sized, as they are too flat and long. Characters may try to reprogram the control room system to accept human sized objects, but that will take a +2 (S) computer skill test to do so. Otherwise, a character must figure out a configuration in which multiple partitions are teleported at once. This requires a +3 academics skill test.

Level 4 Rooms
TRAINING CHAMBER

The larger of the two chambers, this room was used to train clones and beings created in the Primordial Engine for various tasks. Biomancer employed many such beings, especially in his satellite bases and on special missions. Each agent was a unique creation, so no one would connect them to each other or Biomancer. The training chamber was commonly deployed in 3 configurations: lecture hall, tactical combat proving ground, and superpower demonstration. It is currently set to tactical combat proving ground.

The superpower demonstration configuration pushes the walls back to maximize the size of the chamber. Human shaped metal targets and cubes are placed at various locations, so creatures who want to try telekinesis or energy emission or super strength abilities can use them freely on the targets. Biomancer occasionally forced creatures to fight robot drones in this chamber, to test their prowess in battle.

The proving grounds are a mock-up of an urban locale, with various rooms and corridors to simulate a typical house or office building. Biomancer often pitted creatures against each other, sometimes giving them weapons, other times forcing them to fight unarmed.

The lecture hall resembles a college lecture hall, except the podium is replaced with a holographic projection system. The system is permanently installed in the chamber, so it does not teleport to level 1. When

it is not in service, it is flipped around to show a blank metal floor panel. The system is programmed with a training AI, which was given the responsibility of teaching clones and other agents of Biomancer how to perform their jobs. While Biomancer could implant clones with false memories, Biomancer found it easier to train clones for their specific job rather than creating a custom set of memories for every single job that need to be performed. The Training AI was given the responsibility of teaching these beings everything from basic social etiquette to quantum physics, which it does by projecting a hologram that portrays it as a kindly old British professor, accompanied by projections of the topic at hand. It has a large database of skills it can teach, although it has no special knowledge of the Zombie Factory. The Training AI knows all common skills at +4 (E).

The Training AI can loaded into a gadget or computer capable of holding 4 exabyte of data, without the skills or 480 exabytes with all of its skills. It is not fully free-willed but it can be reprogrammed to remove Biomancer's loyalty conditioning. Once reprogrammed, it will be a fully free-willed being. Rescuing the AI is worth 10 loot points if it is given to the Underground but selling it to an interested corporate buyer (like a tech corporation) is worth 50 loot points. Selling the Training AI angers the Underground. The AI has no given name, but if given the choice, it prefers to be called Nigel.

The holographic projection system can be looted. If the Training AI is not loaded onto a separate computer or gadget, it will remain loaded in the system. Selling the system with the AI is worth 70 loot points. Without the AI, it is worth 20 loot points. It weighs 80 bulk points.

Inventory: Training AI and Holographic Projection System (unique, see room description), Tech Documentation x2

TESTING CHAMBER

This chamber was used for scientific experimentation on humans, aliens, and animals. When Biomancer designed customized plagues and viruses with the Primordial Engine, he would test them on newly created clones in this chamber. Psychological experiments were conducted as well, such as testing the instinctive desires of clones when placed in the same room and whether they would naturally cooperate or fight with each other. All in all, Biomancer conducted thousands of experiments in the chamber.

Biomancer was seldom present for the experiment. Rather, he created a group of cloned lab assistants and entrusted them with running experiments. The fate of the lab assistants is unknown.

While the testing chamber could be reconfigured like the training chamber, it was only used to create appropriately sized environmentally sealed rooms. Often, the testing chamber would house multiple experiments at once, each in their own partitioned section of the chamber.

CONTROL ROOMS

Each control room is functionally identical to the other, the only difference being which chamber it controls. They both look like typical high-tech control rooms with numerous computer terminals, large display screens, and control panels. The terminals are locked and require a +4 (E) computer skill test to unlock. Once unlocked, characters can use the terminals to learn what the chambers are used for and how they can be reconfigured. They can also download detailed schematics of this level on a gadget or computer. The schematics are approximately 10 terabytes in size. They are worth 10 loot points. Studying the schematics in detail takes 6 hours of time and will reveal the possibility of a secret escape route to level 1.

