# ABERRANT

**AWAKEN THE POWER WITHIN**

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### Novas and the World

### Novas Defined

## From N! documentary
*Reaching the Stars:
A Decade of Novas*,
first aired March 23, 2008

We had the chance to sit down and talk with Randel Portman, "The Fireman," in an exclusive N! interview. We discussed what it was like being a nova, how the world has changed since novas' arrival and what the future holds.

• **N!:** So, Mr. Portman, what is it like to be the first known nova?

• **Portman:** It is a distinct honor. Actually it's just luck, really. Fate decided that I would erupt in a very public circumstance, and I was lucky enough to save lives with my powers. In general, being a nova is a wonderful thing, although we are simply people with special abilities. Sure, those powers can make us seem weird or unapproachable, but really novas are just people.

• **N!:** You may be understating the case a bit. Experts postulate that, in fact, novas can theoretically do just about anything.

• **Portman:** Theory always sounds better than fact. Novas' powers stem from our ability to manipulate the fundamental forces of nature: gravity, electromagnetism, the strong nuclear force and the weak one. Assuming a nova had no limits in manipulating those forces, then he would effectively be God. Speaking practically, we all have our limits. The Project scientists tell me a lot has to do with how an individual nova sees his abilities and how they emerged.

• **N!:** You emerged — erupted, as the saying goes — spectacularly, saving a school bus full of children. How did that shape your abilities?

• **Portman:** I was a fireman — which is how I got the nickname, naturally. We were responding to a traffic accident. When we got to the scene, all I could see was the outline of a school bus in the flames. Fire was coming out of every possible opening in the thing. It was awful. I heard all the kids screaming, and I just sort of froze. I could feel something happening, but putting out the fire was all I could think of. All of a sudden, I felt like my head was hit by a sledgehammer, and then all I remembered was seeing a huge gout of flame coming right toward me. The next thing I know, I'm kneeling in a puddle of melted asphalt. At the time, I didn't even think to wonder why I wasn't hurt. I couldn't see any more flames, and the guys were all standing around me shouting. The rest of it was a blur of sirens and people I didn't know asking me questions I could barely understand. That sledgehammer headache lasted for almost a week after.

The Project docs told me, later, that novas typically emerge during a time of great stress, and their powers reflect that initial situation. So, I can absorb energy, but I've started learning to redirect it only recently.

We aren't all-powerful. Hell, I can't even fly. What kind of superguy can't fly?

• **N!:** How have your quantum powers grown, and how did you learn them?

• **Portman:** The fire-eating thing — "radiant energy absorption," the docs call it — came, well, naturally. I just *knew* how to do it. Within a few weeks after the first novas appeared, the Æon Society contacted a lot of us to help us gain better control of our powers. They were setting up Project Utopia, and had already recruited some amazingly smart novas who figured a lot out about our abilities. I spent close to two years there, on and off. You learn various meditation techniques, and go through constant tests and challenges to use your powers in new and different ways. A nova's abilities really are in your mind. You have to convince yourself that you can do something new, and you have to make it an expansion of something you can do already. We even got a crash course in quantum physics, so we would better understand what we were really doing.

• **N!:** What's your take on the recent criticism of Project Utopia? Some people are calling it a conspiracy to take over the world, others are claiming that it wants to create a socialist world government. How do you respond to those claims?

• **Portman:** I don't think that's the case at all. Project Utopia has done great things for everyone on this planet, from the global environmental cleanup to the Palestinian peace agreements to the Ethiopian terraforming project to fighting international terrorism… hell, even the Zurich Accord, that made the world accept novas as people. It shocked people when Project Utopia got an advisory position on the UN Security Council, but as closely as they'd been working with the UN, it shouldn't have surprised anyone. I love my country as much as the next guy — or the next nova — but the recent talk of Utopia being a huge conspiracy comes from a few right-wing nutcases with bad attitudes. Nothing more.
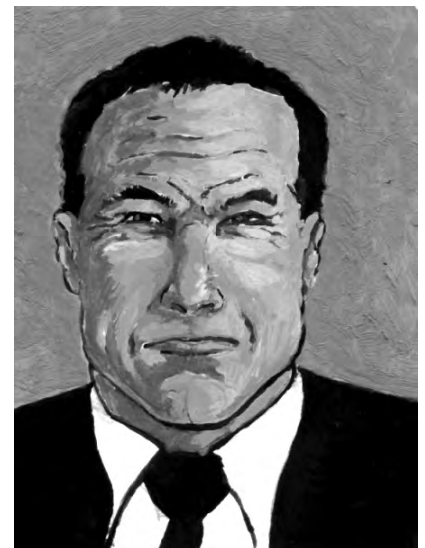
Most of us novas would have been lost without Project Utopia. An erupting nova can be dangerous, whether he means to be or not. At any rate, the process is *painful* — you have that M–R node *growing* in your brain. Hurts like hell, let me tell you. Project Utopia intervention teams are dispatched to offer help and training in those situations. They also offer novas a life and a chance to help society and the world. You remember 1998: People went apeshi— err, wacko when they found out "superpowered mutant freaks" were running around. Project Utopia directed our energies toward helping the world. that, people would never have accepted us, and you and I wouldn't be talking right now.

• **N!:** The world has certainly changed in the last 10 years. Do you think it has all been for the better?

• **Portman:** I don't think anything is that black and white, but the world is definitely a better place. Like I said, the environment is clean, worldwide organized crime is on its way out, Utopia's colleagues at Triton have discovered a vaccine for AIDS and cures for many types of cancer and we are even beginning to seriously explore the solar system. Yeah, I think the world is a better place after the arrival of novas. Don't get me wrong, I don't think that such advances wouldn't have happened without novas. Novas have not just worked toward making the world a better place, but have inspired the rest of humanity to do more. We've changed culture, fashion, politics, even religion in some cases. I mean, isn't this network the highest-rated in the world?

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• **N!:** You mentioned the Triton Foundation. Medical and biological science have made prodigious advances in the last decade. What do you think about the recent work on the origins and distinctions of nova biology?

• **Portman:** Everyone knows that novas, or *Homo sapiens novus* as the eggheads refer to us, are what we are because of DNA coding that allows us to develop the structure in the brain called the Mazarin–Rashoud node. Who would have thought that something so small could change us that much? As far as genetics, it's not really my field. They're saying that novas have a certain sequence of DNA introns or something which is responsible for M–R node development. They also say that the DNA can be inherited only from your mother. The docs know better than me; I just know what they tell me.
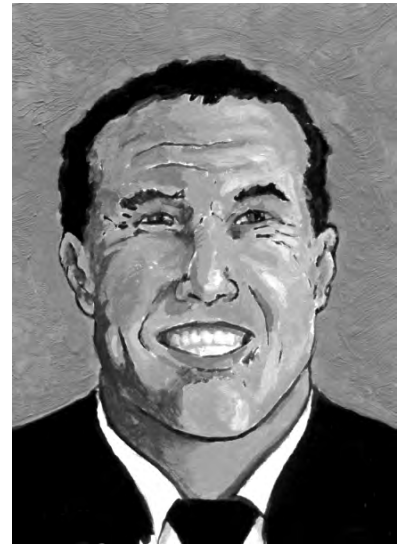
I hear that there are over 6000 known novas in the world, now, from all backgrounds and from around the world. We all look different, although with little body fat and great physiques. They say that it comes from our increased metabolism, from forcing the body to channel so much energy. We also eat like pigs. Hell, I had two steaks and three baked potatoes for dinner last night, but I can also absorb enough energy to turn just about anything into ash. I guess it's the trade-off. Some of us also display what been labeled an "anima." Many novas have a distinct field around them when they use their powers. I guess you've seen the footage — I look like I'm covered in transparent flames when I absorb energy. I've seen weirder displays. I'm just glad that some of the research has helped with problems like cancer. I haven't had a cold in 10 years, and if a blood sample can keep everyone else from having one, all the better.

• **N!:** Not all novas, especially some who have spoken out recently, have taken such a philanthropic position. How do you respond to Divis Mal's melodramatically dubbed Null Manifesto and organizations like his Teragen?

• **Portman:** I don't know much about this Mal fellow, but I don't like what I've heard. Isn't he the guy who says that we aren't human? Of *course* I'm human! I can just do things some people can't. He says we're all governments of our own, and that the laws and rules of humans don't apply to us. If he really believes that, and it's not just a publicity stunt or ratings gimmick, then I'd say he's a megalomaniac. His mom should have spanked him more often. I wish he'd just mouthed off on *Two Minutes Hate*, like the rest of the bored wackos, and left it at that.