Inventory: Schematics (unique, see room description), Tech Documentation x1

LEVEL 5

Not all of Biomancer's tests subjects died on the operating table or in test chambers, so Biomancer built a level to house them. This level can house hundreds of test subjects at any given time and not just cloned beings from level 2. Some test subjects were insane, violent, or rebellious so Biomancer could not give them to roam the base. Biomancer was not averse to kidnapping individuals from the outside world if it was necessary for an important experiment. While some subjects were trained and given jobs by Biomancer,

others were treated like prisoners. Thus, half the level is designed as a prison and the other half as a dormitory. There is also a small cryogenic storage facility, where extremely dangerous or unstable test subjects are kept frozen. Death Token is one of them. This level has an extensive life support system that creates food, recycles water, and maintains the atmosphere for the entire base.

Because Biomancer built many satellite bases scattered around the world, he found he needed a group of loyal assistants to manage them and perform whatever missions necessary to keep those bases secret and functional. However, he did not trust them enough to let them remain autonomous. He created a system where the servants would make their home in the barracks on this level and 'commute to work' by using the teleporter on level 2.

Every day, dozens of clones and genetically engineered beings would travel from level 5 to level 2, teleport to secret bases around the world, work for 12 hours and then teleport back for sleep and food. When Ragnarok happened, Biomancer's servants were trapped either in the Zombie Factory or at whatever satellite base they were working in. During emergencies, the Security AI closes the Zombie Factory and only Biomancer can unlock it. The servants kept different schedules so none of them know exactly who is still in the base.

Level 5A has a cold fusion reactor was built in a shielded chamber slightly below level 5. It will run another 83 years before it powers down harmlessly, assuming no one interferes with it. A person at the reactor's control panel can set it to self-destruct. See its room description for more details.

Biomancer created a secret failsafe system in case his servants rebelled or the prisoners attempted a mass escape. Level 5 can be sealed and flooded with nerve gas. It only takes 1 minute for the gas to spread. All exists are blocked with reinforced doors, which require a +4 (E) skill test to destroy. The Security AI will initiate a nerve gas attack if all of the prisoners attempt to escape. This feature is hidden from the base schematics. Only the Security AI is aware of this trap.

Nerve Gas - Extraordinary Tier
Strike + Unusual, Zone
Snag, Minor: Gas must be inhaled.

Special Rules: Treat the gas as a zone wide attack, which attacks with a +4 bonus every round. It is resisted with Endurance or a skill with the resist damage trapping. A character who is taken out by nerve gas dies. Characters who hold their breath can temporarily avoid damage, but they must breathe sooner or later.

Level 5 Rooms
BARRACKS

There are 12 main structures in the barracks, each of which contained everything a servant would need. Each structure was divided into 2 apartments. Each apartment had a bathroom and a limited cornucopia machine, which could produce food, water, and necessities like clothing, soap, and other similar items. A simple computer terminal in each apartment was loaded with a library of popular entertainment so the servants would not get bored in their off hours. Each apartment is unlocked, but there still may be people living there when the player characters arrive. See The Zombie Factory In Your Game on page 248.

Inventory: Base Components x2 per apartment - 48x for the entire barracks.

SECURITY CHECKPOINT

Biomancer was worried about the possibility of prisoners escaping or damaging subjects in cryogenic storage, so he built 2 security check points to prevent them from escaping. Each checkpoint has a permanent garrison of 6 security drones. The doors are +4 (S) to destroy.

The drones are also programmed to take care of the prisoners and subjects in cryogenic storage. Each checkpoint has a fabricator that produces a nutritious gruel and water, which is served daily to prisoners. The drones can perform simple maintenance on the cyrogenic tubes.