The Teragen? They give all novas a bad name. I can't wait until the Utopians or the UN or someone gets a hold of them. I don't care how popular or "cool" some folks think the Teragen is, it's nothing but a gang of thugs, the Manson Family with superpowers. They've killed people, destroyed property, intervened in wars — and they say they are acting for the good of all novas? They are no better than Mal. In fact, they're worse. At least Mal just mouthed off. These guys are wreaking havoc. They're the ones who are putting this smear-campaign crap on the Project.

• **N!:** Does the future look bright?

• **Portman:** I think so. We've had problems and bad apples, of course, but all in all, novas have done a lot to make the world a better place. Guys like Mal will always pop up, but they'll get their due. I think the next 10 years will be even better than the last. I really believe that the 21st century is the dawn of a golden age for mankind.

# N! the news



## The *Galatea* Explosion

**From Ultimate Media's
"Reliving N-Day" audio collage**

"…In the wake of the *Galatea* explosion, freak accidents and catastrophes are erupting all around the world…"

"…earthquake, at least 4.0 on the Richter scale, rocked Denver…"

"…series of explosions on the streets of New York City, including one threatening a school bus…"

"…United States government has declared a state of Defcon 3…"

"…India is blaming a Pakistani attack for the sudden flood of the Ganges, which has washed away…"

"…teenager was unable to be rushed to the hospital, remaining electrically charged for 20 minutes, despite paramedics' attempts to ground out the electrical charge…"

"…mass suicide of a California religious commune, which detectives are attributing to a millennial death pact…"

## March 23, 1998

Of all the days to change the world forever, why the hell did God have to pick a fucking Monday?

— Dr. Duke Rollo, post-gonzo journalist

**From the final broadcast of *Galatea*, 03/23/98**

• **Galatea:** …Command, we're having some sort of difficulties on board.

• **NASA:** Say again. What kind of difficulties?

• **Galatea:** Lights aren't functioning properly… diagnostic seems to indicate some sort of…

• **NASA:** Come in, *Galatea*. Can you hear us?

• **Galatea:** Yes…the signs are…

• **NASA:** *Galatea*, do you read us?

• **Galatea:** We read you, Command. This isn't… Command, system failure seems to indicate core shielding breach. We…

• **NASA:** Dear God. Hold on, *Galatea*. Are you sure that—

• **Galatea:** Jesus… Command, we're gonna… Please, tell our kids…

[Signal ends]

# N the news

Excerpt from
*Reaching
the Stars:
A Decade
of Novas*

• **Chantal D'Aurelion:** "The explosion of *Galatea*, tragic though it was, was just the first step in that long series of dramatic events that marked the birth of the Nova Age. The first eruptions of novas took the world by surprise, but in America, one particular event stands out. We found an eyewitness to that first dramatic eruption — and what a story it is."

• **Doreen Maxwell [voiceover as "dramatic re-creation" footage rolls]:** "Lord, I'll never forget it. The TVs in the store windows had just started up with the news breaks talking about the *Galatea*. I can remember the *Challenger* explosion, and I was just thinking 'Oh my God, not again — not another crew of astronauts lost,' and that's when I heard this screeching behind me. I turned around, and there was this school bus all smashing across the median and slamming into cars. Fire was coming out of the windows and everything, and the driver actually shot up out of the roof into the air. I don't remember seeing him come down.

"The flames was getting bigger, starting to shoot all over the place, and we could see that the kids couldn't get out. I was screaming for somebody to do something when the fire truck got on the scene. The firemen started moving people back out of the way, trying to get there, and the poor kids was just screaming, and that's when it happened.

"The fire just shot up and out of the windows and twisted up together like a braid, and then it *shot* down at this one fireman and hit him right square in the chest. His helmet blew off and he took a couple of steps back, but he didn't fall over. And that fire just kept on shooting up out of the bus and pouring into him until the bus didn't have any fire in it left at all. And the fireman, he was down on one knee, holding his head, and he looked like he was on fire — but I looked twice, and the fire just soaked on up into his body like he was a sponge, and the asphalt around him was turning all red, and I swear he sank down into the *melted* road!

"Well, things kept on getting crazy after that. The police arrived and started shooing us all back, and I heard about the rest on TV — how this sort of thing was going on all over the place, with earth-quakes, explosions, freak thunderstorms and all that, and the government all going to Defcon 'cause they thought it was some kind of attack — but the news finally told us that the fireman was all right, and soon after that, we started finding out about all these people with powers.

"But when people ask me, 'Where were you when the *Galatea* exploded?', I can look them in the eye and say, 'I was on the street where the Fireman erupted.' Ain't too many people can say that."

**Journal entry, Dr. Phylicia Cassant; February 2, 1999**

The public is now fully convinced that the *Galatea* disaster is the link. A payload of radioactive isotopes, detonated in a spectacular explosion and spread via jetstream to every corner of the globe: The image has certainly caught on with the common man. "Radioactivity breeds mutation" — that's all the explanation most people seem to need.

I have to wonder, however, if the isotopes weren't somehow charged with refined "quantum energy" during the process. Nothing in modern science explains how such a thing was possible — but then again, modern science is skating by with the barest excuses for how aberrant powers function, anyway. It seems more plausible to me that the genetic coding for the M–R node would be stimulated by focused quantum than by outright radiation; however, there's no way to test this theory. Quantum is notorious for not remaining in the background long in concentrated quantities; short of having an already-manifested aberrant there at the time, I suppose there's no way we could ever have known for certain. Which is a damn shame, because otherwise, this conundrum may very well haunt me to my grave.

I wonder: Since the most common source of focused quantum appears to be aberrant powers, is it possible that some mutant actually manifested a functioning M–R node *before* the loss of *Galatea*? Is it possible that one of the men and women aboard was the first aberrant, and that he or she somehow engineered the explosion to create others like himself or herself? If so, then logically this aberrant would still survive; why sacrifice yourself, after all? The question is — where is he?

Must look into this further, preferably by enlisting an aberrant with enhanced reasoning capacities. Are the rumors of psychometric powers true? Whatever the case, I'd better keep this to myself; no need to endanger my current position by earning a reputation as a crank conspiracy theorist. I can collect the Nobel after I've gotten proof.

# Timeline

## 1998

**March 23, 12:18 PM GST:** *Galatea* research satellite explodes. Its rapidly decaying orbit dumps radioactive material into the jetstream. In a matter of days, increasing radiation levels are reported worldwide.



**March 23, 3:31 PM EST:** Randel Portman becomes the first publicly known nova. "The Fireman," as the media later dub Portman, emerges during a school-bus fire in New York. His nascent powers absorb the energy from the fire, putting it out and saving dozens of lives.



**March–April:** Novas emerge worldwide on an almost daily basis. Governments scramble to deal with the phenomenon. International relations become tense, with the United States going to Defcon 3. Other nations respond in kind. Emergency sessions of the United Nations (UN) are called. First usage of the term "nova" by the press, in response to scientists' unofficial categorization of the newly erupted as *Homo sapiens novus*.

**April 12:** The Æon Society, an international philanthropic organization dating back to the League of Nations, initiates a dialog with the UN, offering to seek out and study novas.



**May 1:** The Æon Society announces its UN support and issues an invitation to open dialog with any interested novas. Meanwhile, the UN uses its influence to calm and reassure the world that Æon is best-suited to handle the nova outbreak.



**June 30:** The UN passes the Zurich Accord, a document declaring novas to be human beings, with all the rights and responsibilities thereof. A few fundamentalist Islamic nations and dictatorial regimes, all countries with poor human-rights records, protest the resolution.

**August 13:** Project Utopia, a multipurpose private foundation, is formed under the guidance of both the UN and the Æon Society. Project Utopia's stated goals are to study the nova phenomenon and utilize novas' abilities to better the quality of life on Earth for all its inhabitants. Membership and training are open to all interested novas, under the direction of Drs. Henri Mazarin and Farah Rashoud.



**October:** First use of the term "baseline" to refer to humans without an M–R node.

**December 4:** Dr. Henri Mazarin and Dr. Farah Rashoud announce the discovery of a unique structure found in the brain of novas. The Mazarin–Rashoud, or M–R, node is believed to be the root of a nova's abilities. Novas dubbed subspecies *Homo sapiens novus*. An independent pharmaceutical research facility, the Triton Foundation, provides funding for Mazarin and Rashoud's research, and much other nova research over the next decade. A nova's powers are theorized to derive from manipulation of the basic forces of the universe, also known as the quantum forces: gravity, electromagnetism, weak nuclear force and strong nuclear force. The M–R node allows the nova some degree of channeling and control over the quantum forces.



**December 31:** Æon Society census reports approximately 600 known novas in the world population.

Inspired by the coming of the novas and fueled by millennialist anxiety, various apocalyptic and transcendentalist religious sects arise throughout 1998. Many of these groups see novas as the chosen of God or the ultimate development of humanity. The most notable of these is The Church of the Immanent Escheaton, founded by a charismatic nova styling himself Chrystian Kalpa. The Vatican does not release an official statement of position on the status of novas. Protestant sects and Judaism release statements of support for novas, with wording in line with that of the Zurich Accord. Fundamentalist Islamic sects decry novas as the Devil's children, but increasingly come into conflict with Sunni philosophy exalting novas as the chosen of Allah.