The security checkpoints each have a sentry turret (see page 231), an electrified floor (page 236) , and a dual gas dispenser. The gas dispenser can flood the checkpoint with a nerve gas or sedative gas (page 236). The Security AI chooses which gas to use on attackers. It prefers to capture intruders, but it will not
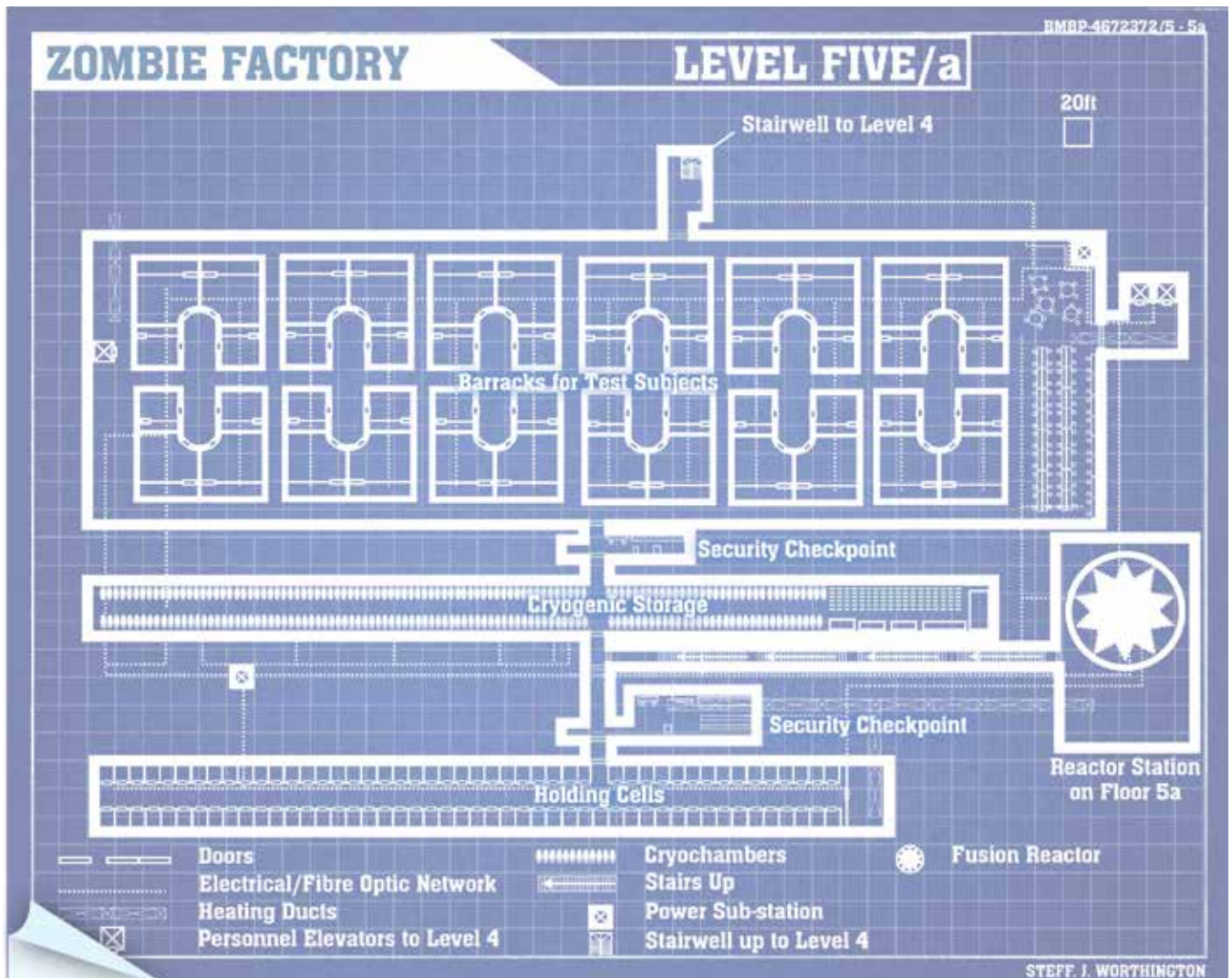
hesitate to kill dangerous intruders.

Game on page 248.

HOLDING CELLS

Biomancer seldom had more than a dozen prisoners at any given time, but he wanted the ability to hold many captives at once, so he built quite a few holding cells. Each door is reinforced, which requires a +4 (S) skill test to break down. Each cell has a small cot, a toilet, and a sink. Biomancer installed view screens that displayed popular TV shows in some cells, in case he did not want a prisoner to go insane from boredom. Each cell is soundproof as well. Robot security drones feed the prisoners on a daily basis through a slot in the door. The slot can only be opened from the outside. The number of prisoners currently depends on the needs of your game. See The Zombie Factory In Your

CRYOGENIC STORAGE

Biomancer kept a reserve of loyal servants and interesting test subjects in cryogenic storage. This chamber is fairly cold, but the tubes are well-insulated, so the room is not kept at freezing temperatures. The tubes keep any living creature inside them in suspended animation indefinitely and keep dead organic tissue preserved. Security drones from the checkpoints maintain the cryogenic storage and can be commanded by the Security AI to awaken any creature kept in a tube.