## 1999

**January 1:** In a media spectacle attended by former President Carter and the UN Secretary-General, Project Utopia introduces its "Team Tomorrow," a group of novas from around the world organized to implement Project Utopia's goals of a better future. Team Tomorrow combats global terrorism, organized crime and natural disasters with the co-operation of law-enforcement agencies worldwide. Utopia's fledgling Science and Technology Department (SciTech) begins working on solutions to famine and environmental crises.



**January 8:** Project Utopia opens the first Rashoud facility in midtown Manhattan. The facility is intended as a place where nascent novas can learn about and explore their powers in a controlled environment. Over the next decade, dozens of other Rashoud facilities open worldwide.

**February 18:** Boris Yeltsin dies, setting off a breakdown of the Russian government. The chaos leads to Russia's total economic collapse. Russia's financial woes spread through already weakened world markets, and cause the world's worst one-day market losses ever. "The Moscow Crash," as it is later termed, plunges the world into a massive recession.

**February 19:** The World Bank responds to the Moscow Crash by calling for temporary freezes on all international loan payments. International currency markets close for the week due to pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Wall Street and other world trading centers close trading voluntarily for the rest of the week to allow a thorough assessment of the situation, and to allow the panic to calm. Many governments, including the US and the rest of the G7 nations, implement emergency price controls on consumer goods.

**March 1:** Project Utopia announces that its nova-employing research department is working on a solution to the economic crisis. It also offers the services of novas associated with Utopia to the UN, and any government that asks, for relief work. The news leads to a slight upswing in world markets.

**April 7:** Microsoft becomes the first private company to employ a nova for public relations and research. Mungu Kuwasha is hired for his ability to interface with computer systems.

**April 30:** World unemployment rates quadruple in only two months. Philanthropic organizations worldwide follow the Æon Society's lead in offering relief assistance. Project Utopia novas help with distribution of perishable supplies, creating the most efficient relief effort in history. Governments enlist nova aid in quelling food riots. Some novas use their abilities to keep basic utilities, such as water and electricity, flowing in areas where they would otherwise be inaccessible.



**June 2:** The IMF announces its inability to ameliorate the global financial crisis. The Japanese take the news especially poorly. The Nikkei Index loses 50% of its value overnight. Tokyo newspapers report over 2,000 suicides that night alone.

**June 5:** Acting on the advice of Project Utopia nova prognosticators, the UN passes a unanimous resolution to freeze exchange rates in the world currency market. The move causes massive inflation in the currency of developing nations, but leads to a gradual strengthening of the industrial powers' economies.

**November 21:** Japan announces *Saisho*, "The New Beginning," a series of government subsidies designed to employ novas in high-tech industries. The Japanese government agrees to pay for companies to hire novas for research and development purposes, in hopes that new technologies will salvage Japan's economy. The project is a rousing success, and within a decade Japan regains its position as the premier developer of new technologies.

**December 2:** Project Utopia's Team Tomorrow announces it will be on call around the world to avert any problems that may come from the Y2K millennium bug. Prime-time television specials aired around the world show novas working with computer designers to prevent the problem, and teams of novas performing disaster-control drills.

**December 31:** Æon Society census reports approximately 1350 known novas in the world population.

Novas continue to erupt throughout the year, despite falling levels of radiation from the *Galatea* explosion.

## 2000

**January 1:** The Year 2000 bug itself proves to be a minor hiccup. However, certain novas — including many with computer- or electrical powers — use the specter of Y2K and the so-called new millennium to indulge in acts of theft, vandalism and terrorism. Power production, airline traffic control, Internet traffic and financial institution computers are the most affected. Utopia-affiliated novas are dispatched to address these problems. Most people notice only that the airlines and banks are shut down for a couple of days, and that Web pages and e-mail have glitches for a few weeks. Y2K becomes Utopia's biggest public-relations windfall since the coming of the novas.

**January 28:** The Triton Foundation announces the first successful gene-therapy treatment for breast cancer. By 2006, this treatment, combined with childhood genetic screening, makes breast cancer a thing of the past.

**February 1:** Before the UN General Assembly, Project Utopia announces its intention to perform a worldwide environmental cleanup. The world press applauds the news, and various countries use the cleanup project as a core to create civil works programs to help alleviate the massive unemployment that has plagued them since 1999.

**April 8:** Fidel Castro dies. Cuba spends the following weeks in political turmoil. When the dust clears, a democratically elected president and legislative body take control of the government. Cuba's relations with the rest of the world normalize by July.

**May 31:** The first movie to feature nova actors opens to rave reviews. Steven Spielberg-directed *Nova* is the story of a young man who emerges as a nova, then dedicates his life to righting the wrongs of society. Various famous novas figure prominently in the cast. The movie breaks all previous sales records, staying in the top spot throughout the summer. *Nova* goes on to sweep the Academy Awards, winning a record 18 Oscars.

**July 15:** Second-quarter financial reports indicate worldwide economic improvement. The upswing marks the beginning of the largest sustained period of economic growth and prosperity in world history. The UN drops its freeze of the currency markets, and most nations of Western and Central Europe agree to the adoption of the euro currency, linking much of Europe into one economic entity. The United Kingdom declines entry into the European Union.

**September 6:** Project Utopia announces that it has closed the hole in the ozone layer and introduced CFC-eating bacteria into the atmosphere to prevent continued damage. Project Utopia requests that all UN member states transport toxic and radioactive waste to a collection facility in Siberia for future disposal.

**November 3:** Robert Schroer, a moderate Republican representative from Colorado, is elected President of the United States. Schroer begins the Republican nomination process as a virtual unknown; his platform calls for continued economic reform and a return to so-called "common-sense" values. He wins a narrow victory in the general election over Al Gore, in which the Reform and Libertarian candidates also take sizable proportions of the vote. Following Schroer's win in the primaries, and escalating with his election, many of the Republican Party's far-right elements divorce themselves from the party to found splinter groups more appealing to their agendas.

**December 31:** With the Y2K problem and millennialist anxiety distant memories, the press recognizes 2001 as the actual beginning of the new millennium. This announcement inspires the largest New Year's celebrations in memory. Festivities include nova-produced energy releases in orbit that are visible around the world.

Æon Society census reports approximately 1800 known novas in the world population.

# 2001

**January 24:** Project Utopia-mediated negotiations open between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization. The peace talks end with the signing of the London Peace Accord, which establishes a Palestinian state along the border of Israel and Egypt. Project Utopia agrees to monitor the border as part of the Accord, although Israel is rumored to have almost a dozen novas under its direct control.

**March 18:** Project Utopia announces that bioremedial bacteria introduced in the world's oceans, along with a large amount of physical cleanup, will restore the water quality of the world's oceans to pre-Industrial Revolution levels by 2006.

**March 29:** The Russian Confederation rises from the political and economic chaos caused by the Moscow Crash of 1999. Russia's downward spiral reverses, albeit slowly, thanks to nova "economic savant" and Minister of the Treasury, Vladimir Sierka. The reorganized Confederation consists of sovereign member states allied for purposes of economic strength and foreign relations. The Confederation has one currency, the ruble, and representatives of each member-state in the Confederation vote on all foreign trade decisions. The Confederation retains its seat on the UN Security Council, but the member states are represented individually in the General Assembly. In effect, the Confederation functions somewhat like a cross between the European Union and the United States of America. Belarus president Andrei Srebrianski is elected the first Confederation president. Although Srebrianski is officially president, rumors continue in the press that Minister Sierka is the true leader of the Confederation.

**May–November:** Brushfire wars sweep through sub-Saharan West Africa, as Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Sudan use nova mercenaries — which the press dubs "elites" — to fight as their proxies. While fewer than a dozen elites die in the conflicts, hundreds of civilians are killed as "collateral damage," and the political borders of Africa are redrawn several times throughout the months of conflict. Team Tomorrow takes peacekeeping actions on behalf of the UN and negotiates a ceasefire. Press coverage of the conflicts becomes the highest-rated television event of the decade to date. Conspiracy theorists claim that the US and other major powers instigated the conflicts so that they could see how effective novas were when used as military operatives.

The so-called Equatorial Wars prompt international negotiations concerning the use of novas in military applications. While the talks are never formalized, the UN and Project Utopia support discussion on the issue. International consensus falls short of banning the use of novas in the military, but it is agreed that novas should not be used against civilian or normal military targets unless in all-out war, due to the unpredictable nature of nova powers. Strategists and academics devise a new school of military deterrent thought based around novas and formalize the idea of limited-scale conflicts fought by nova proxies. General acceptance of this idea, as an economical alternative to certain types of conventional conflicts, leads to world governments contracting large numbers of elites in the following year.

**May 21:** The Triton Foundation announces a gene-therapy treatment for prostate cancer and a genetic screening process that predicts (with 94% accuracy) whether a person will develop any of the common forms of cancer.

**June 10:** Representatives of the United States, the Russian Confederation, the UK and Japan meet in Moscow. They agree to form and sponsor a multinational intelligence agency, which they term the Directive. The Directive's primary mission is to monitor the activities of Project Utopia and the world's growing population of novas.

**August 7:** Anibál Buendia, a nova with the ability to reconfigure his cellular structure, creates the polymer derivative known as eufiber. This material bonds with nova cell structure and can channel and redirect quantum and bioenergies. It becomes the most popular fashion accessory for novas and the wealthy. As a side effect, studies of eufiber enable the development of advanced optic cable technology.

**October:** Project Utopia coordinates with law-enforcement and intelligence agencies from around the world (Interpol, FBI, Scotland Yard, Mossad) to combat organized crime and terrorism.

**December 31:** Æon Society census reports approximately 2100 known novas in the world population.

## 2002

**January 2002–early 2005:** Much of the world's copper and fiber-optic cable communications networks are replaced with advanced optic cable derived from studies of Buendia eufiber and wireless networking. The new hardware, coupled with new data-transfer protocols, is dubbed "OpNet." OpNet replaces the Internet, phone systems and cellular networks, allowing for wireless communications from virtually any location. It boasts an initial 700% increase in data speed over conventional telecommunications technology.

**March 30:** CNN breaks a sex scandal involving US president Schroer. The sordid scandal involves a six-year homosexual affair on the part of the President. Schroer gives a televised address that night and admits to the affair. Even with his immediate response, his approval ratings plummet.

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**August 12:** Project Utopia gives its final report on the state of the environment to the UN General Assembly. Team Tomorrow combines physical cleanup with the introduction of the Zushima macrobe, a genetically engineered self-regulating organism that will regulate further pollution. The environment is in better shape than at any point in the last hundred years, and Project Utopia scientists estimate that a sustainable level of pre-Industrial Revolution air and water quality will be a reality by 2005.

**September 15:** India, China and Pakistan face off over ownership of the Kashmir region. Quick intervention by Team Tomorrow prevents an all-out war, but several conflicts with government-sponsored novas and mercenary elites occur. Kashmir becomes a demilitarized zone under UN and Project Utopia surveillance.

**November 21:** The Viacom and Microsoft corporations announce their merger into an enormous corporate entity to be called ViaSoft.

**December 4:** A subway bombing in Tokyo brings world attention to Kamisama Buddhism, a hybrid of Shinto and Buddhist beliefs that enjoys increasing popularity with Japanese youths. While Kamisama Buddhism professes nonviolence, the media play up the suspects' involvement with the sect. Three young fanatics are charged in the bombing, though the leader of the religion, nova guru Bodhisattva Masato, disavows any knowledge of the attack.

**December 31:** Æon Society census reports approximately 2500 known novas in the world population.

## 2003

**January 1:** The N! channel debuts on cable and satellite systems in 47 countries. A spinoff of the E! network, N! is dedicated to covering the lives and exploits of novas. It features biographies of famous novas, quasi-scientific documentaries on nova abilities and physiology, nova sporting competitions, interviews with novas and nova-related news from around the world. Within three months of its initial airing, N! becomes the highest-rated network ever.

**March 9:** Team Tomorrow stages a dramatic rescue of the space shuttle *Discovery* after a sizable meteor strikes the shuttle, knocking it off course and igniting an oxygen tank. The entire crew survives the rescue. This event marks the point at which governments begin to consider novas for space operations and exploration.

**May 6:** Project Utopia announces plans to terraform the Ethiopian Highlands. The project, a cooperative endeavor between Project Utopia, the UN and the Ethiopian government, marks the first attempt at engineering widespread geographical and environmental changes throughout a region.

**September 25:** A terrorist organization sets off an explosion in Sao Paolo, Brazil, utilizing primitive fusion technology. Over 30 city blocks are leveled; hundreds die. Team Tomorrow Americas supplies humanitarian aid and assists in the criminal investigation. Despite repeated reports of nova involvement in the bombing, no one is charged to date. The Sao Paolo bombing is the most expensive terrorist attack in history, causing an estimated $20 billion in damages.

**October 7:** The Triton Foundation announces the discovery of an AIDS vaccine. The World Health Organization (WHO) declares October 7th "Red Ribbon Day" and, with the help of na-

tional and local health organizations, vaccinates 90% of the world population over the next three months.

**December 10:** Henri Mazarin and Farah Rashoud receive the Nobel Prize in biology for their pioneering research into nova physiology and the discovery of the M–R node.

**December 31:** Æon Society census reports approximately 2800 known novas in the world population.

## 2004

**February 19:** The Triton Foundation announces an advanced gene-therapy treatment that fights most known forms of cancer.

**May 1:** The WHO approves a host of new genetic engineering techniques, many of which were developed in conjunction with the Triton Foundation. Most national food inspection organizations (such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the US) copy this move, marking the first widespread international use of genetic engineering for livestock and crops. World food production increases by 25% over the next two years.

**June 1:** The hypercombustion (HC) engine is released. Designed by nova Tetsuo Yamato, the HC engine is a super-efficient internal combustion engine, suitable for consumer and industrial applications. It boasts a tenfold decrease in fuel consumption while increasing power by a like amount. Certain automobile manufacturers resist its widespread implementation, but efforts by Project Utopia and other organizations wear down opposition. Within the decade, all automotive transportation and fossil-fuel-based electric production use HC engines exclusively.

**June 15:** In the wake of the Sao Paolo bombing, the UN Secretary-General grants Project Utopia's SciTech authority to monitor, approve and regulate new technologies, particularly those derived from the "nova boom." Many member nations and corporations protest this decision vehemently.

**July 24:** The first Summer Olympic games to feature nova-only competitions opens. The nova events include variations on traditional track and field events, and the games become the second-highest-rated sports event of the year.



**September 6:** Project Utopia opens a special Rashoud facility in Bahrain. This facility is designed to assist novas with high levels of quantum buildup, but Utopia is given leeway to confine novas considered in need of therapy by the UN as a whole. The facility's opening is not publicized, nor are the media or public allowed on the facility's grounds, though documentaries of its existence soon flood the OpNet.

**September 30:** The inaugural match of the Xtreme Warfare Federation, XWF, takes place in Madison Square Garden. The XWF is founded in response to increased demand for nova sporting events, and a corresponding loss of interest in traditional sports over the preceding years. The pay-per-view event garners massive ratings and is carried over OpNet. Licensing revenues top the $1 billion mark in a single year. The initial match is the highest-rated television event of 2004.

**November 3:** Lauren Pendleton is elected both the first female and first Libertarian president of the United States. The press credits her stunning victory to voters disgruntled with two sex scandals by two consecutive presidents from both major political parties. The Libertarian Party and various independent candidates claim a sizable portion of legislative seats in the election.

**December 31:** Æon Society census reports approximately 3000 known novas in the world population.

## 2005

**April 2:** Puerto Rico becomes the 51st state of the United States of America.

**April 19:** Team Tomorrow unseats Macedonian dictator Yaroslav Radocani. Radocani came to power with the aid of military loyalists and high-tech weaponry. Following the revelation that Japanese corporations act-

ing in violation of UN norms produced Radocani's weaponry, Utopia's SciTech is granted even greater regulatory latitude in monitoring "potentially dangerous technological advancements."

**June 15:** Pope Benedict XVI issues *Ad Dei Lucem*, a bull declaring that novas, like humans, have immortal souls, are tainted with original sin and can be saved through the grace of Christ.

**October 31:** Divis Mal, a heretofore unknown nova, issues the Null Manifesto in a broadcast emanating from the Azores. The edict counters the Zurich Accords, and claims that novas are "emancipated" from global citizenship and any responsibilities thereof. The provisions of the Null Manifesto state that novas are not human beings and are therefore not subject to human law, boundaries or moral codes, nor may they claim citizenship in any nation established by human beings. Novas may be granted diplomatic privileges by human governments, but they are essentially "governments" unto themselves.



A nova-only dissident group calling itself the Teragen endorses the Null Manifesto and renounces all ties to governmental bodies. Project Utopia comes out in strong public opposition against the Teragen's position. Before a closed UN Security Council meeting, Utopia promises to monitor Teragen activity. Sales of Teragen-specific bootleg merchandise skyrocket, particularly among the First World 18–35 demographic.



**November 7:** The first ever surgical trial of a complete spinal cord recon-

struction is performed. The trial is a glowing success. Funding for the research comes from the Triton Foundation.