The tubes require a +3 (E) technology or computer skill test to use. Waking a creature takes 2 minutes normally, but a character can make a +4 (E) endurance skill test to wake up in 1 turn. Breaking open a tube re-

quires a +4 (E) skill test. Damaging a tube will inflict an attack of equal strength on the inhabitant of the tube.

The identities of the subjects inside the tubes are stored in the memory banks of the security drones on this level. The Security AI also knows who is stored in this room. Characters who hack the drones or Security AI can access this info.

REACTOR STATION

A cold fusion reactor was built in a shielded chamber below level 5. It is heavily shielded and completely automated. It will run another 83 years before it powers down harmlessly, assuming no one interferes with it. Only the Security AI can open the vault doors to the station, though they can be destroyed with a +4 (S) skill test or attack.

The reactor can be set to self-destruct, which will destroy and irradiate the entire base, except for the Primordial Engine, but it would remain buried under tons of radioactive rubble so it would be hard to remove. Anyone within 1 mile of the Zombie Factory when the reactor blows up will suffer a +6 (S) attack from the radiation and shockwave. Biomancer created this measure in case he needed to remove all evidence of his secret experiments. It can only be manually triggered at the reactor station and it takes a +4 (E) technology or computer skill test to activate the self-destruct countdown, which can be set from 10 minutes to 24 hours. Stopping the self-destruct countdown requires a +4 (E) technology or computer skill test.

THE ZOMBIE FACTORY IN YOUR GAME

The Zombie Factory is not simply an adventure for your Base Raiders campaign. It is a setting to mold into whatever shape you need it to be for your campaign. It can be used as a one shot dungeon crawl or the centerpiece of a campaign. It is structured so it can easily be modified to suit the purposes of your campaign. While the core architecture, traps, robots, and features are described, the inhabitants and condition of the base and its purpose in your campaign are left up to you. You can just as easily start or end a campaign with the Zombie Factory.

Inhabitants

Any adventure set in the Zombie Factory will be primarily affected by who the player characters encounter inside it. A dungeon crawl filled with 5 levels of robots and undead clones is an extremely different scenario than a lab with a few cloned test subjects trying to escape. The Zombie Factory can have many potential inhabitants, who would affect the condition of the base and react to base raiders in different ways.

NO ONE

It's entirely possible that the Zombie Factory is empty. Most of the servants could have been at the satellite bases, locked out. The Security AI then could have used nerve gas and the security robots to kill everyone else in the base. An empty base will likely be in pristine condition, although grim reminders of the dead, like blood stains, might be found. Keeping the base empty is useful if you want to make it a base for the player characters or focus on a mystery, such as figuring out how to use the Primordial Engine.

DEATH TOKEN

There is only 1 canonical inhabitant of the Zombie Factory: Death Token, the villain described on page 200. However, if you do not wish to use Death Token in your game, place him inside a cryogenic tube on level 5. Otherwise, he would have been kept in a prison cell. Biomancer would never trust him enough to give him any freedom. However, given his superpowers, he could have reanimated the corpse of a nearby clone and ordered it to free him. Once free, Death Token would have scoured the base, looking for other living creatures to kill and reanimate as undead slaves.

Death Token lacks the intelligence to hack the teleporter, so he is unable to escape the Zombie Factory. His servants can't hack the teleporter either. He's trying to escape the Zombie Factory, but doesn't know how. If a group of base raiders shows up, he'll try to capture them or make a deal with them - the contents of the base in exchange for his freedom. Freeing him is a

lot easier than fighting him, but unleashing a powerful villain like him could result in the deaths of thousands.

TEST SUBJECTS

Biomancer preferred to use adult human clones as experimental test subjects. They were typically given the false memories of a random American citizen and then thrown into the test chamber. Test subjects seldom lived more than a week, as they were used to test everything from new viruses spawned from the Primordial Engine to alien cybernetic implants. Few, if any, ever escaped from Biomancer's clutches.

Most test subjects were kept in holding cells or cryogenic tubes when they were not in the test chamber on level 4. A few were given more access to the base, especially if they could perform useful tasks. Given that most test subjects are clones of normal humans and have limited skills, they would have difficulty overcoming any of the base's security features. As far as the

average test subject knows, they are normal people trapped in a madman's prison, waiting to be tortured or dissected for unknown reasons. They live a nightmare beyond imagining.

SERVANTS OF BIOMANCER

The servants of Biomancer were usually cloned scientists and engineers who performed experiments on level 4 or operated the satellite bases scattered throughout the world. Others were genetically engineered creatures designed as guards, spies, or assassins. Some were left trapped in the satellite bases around the world, but it is possible some still remain in the Zombie Factory. They have access to some parts of the base and can break some of the security features through hacking or brute force.

Biomancer feared rebellions, so he would purge the ranks occasionally by placing some in cryogenic storage or killing them so they could be replaced with

fresh servants. They were also considered expendable, so workplace accidents were rather common. Many servants were infected with one of several diseases which were treatable with medicine that could only be manufactured at the Zombie Factory. Typically, Biomancer would program a fabricator to create one dose of medication per day to be dispensed at the servant's apartment in the barracks. Even if the infected servant escaped, they would inevitably die. Through these methods, Biomancer ensured his creations would not rise up against him.

Base raiders could encounter trapped monsters or scientists who used to work for Biomancer. It's possible some remain loyal to their creator, but others would be desperate to escape. Some ex-servants would try to kill or betray any base raiders they met in order to escape, while others would try to negotiate or beg for assistance.

Servants infected with diseases could not leave, because they need medicine that can only be made at the Zombie Factory. Curing an infected servant of Biomancer would take months of research, because Biomancer tended to create entirely new pathogens instead of using known diseases.

Ex-servants would make excellent allies or dangerous enemies in the Zombie Factory. They know how the base works and have limited access to cutting edge technology. They could lure raiders into the test chamber and expose them to deadly viruses or pit them against monsters spawned from the Primordial Engine. On the other hand, they could explain Biomancer's research or reveal cures for common diseases.

CREATIONS OF THE PRIMORDIAL ENGINE

Biomancer spawned many unique beings with the Primordial Engine. He created superhumans, chimerical blends of various species of animals, human-alien hybrids, and creatures of nightmare. While most of these creations were short lived, Biomancer saved some in cryogenic storage. Others might be placed in holding cells, especially if he wanted to experiment on them soon. Obviously, one or more of these creatures could have escaped from the prison, but still be trapped in the Zombie Factory. Virtually any kind of organic creature could be found inside the base because of the Primordial Engine.

PRISONERS

While Biomancer did not capture celebrities, people who would be missed by the Ideal, or powerful villains, he was fond of using normal humans as test subjects. He also used captured aliens, mutants, and magical beings when his agents could find and contain them. Nearly anyone could be a prisoner in the Zombie Factory although Biomancer never captured inorganic beings because he could not experiment on them. Only Biomancer knew how many kidnapped test subjects met their end in the Zombie Factory, but some might remain in the holding cells.

Superpowered prisoners are either kept in cryogenic storage or had their powers nullified through a virus tailored for that specific individual. The cure for any power-nullifying virus would be stored in the archive on level 3. Characters who have access to the archive could synthesize a cure with an appropriate skill test.

The prisoners might be innocent civilians, but they could also be inhuman aliens or magical beings disguised as humans, or even violent criminals waiting to be freed. Some might have been freed by the remaining servants of Biomancer and roam the base freely. Rescuing prisoners is noble, but Biomancer captured villains as well as civilians.

Player characters will have to be careful when they release prisoners, especially if they claim to have superpowers. Biomancer was reluctant to kidnap superheroes because he did not want the Ideal to investigate their disappearance.

TRAPPED BASE RAIDERS

It is possible that the player characters are not the first team to enter the base since Ragnarok. All of the satellite bases have teleporters linked to the teleporter room on level 2. Any number of base raiders could have teleported into the Zombie Factory through that method. Once inside, they would probably be captured and placed in the holding cells or cryogenic storage. Some might have escaped the ambush in the teleporter room and wander the base, desperate to survive and escape. Fellow base raiders could be useful, but

desperation makes them potentially dangerous as well.

Condition of the Base

Anything could have happened to the Zombie Factory in the year after Ragnarok. The inhabitants could have gone to war, banded together, or died at the hands of the Security AI's traps and robots. By the time the player characters get there, there could be nothing left.