**December 31:** Æon Society census reports approximately 3500 known novas in the world population.

## 2006

**May 22:** The Ethiopian government announces the completion of the terraforming project. The Ethiopian Highlands, formerly a dry, flat, desert plain, is now a verdant grassland. The grateful Ethiopian government gives Project Utopia a large headquarters in Addis Ababa. Ethiopia soon becomes the breadbasket of Africa.

**July 5:** Novas declaring themselves "members of the Teragen" assassinate a conservative Tehran mullah. Known Teragen sympathizers disavow the assassins, claiming that the Teragen is neither an organized institution nor has any single agenda. Nonetheless, Project Utopia and the UN take greater pains to monitor known or suspected Teragen novas.

**August 30:** Ongoing tensions in the Kashmir region erupt into a small-scale war. Nova elites representing India, China and Pakistan fight across the region, turning it into a blasted ecological nightmare. Under UN authority, Project Utopia steps in to stop the fighting and arrests several of the novas deemed responsible for the disaster.

**November 5:** A Quebec separatist group based in Montreal claims responsibility for recent terrorist strikes in Ottawa and Toronto. Given the nature of the strikes, Canadian authorities fear the group may be employing a nova elite.

**December 31:** Æon Society census reports approximately 4800 known novas in the world population.

## 2007

**January 1:** Nova astronaut Janos Karagian walks across the lunar surface without artificial life support gear. Plans are made to send nova astronauts to Mars.

**March 1:** The UN promotes a pact banning all nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) weaponry. All member states sign the NBC weapons ban. Military observers claim that while there is a trend toward disarmament, most of the nuclear powers still have stockpiled weapons.

**May-December:** The media reports Teragen attacks of terror and random violence. Although fewer than half a dozen terrorist strikes occur, the media goes into a frenzy.



**August 3:** Project Utopia receives a permanent "advisory" seat on the UN Security Council. Many political observers credit the unprecedented move as stemming from Project Utopia's agreement to pay off the UN debt, totaling $1.6 billion.

**December 31:** Æon Society census reports approximately 6000 known novas in the world population. As of yet, no nova is known to have been impregnated or to have impregnated others, either baseline or nova. Utopia-affiliated scientists vow to study this phenomenon, at the behest of nova would-be parents.

## 2008

**May 13:** Popular Team Tomorrow agent Jennifer "Slider" Landers is killed in Calcutta by parties unknown. The world is shocked at the murder of its "sweetheart."
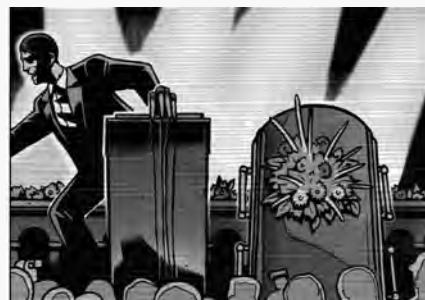


**May 15:** Jennifer Landers' closest friend, controversial ex-T2M nova André Corbin, inexplicably flees the site of her funeral.

**May 16:** UN and Utopia investigations finger Slider's murder as the handiwork of Corbin, who is believed to be linked to the Teragen. This revelation comes as part of a worldwide public broadcast on all major news networks.

**May 19:** Scandal rocks Project Utopia as unconfirmed reports of mercenary novas, government infiltration and nova black ops leak to the media. Project Utopia spokespeople counter with evidence of a Teragen frame-up involving the dead Slider. Wary observers and conspiracy theorists see themselves as vindicated and deluge the media with dire predictions.

**May 30:** Nova Sophia Rousseau contacts fugitive André Corbin. Their underground organization begins contacting friends and acquaintances in the nova community, as well as newly erupting novas. The group's goal is to expose the hidden corruption in Project Utopia, and Corbin dubs its members "aberrants" in an ironic usage of a popular epithet.



**June 2:** In a closed UN Security Council meeting, Utopia's Internal Affairs Department reveals findings indicating a frame-up of the organization. The US and British governments are unconvinced, and Directive surveillance of Utopia's operations is stepped up.

**June 3:** The Teragen meets in council at a hidden retreat. Topics of the meeting include what precisely is going on with the now-weakened Project Utopia, and how to use the group's newfound weakness to dismantle it.

**June 4:** Project Utopia begins two separate internal investigations — one into possible internal corruption, and another to search for remaining allies of Corbin within its ranks.

**June 15:** There are approximately 40 Aberrants worldwide, all either in deep cover or in hiding. To date, neither Corbin nor Rousseau has been brought to justice, and the identity of Slider's assassin remains a mystery.

## Abstract from the Research Project "The Genetic Basis of *Homo sapiens novus*"

Dr. Sarah Lewis, Director of the Brooks L. Miller Center for Biosciences Research, Georgia Institute of Technology

September 13, 2007

Funding provided by the Triton Foundation

In the nine years since the first recorded appearance of novas, many in the scientific community have speculated as to a possible genetic basis for the individuals now classified as *Homo sapiens novus*. The continued emergence of novas, years after the worldwide cleanup of the debris from the *Galatea* explosion, has served only to fuel the controversy.

After five years of research, involving data collected from over 50 novas and the Human Genome Project, I feel confident in saying that *Homo sapiens novus* definitely has a genetic basis. The findings of this project bring into question several long-standing assumptions on human genetics.

Early analysis showed no significant statistic link between *Homo sapiens novus* DNA sequences or chromosomal typing and those of *Homo sapiens*. Without an isolated DNA sequence being responsible for *Homo sapiens novus* development, it led us back to considering environmental causes. A review of the pioneering work of Drs. Mazarin and Rashoud provided the clues to unlocking the mystery of *Homo sapiens novus* genetics.

The Mazarin–Rashoud (M–R) node is key to novas' ability to manipulate quantum energies and forces, and provides the most consistent physiological distinction between *Homo sapiens* and *Homo sapiens novus*. The node itself has an internal structure similar to that of a metaphase-stage mitosis division, the second stage of cellular division, in which the DNA has been condensed into sister chromatids. The nuclear membranes have disappeared, and the chromatids are lined up in the middle of the cell on the spindle fibers, preparing to be drawn to the poles of the cell. Interestingly, the M–R node does not contain DNA itself. In a fashion similar to red blood cells, it relies on other cells to create and expand it.

The similarities between the physical structures of metaphase and those of M–R nodes led to an analysis of the genetic material within currently replicating cells of *Homo sapiens novus*. Extensive analysis and mapping of *Homo sapiens novus* dividing DNA showed that particular sections of DNA sequences were common to all the novas tested.

The common sequences were previously thought to be introns. An intron is nontranscribed DNA sequencing. If every individual base pair in all the DNA in an organism were used to make needed proteins,

the organism would be susceptible to even the slightest genetic mutations. Introns are a kind of blank space in the DNA chain that codes no needed information. In fact, most of the DNA making up a gene are actually introns. As such, their existence means that any particular genetic mutation is statistically much less likely to be fatal to the organism. However, in normal dividing cells, no DNA is being coded, as it is compressed in preparation of division. All novas must have some trigger that codes that DNA immediately preceding duplication of the cellular DNA for replication and mitosis, or that codes introns while the DNA is compressed.

All *Homo sapiens novus* test subjects were found to have the same intron sequences in their DNA. The Human Genome Project did not record sequencing of dividing DNA, so initially, we isolated and tested 30 researchers at our lab. Only one showed the particular sequencing. Her excitement over the find apparently led to the triggering of the latent genetic material, because within days of the discovery, she erupted as a nova.

Subsequently, a double-blind test was run with tissue samples from 5,000,000 different individuals. Six of the samples were from *Homo sapiens novus*. All six of the *Homo sapiens novus* samples showed the DNA sequencing, while none of the *Homo sapiens* samples did. We have not received the funding for more extensive testing, but computer models indicate that our current tests are 99.998% statistically accurate.

## M–R Node Development

The latent genetic sequencing in a *Homo sapiens novus* is activated by severely increased cellular division brought about by large-scale adrenaline release. Upon activation, the previously dormant DNA sequences transcribe a series of highly mutagenic hormones. These hormones leave the dividing cell's DNA, and quickly infuse the cell. The hormones are then released from individual cells, and make their way into the bloodstream.

Through an unknown mechanism, the hormones seek out and bind to specific neuron clusters in the frontal lobes. There they cause a rapid mutation of the neurons into the M–R node, much as large doses of highly carcinogenic agents can cause cancerous tumors in a matter of hours. The mechanism by which the M–R node changes or expands after its initial genesis is unknown.

Several of the hormones coded by the DNA sequence were previously unknown, and have resisted all attempts at independent synthesis.