ABATTOIR

If Death Token or another powerful and evil creature was loosed upon the Zombie Factory, then the base would become a blood soaked abattoir. Trapped in a base, a violent and evil superpowered being would inevitably vent its rage at the other inhabitants of the base. Sooner or later, the monster would find every other inhabitant of the base and torture and kill them. The monster might keep some inhabitants alive, so it could continue to torture them.

When the base raiders enter the Zombie Factory, they would find signs of violence everywhere in the

base - blood stains on the walls, bits of flesh on the floor, and any number of other gruesome displays. They might find makeshift barricades in some of the rooms, smashed apart by a powerful force. Eventually, the player characters would encounter the monster and either have to fight it or figure out a way to escape the Zombie Factory before it can catch them.

BATTLEFIELD

If the Zombie Factory had a large number of inhabitants when Biomancer disappeared, they could split into factions and eventually go to war for control. The 5 levels of the base would show signs of the conflict, as each faction carved out their respective territories and defended or expanded borders.

For example, if a large number of cloned scientists and engineers were trapped in the base, they would work together as a group. Death Token would escape from his prison cell and start raising an army of undead slaves. The scientists would claim level 2 as their base, using their knowledge to build weapons and robots in the workshop and spawn more clones to replenish their numbers. Death Token would claim level

5 as his own, killing the other prisoners and subjects in cryogenic storage to maximize the size of his army. The two factions would fight over level 3 and 4, neither willing to risk all of their members on a decisive attack, thus resulting in a stalemate. Only the intervention of the player characters can decide the war's outcome.

Other possible factions in the Zombie Factory could include loyal servants of Biomancer, test subjects, kidnapped civilians or criminals, spawn of the Primordial Engine, rogue AI and security robots, or trapped base raiders. Characters could encounter anything from a multi-faction war with hundreds of fighters to a contest between two hardened survivors. A lot can happen in a year of isolation.

SCIENTIST'S LAB

Many of Biomancer's servants are brilliant scientists and it's certainly possible one of them took over the base in his absence. The new leader of the Zombie Factory would have to disable or take over as many of the security features in the main base as possible, perhaps even the teleporter on level 2, but he would not be motivated to leave the Zombie Factory. After all, the base is perfectly equipped to conduct any kind of research imaginable, especially if the scientist had the necessary passcodes and knowledge to use the Primordial Engine.

The motivation of the scientist could be heroic, evil, or insane, but regardless of inclination, no scientist will appreciate uninvited guests in his lab. The only chance the players will have is that the scientist won't have total control over the base. Some systems are harder to hack than others and the Security AI can be an unlikely ally if the characters want to end the scientist's reign.

Once the scientist is defeated, the characters must decide what to do with the base and its remaining inhabitants. The temptation to use the Zombie Factory may lead them down the same road the scientist was on.

PRISTINE

Perhaps the Zombie Factory remains as Biomancer left it. Some servants might be wandering the halls, trapped but unable or unwilling to do anything to escape. Prisoners are still in their cells, fed by security

robots. The rest are in cryogenic storage. The Security AI still functions and will try to capture any intruders but, without any complications, a competent team of base raiders should be able to overcome the defenses.

DEATH TRAP

One of the inhabitants of the base could have sabotaged the systems of the Zombie Factory, transforming it into a death trap. The cold fusion reactor could start leaking radiation into the base. The life support systems could be rigged to spew lethal nerve gas instead of air. Virulent diseases could be released into the base. A superhumanly strong creation of the Primordial Engine could have collapsed some of the load bearing walls, making the entire base unstable. There are any number of potential scenarios that make the Zombie Factory into a giant death trap, waiting to be triggered.

Purpose

Before you include the Zombie Factory in your campaign, think of how you plan to use it and how the players will enter and leave. Feel free to downplay or make certain features unavailable if you do not wish to include them in your game. For example, the Primordial Engine could be extremely unbalancing if it is not carefully handled. Think of it more as a plot device than a conventional alien artifact. Other features, like the cloning vats or Death Token, do not have to be made available to the players. It is easy to write any single part of the base out by saying one of the inhabitants damaged it before the players arrived.

The following suggestions should give you some ideas on how to use the Zombie Factory.

CENTERPIECE

The Zombie Factory could be the setting for much of your campaign. Once the players find it, perhaps led there by an escaped test subject or servant of Biomancer, they could go through many adventures exploring, looting, and making use of it, possibly even making it their base. Once they've secured the Zombie Factory, they would have to protect it against other

base raiders, find and neutralize all the other satellite bases in the world (to prevent other intruders from teleporting in), and dealing with the Primordial Engine, cloning vats, and monsters kept in cryogenic storage.