## Conclusion

While we have identified the genetic basis for *Homo sapiens novus*, the finding leave more questions and speculations than answers. The specificity of the DNA sequencing would account for the rarity of *Homo sapiens novus*, but it is unknown why novas continue to appear with

greater frequency. The *Galatea* explosion, and its subsequent radioactive fallout, could theoretically have caused the changes in the DNA sequence, but not in the frequency shown by erupting novas.

Given the inheritable genetic basis of *Homo sapiens novus*, it would seem that we can expect further generations. Half of a human being's DNA is from each parent, so it is possible that all or some *Homo sapiens novus* females that have children will produce *Homo sapiens novus* themselves; similarly for *Homo sapiens novus* males. Please note that this assertion is just that; we have yet to locate any *Homo sapiens novus* who are pregnant or who have had children. In light of the physiological changes inherent to *Homo sapiens novus*, it is questionable whether a *Homo sapiens novus* female can bear children at all.

Our testing method would also imply the ability to test people for future M–R node development, possibly even in a prenatal stage. While this is a technical possibility, the process of harvesting and analyzing DNA is both laborious and very expensive. It requires not just blood samples, but various tissue samples in large quantities. The DNA analysis requires intensive lab work, and even with the best computer analysis, the process is prohibitively time-consuming. Widespread testing for *Homo sapiens novus* is not something that is likely to occur in our lifetime.

On a last, purely speculative, note, we found it interesting that the genetic basis for *Homo sapiens novus* came from previously unre-

## From *Encyclopedia Britannica, 2005 edition*

"Mazarin–Rashoud Node"

The Mazarin–Rashoud (M–R) node is a small structure located between the frontal lobes of the brain that is found only in novas, *Homo sapiens novus*. The M–R node acts as a catalyst for novas' control and manipulation of quantum energy forces. As the node develops, it increases in size, taking up progressively more space in the cranial cavity. Relatively little is known about how the M–R node functions. The M–R node is named after Dr. Henri Mazarin and Dr. Farah Rashoud, who first documented its existence in 1998 and received a Nobel Prize for their work in 2003. *See NOVA, QUANTUM FORCES*

corded introns, and at a time when the cellular DNA is not supposed to be active. The triggering mechanism is still unidentified; it could be a case of spot evolution, or perhaps even outside source influence. Further research on this topic is definitely in order.

## Corbin

**Birth Name:** Andrè Corbin
**Date of Birth:** March 23, 1985
**Place of Origin:** Leith, Scotland
**Occupation:** Ex-soccer player; ex-adult film star; ex-Team Tomorrow agent; co-founder of Aberrant movement

**Powers:** Corbin was a professional soccer player prior to his eruption, and the transformation from human to nova has enhanced an already exceptional athletic prowess. His strength, speed and reaction time are all well above the human norm, and he possesses uncanny powers of perception, intuition and acuity. Most notable, though, is Corbin's self-titled "Bender" Ñ waves of quantum force that radiate out from his body. Persons bathed in these waves experience exceedingly potent emotional shifts: Would-be lovers hurl themselves at each other (or at Corbin), rivalries flare into violent hatred and mild unease becomes mind-numbing terror.

**Background:** Born on the date that would become N-Day 13 years later, Andrè Corbin seemed born to stardom. From a working-class family in the industrial town of Leith, Corbin rose to become a professional soccer player in London. One of the most talked-about up-and-coming stars, Corbin seemed destined to save the declining edifice of baseline professional sports Ñ if he didn't destroy it first. His athleticism was almost as notable as the fiery, hell-raising personality that incited riots across the continent and made tabloid headlines across the world.

And that was before his eruption. Corbin manifested as a nova during the World Cup playoffs between the UK and Nigeria, causing a riot in the process. Seeking to bolster its public image, Project Utopia contacted the famous sports celebrity and, amid great fanfare, announced his entry into Team Tomorrow.

This move was, to put it bluntly, a disaster. Corbin's in-your-face, hedonistic personality and lack of respect for authority made him completely unable to get along with his teammates or take his role seriously. Scandal rocked the prodigal's tenure, from the Princess Fazour Affair to the Waldorf-Astoria Incident to the shocking direct-to-OpNet release of Hardballs, an "art film" featuring Corbin and several pulchritudinous costars. Suspended from the team, Corbin severed all ties to T2M except for those to his unlikely friend, Jennifer "Slider" Landers.

And so it was to Corbin that Slider turned when she discovered evidence linking Project Utopia to a secret "black operation" called Project Proteus. At first skeptical, Corbin soon became convinced that Slider had uncovered the first layer of a vast global conspiracy. His conviction became concrete when Jennifer was murdered in Calcutta on May 13, 2008. Since that day, Corbin has gone into hiding, allying with mysterious nova Sophia Rousseau. The pair have recruited approximately 40 like-minded novas, some of whom are still officially tied to Utopia. Taking the epithet "Aberrant" as their ironic sobriquet, these novas seek to uncover the truth about Project Utopia and stop the Project's exploitation of novas. Corbin has a lot of growing up to do in a hurry; only time will tell if he succeeds.

**Estimated Power Levels:**
| | |
|---|---|
| Strength: | 5 |
| Intellect: | 3 |
| Speed: | 6 |
| Offense: | 4 |
| Defense: | 7 |
| Versatility: | 8 |

## From "The Coming of Novas: Evolution's Next Step" by Dr. Henri Mazarin and Dr. Farah Rashoud, 2003

The M–R node is significant for two reasons. First, it is the structure with which novas manipulate quantum energies, hence giving them their amazing abilities. Second, it is the most reliable and obvious physiological difference between *Homo sapiens* and *Homo sapiens novus*.

For all of its importance, the M–R node itself is rather unexciting: a rough sphere, approximately 1 cm in diameter, of grayish matter. The node has many blood vessels and nerve fibers extending from it into the rest of the brain, which make it look vaguely like an octopus.

The M–R node's internal structure is much more interesting, and admittedly, more than a bit mystifying. The node consists of a tough outer membrane that surrounds twin poles connected by fibers, with what appear to resemble chromosomes. The outer portion of the chamber, outside the "spindle," contains the blood supply and numerous nerve endings, which relay information back and forth to the rest of the brain. The inner spindle surrounds a matrix of complex proteins. The matrix displays a high level of electrochemical activity, the specifics of which are still a matter of study.

It is interesting to note that the node itself resembles another biological structure. With the exceptions of its connections to the rest of the brain and its size, the M–R node's structure is very similar to that of metaphase in mitosis.

While nothing is yet known about how the M–R node manipulates quantum forces, how it affects a *Homo sapiens novus*' individual physiology is less of a mystery. The M–R node connects to all portions of the brain, both those controlling autonomic functions (such as heartbeat and respiration) and those responsible for creativity, speech, and thought. This allows the node to both influence and draw from all aspects of a nova.

Novas control their abilities with conscious thought, but the specific actions of the M–R node that are responsible for the desired effect are unconscious. It seems to respond to subconscious desires and stimuli, in a manner similar to muscular reflexes or other autonomic functions. Much like walking: The nova decides to walk, but the actual interplay of his leg muscles is handled outside of his direct conscious awareness. There also appears to be a significant psychological influence of the unconscious on the M–R node, as novas display a kind of "signature" when manifesting a power. Examples include William Thompson, who appears to be surrounded by "serpents" of energy when using his abilities; or Randel "The Fireman" Portman, who appears to be surrounded by flames when absorbing energy from his surroundings. This effect is referred to by scholars as the nova's "anima."

The M–R node's control over autonomic functions within the body is much simpler. The node can effect considerable changes in physiology and metabolism within a nova. Indeed, it seems to adapt a nova's body to compensate automatically for any manipulations that it makes to the external environment. This is not to say that novas are infinitely adaptable. They adapt to environmental changes caused by themselves, but do not necessarily change in response to environmental conditions they did not cause. For example, a nova's M–R node would adapt his body to a self-generated cryokinetic "ice sheath" that covers his body, but he may still need a coat in cold weather.

The M–R node can produce great changes within a nova's body. Some general alterations include enhancement of physique and improvement of efficiency in all bodily processes. These changes are in response to the increased stress caused by the manipulation of forces and energies that the unaugmented human body is not equipped to channel.

The M–R node itself adapts over time. With increased control of quantum forces, a nova's M–R node grows a perceptible amount. It appears that the size of the node affects the amount of energy that it can channel, and the level of control it has over those forces. Some novas have displayed M–R nodes as large as an apple. What effect, if any, this has on a nova is unknown at this time.

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### M E M O

**From:** Agt. Kyle Landers, DEA

**To:** Michael Padgett, Northeast Regional Director, DEA

**Date:** April 8, 2006

**Re:** Tri-Cities Operation

The Tri-Cities drug ring has finally been broken up, though no conclusive ties to the C-Z were discovered. I just turned the evidence over to the District Attorney today. In all, 26 arrests were made, but the group's leader, a suspected nova, eluded capture. I guess we need our own nova to get him.