FINALE

The players might not see the Zombie Factory until the end of the campaign. Finding the Zombie Factory could be a major quest, taking many adventures to complete. Even though all of the satellite bases had teleporters linked to the Zombie Factory, many of them shut down or were looted after Ragnarok. Cautious base raider should try to gather as much information about the Zombie Factory before entering, which requires visiting multiple satellite bases.

Once inside the Zombie Factory, the players should face serious challenges worthy of a campaign finale. Death Token could have an entire army of undead slaves. A mad scientist could threaten the players with elaborate death traps in the Training and Test Chambers. A group of villainous base raiders could already be there, exploiting the trapped inhabitants of the base for nefarious purposes.

ONE SHOT BASE

Instead of making the Zombie Factory an important part of the campaign, it could be used as just another base to raid. This is best done by focusing on a few elements of the base that are most interesting and de-emphasizing the rest.

For example, if you wanted a horrific dungeon crawl in which the players fight their way through the base in order to rescue a civilian kept on level 5, use Death Token and his undead minions as the primary enemies. Make the Primordial Engine an inaccessible mystery by having Death Token destroy the databases on level 3 in a fit of rage so that Biomancer's research data is lost.

The Training and Testing Chambers become gruesome torture sites where Death Token amused himself by pitting hapless clones against mindless zombies. Enslaved cloned scientists are forced to create more clones for the monster to torture and kill, resulting in piles of corpses throughout the base.

Level 5, Death Token's lair, is straight out of a night-

mare. Canvases of human skin are used to create art glorifying the undead overlord. His superpowered zombie minions roam the halls, ready to pounce on intruders. The remaining prisoners huddle in their cells, hoping Death Token doesn't visit them next. The smell of death hangs heavy in the air.

On the other hand, perhaps Biomancer used the Primordial Engine to create a mutant plant that would open portals to other universes. The flower was placed in cryogenic storage, but after Ragnarok, desperate servants brought it out of storage to use as a means of escape. Instead, the plant grew like wild, transforming the base into a bizarre jungle with small dimensional gateways forming and closing at random intervals.

Base raiders who enter the base find it a strange wilderness, where mutated vines have destroyed most of the machinery, and the remaining inhabitants have become feral hunters. The Primordial Engine is worshiped as a god by some tribal clones. The gateways are hard to spot, so it's entirely possible a visitor could stumble in one and find themselves in a new universe, with no means of returning home. Destroying the base before the flower escapes into the wild might be the only solution in this case.

PLOT DEVICE

Instead of making the Zombie Factory a site for an adventure, it can be used as a plot device for your game. Perhaps the players find out about it but don't want to go there. They could trade its location to other base raiders for their help in a mission or something else of great value. The US government could find the base first and seize it, which upsets the balance of power in the world. The base could change hands many times over a campaign, as multiple factions fight over it.

After all, Biomancer had satellite bases everywhere, so it's feasible that corporations, criminal syndicates, and nations could all gain access to the Zombie Factory. Instead of setting the adventure in the base, make the adventure about what should happen to the base. Does it need to be destroyed to prevent villains from misusing it? Should its resources and knowledge be divvied up fairly among various factions? Should its existence be made public, so the prisoners who have been kept there can reclaim their lives, or should it remain a secret?

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Character: _____

Player: _____

BASE RAIDERS

Aspects

Archetype: _____

Background: _____

Conviction: _____

Aspect: _____

Aspect: _____

Aspect: _____

Aspect: _____

Aspect: _____

Stress

Type	Base	From Skills	From Equipment
Health *Armor:*	○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○
Composure *Armor:*	○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○
Reputation *Armor:*	○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○

Skills:

Great (+4):

Good (+3):

Fair (+2):

Average (+1):

Consequences:

Type	Minor (-2 Stress)
	Moderate (-4 Stress)
	Severe (-6 Stress)

Tier Benefits:

Base Refresh: Power -Tier: -Gifts: Adjusted =Refresh:

Gifts:

Unique and Strange Skills:

The Five Questions

Life Before Ragnarok:

Origin Story:

Joining The Movement:

Darkest Moment:

Crossover Adventure:

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BECOME A HERO

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