One thing you need to be aware of, though. The Tri-Cities ring was peddling a new drug, along with all the old favorites. The dealers call it "soma." They claim it is an extract from a nova's M–R node. The lab boys analyzed it, and it is some kind of super-adrenochrome. This shit is scary. Imagine crack, but about 10,000 times more powerful. It kills most people that use it, unless it is extremely diluted. Even worse, it's rumored that soma is the only thing that can give a nova a sustained high. Their metabolism makes everything else seem like aspirin.

If this shit ever gets out, it could be a real mess. Luckily, you have to kill a nova to get it, and that can't be easy. We should keep our eyes open anyway.

## From "Quantum Force Manipulations and the Mind" by Dr. Shawn Worth

*Scientific American*, February 2008

In the decade since their appearance, there has been much speculation about how *Homo sapiens novus*, or novas, manipulate quantum forces. While it is well known that the Mazarin–Rashoud node allows these spectacular abilities, little is known about how the node functions. Unfortunately, this mystery is unlikely to be solved in the near future. Novas are reluctant to participate in the direct experimentation needed to validate any theories proposed. This matter remains an issue of much debate in the scientific community.

I wish to offer a theory on the workings of the M–R node. The release of Dr. Lewis's recent study on the genetic basis of novas has opened the doors of speculation on their origins. I feel that the answer to both the origin of novas and their amazing abilities lie in the origins of human consciousness.

Philosophers have long debated the nature of the mind. Human consciousness is a unique phenomenon. In the last decades, computer scientists have claimed that consciousness and intelligence are simply a function of a sufficiently complex computational ability. This theory is proposed by those who support what is known as strong AI (artificial intelligence). These thinkers claim that a fast enough and complex enough computer will mimic all the functions of consciousness.

I say "hogwash" to my esteemed colleagues. I say that consciousness is an observable physical phenomenon that happens on the quantum level. The uncertainty inherent to quantum mechanics allows for the self-reflexivity of consciousness, unlike the cold logic of a binary system. Although the proponents of strong AI would deny it, there has been significant research in the last 30 years to point to this conclusion.

The phenomenon of consciousness gives novas their incredible abilities. Novas can manipulate the fundamental forces of nature on a quantum level. Given that our consciousness exists primarily on the quantum level, the abilities of novas are merely manipulations of the primary components of consciousness. Humans manipulate quantum forces every day by merely thinking. Novas, through the M–R node, magnify and externalize those manipulations.

The metaphorical comparison between the M–R node and mitochondria may be more than an interesting coincidence.

## From "Introduction to Physics, 12 edition," 2008, entry-level text

**Quantum Forces:** What are typically referred to as the "quantum forces" are in fact the fundamental forces of the universe. The term "quantum" came to be applied to such forces as physicists began to understand that the forces themselves operate on a fundamental level and carry aspects of both particles and waves; *see quantum physics* and *quantum theory*. The quantum forces are gravity, electromagnetism, strong nuclear force and weak nuclear force.

**Gravity:** Simultaneously understood well and not well at all, gravity is a force we're all familiar with, as most of us feel it every day of our lives. Gravity is the attraction of mass to mass. In other words, matter is attracted to other matter, with more attraction being caused by objects with greater mass. Newton was the first to set down concrete laws for gravity, followed by Einstein's theory of general relativity. However, gravity has yet to fit comfortably into the quantum mechanical picture. Many theories have been proposed, but none have been fully satisfactory. The fact that novas can manipulate gravity is perhaps the strongest evidence to date that gravity can be fit into the quantum picture, however.

**Electromagnetism:** The second-strongest of the four fundamental forces, electromagnetism has an infinite range, just as gravity does. Easily the most fully explored of the quantum forces, electromagnetic fields are fields of photons generated by charged objects. Electromagnetism reflects the tendency of opposite charges to attract. This force is displayed on the atomic level via ionic bonding and on a larger scale with such materials as magnets. Electromagnetism works through the use of electromagnetic fields produced by charged material. These fields are easy to detect: They can be displayed by such pedestrian methods as sprinkling iron filings around the end of a magnet. If the charge is stationary, we call it an electrical field, and if the charge is moving, we also get a magnetic field.

**Strong Nuclear Force:** This force holds things together on the atomic scale and smaller. It has a range of only a few femtometers (a millionth of a trillionth of a meter), but within that range is the strongest force in the universe. It holds quarks together into hadrons, and holds protons and neutrons together to form nuclei. Only its extremely short range allows other forces to overcome it at all. The particle which carries the strong force is call the gluon.

**Weak Nuclear Force:** The least understood of all the fundamental forces, weak nuclear force also acts only at the nuclear scale. The weak force is responsible for a number of nuclear decay reactions, but is hard to explain beyond that, as it does not act in any sort of intuitive "push" or "pull" manner like the other three forces. The intermediate boson, W, is responsible for the weak interaction. An early triumph in the search for a Grand Unified Theory (GUT) was the unification of the electromagnetic and weak forces in electroweak theory.

## From N! documentary "Nova Powers!!!"

Novas display a multitude of amazing and incredible powers. Scientists have attributed these powers to a nova's Mazarin–Rashoud node and its ability to manipulate quantum energies and forces.

Novas tend to "erupt" at points of great stress. The nature of this stress often dictates the kinds of powers the nova possesses. For example, nova Micah Weedman, who emerged during a skydiving accident, gained the ability to fly. Novas often display an outwardly visual effect associated with their powers, called the "anima." As we see, Micah displays a pair of glowing energy "wings" when he flies.

Besides the anima, most novas bear some obvious outward sign of their change. While many novas possess amazing physiques, some novas develop further changes to their appearance, such as bioluminescent auras or silvery skin.

Nova powers can roughly be divided into three categories: internal powers, sensory/ controlling powers and external powers. These categories are merely for purposes of demonstration; few nova abilities are so easily classified.

### Internal Powers

Internal powers affect only the nova. Many novas display typical human traits that are heightened to an amazing degree. Some novas are incredibly strong or unbelievably intelligent. A quick look at the evening news sometimes shows novas lifting tractor-trailer trucks or memorizing the complete works of Shakespeare. Many novas seem to display a heightened level of biological attractiveness and natural charisma. The many nova actors and actresses are testament to how seductive and appealing novas can be.

Some novas display useful and amazing body modifications. Novas with claws, wings or the ability to withstand the elements or massive amounts of energy are not uncommon. Changing appearance at will or even turning completely invisible are other documented powers. And, of course, so is the ability to fly….

### Sensory/Controlling Powers

Potentially even more powerful are novas who can sense things beyond the limits of normal human experience, or control objects through acts of will. At the simplest level, many of these abilities seem nothing more than normal human senses extended and heightened to an impossible degree. Other such powers include seeing in other parts of the electromagnetic spectrum (such as infrared, ultraviolet and x-ray waves) or seeing matter on a microscopic or atomic level.

Novas occasionally display powers that were once considered psychic or extrasensory perception. Acts of clairvoyance or precognition fall into this category. Other so-called psychic powers, such as the spectacular "telekinesis" ability, will be mentioned later. Novas often seem more 'in tune' with the world around them, and some are able to predict future events. No one knows the limits of these abilities, but they seem specialized and relatively rare among the nova population. It probably makes our viewers feel better to know that no nova has displayed the ability to read minds. Yet.

Novas have also displayed even more esoteric abilities. ViaSoft prodigy Mungu Kuwasha, for example, can manipulate and control computers and data seemingly by thought alone. Novas have demonstrated control over purely mechanical devices, too. Most novas with these abilities seem to "interface" with the object in question….

## External Powers

By far the most spectacular and impressive of their abilities, the external powers account for the most amazing and unbelievable of nova abilities. These powers allow novas to defy nature — to literally change the world.

Many novas possess the ability to harness ambient energy, then release it in a focused burst. The tabloids have dubbed this ability the "quantum bolt," and it can take many forms. Novas have been observed throwing heat and electrical discharges, even shooting lasers from their eyes. News footage from the Kashmir crisis and African conflicts show the sheer power of these "quantum bolt." They can vaporize tanks, crumple buildings and even simulate atomic discharges. The nova generating a quantum blast seems immune to its effects, sometimes walking unscathed out of a conflagration of his own making.

Just as some novas can create energy from nowhere, other can absorb and destroy energy. Randel Portman, the famous "Fireman," is probably the most widely known energy-absorber. Last year, an unknown nova even walked into the fires of a nuclear power plant during the Calcutta Meltdown, and when she left, there was not a trace of radioactivity left.

External powers displayed by novas take on even more bizarre forms. Sound waves, radioactivity and even biological processes in other creatures can all be controlled by certain novas. Many of the other so-called psychic powers, such as telekinesis, also fall into this category.

## From internal Department of Defense memo, EYES ONLY, 6/6/03

Our scientists have completed their studies of known and theorized nova abilities. What they found is shocking. First, some novas do possess the ability to manipulate emotions and even dominate individuals. Mind-reading is not confirmed, but is not out of the question, either. This information should be screened and censored from the media and the scientific community at large. I also recommend that all sensitive operatives be screened for undue influences.

The scientists' conclusion is that novas can potentially do anything, and I mean *anything*. They affect the very fabric of the universe. Our scientists speculate that, given enough time and training, there is literally nothing a nova could not do. Even more frightening are preliminary reports that novas with greater levels of quantum control appear to be less stable. The researchers theorize that the increased growth of the M–R node, necessary for greater power, also impinges the frontal lobe, possibly leading to hallucinations or even personality disorders. The last thing we need is a bunch of psychos with the power of gods....

## From a New Nova Orientation Meeting Speech

Greetings, everyone, and welcome to the dawn of your new future. I am Dr. Yuji Go; you will no doubt get to know me and all of the other Project Utopia staff intimately during your training stay here at this Rashoud facility. If you have any questions or concerns during your stay, please contact your personal liaison, who will take the proper procedural steps to have the matter addressed.

As you all undoubtedly know now, you have demonstrated abilities that identify you as novas. Take a quick look around you — most of you are in your 20s, while a few are in your early 30s and a goodly number of you are still in your teens. Obviously, eruption — which is what we call the act of becoming an active nova rather than a latent one — happens to relatively young members of society. By looking around, you've also probably caught on to the fact that novas aren't restricted to any single class, race or ethnicity. Some of you were dirt poor seven days ago, while others of you may have been born with silver spoons in your mouth. That doesn't matter anymore. What is important is that we're here to help you realize your potential and, should you choose to remain among us, become a contributing member of Project Utopia, whose own goal is building a better world for novas and humankind alike.

If you would, think back to the time of your eruption. It may be a bit traumatic for you, but this helps us immensely in directing your potential. Recall the exact circumstances, as they have become psychological catalysts for your burgeoning powers. For example, if you were trapped in a burning building and the stress triggered your eruption, you may find yourself inclined toward the manipulation of fire. If your eruption occurred while falling, you may possess a flight potential. If you erupted while faced by a menacing animal, you may possess control over nature's lesser beasts. Whatever the case, give it a moment of brief consideration. If you'd be so kind, please look over your enrollment dossier and make sure your processing liaison recorded your eruption circumstances correctly. There's nothing to be ashamed of — remember, if you don't help us, we can't help you.

Before we go any further, however, I'd like to offer a bit of preemptory warning. Yes, you are all novas, and you possess tremendous abilities and vast power. But that power comes with a price. I will warn you now about using your powers recklessly: Don't do it. The upcoming months will educate you in the rudiments of why and how your abilities work, as well as the danger inherent in abusing them. For now, simply let us guide and direct you in the use of your nova potentials. Your very health depends on it.

I can see some of you are uncomfortable with this already. We've anticipated that. During your physical examination, you were administered a pill or injection of quantum-retarding moxinoquantamine. Whatever potential you may possess, the drug limits it until you have learned the control and restraint to do it yourself. We cannot control the effects this quantum power has on your bodies, however, and if you insist on rebelling or making a show, you will damage yourself far in excess of the effect you try to create. Please; we do this for a living. Let us work with you.

## From a Progress Report on Nova Development at a Utopia Facility

**Date:** 10 Jan 2006

**Datum/Data:** Actualization continues slowly with the newest detachment of recruits. Retarded progress seems to rest in the nature of the recruits: As M–R node eruption can occur in anyone, we have no guarantee of dealing with analytical or even suitably self-aware subjects. Indeed, some among the current roster seem to hail from what could be described as underprivileged, socially inequitable or (for lack of more suitable descriptors) "white-trash" upbringings.

While the development team continues to guide these prospects down their paths of enrichment, it is the opinion of this researcher that some subjects would affect their environment more radically than they possess the conscience or intelligence to understand.

### UTOPIA STAFF MEMORANDUM

**To:** All field operatives, clinic staff and recruitment team captains

**From:** Michael Hodge, New Personnel Processing Director

**Re:** Procedural Update

Effective immediately, all recruitment staff are to cease "snatch-and-grab" enrollment methods. While this may be appropriate to "organizations" like the Teragen, it is certainly out of place with the aims of our organization. Project Utopia takes a nurturing stance on nova development. Although I am not a nova myself, I have seen many of you brought into the organization, and encourage you to remember the trauma of your own first eruptions.

All I'm asking is that team leaders show a little sympathy. If we adopt the methods of the other groups, we make ourselves no better than they.

Clinic staff, if you have any reason to suspect that a newly discovered nova has been treated roughly or unfairly by his recruiter, please notify me immediately.

### RE: UTOPIA STAFF MEMORANDUM

**To:** Michael Hodge, New Personnel Processing Director

**From:** Bruce McInerny

**To:** All field operatives, clinic staff and recruitment team captains

**Re:** Procedural Update

Look, I already told you that McKinney kid refused to calm down once he'd already agreed and his parents had signed the release. Read the report. This job's already hard enough without some pencil-pushing, third-rate bureaucrat trying to tie my hands even more because he's got nothing better to do on Project Utopia time.

The more you complicate this, the more difficult it becomes, and the easier it is for these new novas to fall in with other, potentially dangerous, organizations.

Screw you, Hodge. It's already ridiculous that someone with my capabilities has to file paperwork to keep a tick like you happy, so count your blessings that I haven't had to "ensure complicity" by knocking *you* out with a manhole cover.

I draw on sociological history to make my point. Star athletes of the latter 20th century made a good deal of money, often with little more than cursory education. This abrupt accumulation of money, combined with poor knowledge bases and insufficient socialization, made for aberrations of society — "hillbillies with money," who could not conceive of the problems they potentially posed.

Taken to the next logical step, novas possess far more environmental influence than money represents in the preceding pro-athlete example. When a subject possesses the ability to distort the minds of those around him or cause a nuclear conflagration in a half-mile radius, yet lacks the ability to distinguish between not only right and wrong but appropriate and inappropriate as well, upon whom does the burden of responsibility fall? As further evidence, I cite case UT–117–UK; Marjorie McCannagh. At 60 IQ, Marjorie was only marginally aware of her surroundings, so her power to sever organic molecular bonds and turn living things into puddles of carbon sludge posed more threat than advantage.

(Granted, these aberrations are isolated occurrences. All evidence suggests that, most frequently, the M–R node acclimates and accelerates the mind and body to peak or even superhuman levels of fitness and performance. This problem, on a larger scale, seems to be more of a sociological phenomenon, though McCannagh is hardly an inappropriate example.)

To that end, this researcher must recommend continued pursuit of the proposed "M–R lobotomy" treatment. In sociopathic, asocial and criminally inclined subjects, the Project must take it upon itself to cauterize the M–R node as early in its eruption as possible. Waiting too long may allow the node to grow back under the healing auspices of its biochemical adjustments.

# Welcome to the Nova Site,
## the only site on the OpNet devoted
## to self-made novas by self-made novas.

So you want to be a nova. Join the club. Only one in a million people becomes a nova, because its really hard to do. First, you have to have the devotion to do it. Second, you have to have the time to explore your powers. Third, you have to have an extra bit of meat in your brain, which causes all your powers to happen.

You can't be a nova without causing that bit of meat (called the node) to open up. Of course, its not that easy. The node only opens up under stress. (Mordus says he opened his by drinking an entire case of African Malt Liquor, but I think he's lying.) That's the hard part. You have to cause yourself enough stress to open the node, but if whatever you do to cause the stress might kill you, so be careful.

Also, your nova powers have to do with the thingie that caused your node to open, so pick something cool. If you open your node by holding up a golf club in an electric storm you get lightning powers, but if you open your node by slamming your head in a car door a lot, you probably get some really crappy powers like only making car doors open.

Learning powers and opening the node usually makes you really sick. Most people get huge headaches (migraines) when the node opens up, because the node pushes its way out from the "inactive" part of the brain to the "active" part physically. Seriously.

Also, the power (we novas call it jolt or juice or magnum) sometimes causes illness in a body not used to it. Your going to be really tired when you first become a nova, because all the juice just wears you out because you don't know how to control it yet. Also, you'll probably get some kind of disease like a cold or the flu because your so tired your immunity system is tired with the rest of your body.

The best thing to do is practice your powers, though, so let the headache and sickness wear off and get to work. Practice makes perfect, but here's a few easy tips to help you on the way.

1.) Do it (practice) away from people until you get the hang of it. If you're just learning you might kill someone or hurt them, so stay away from other people.

2.) Practice at the same time every day. Let your body get used to a regular series of practice exercises, so you can be at your maximum ability each day when you "work out."

3.) Go slowly. Only train your powers for a few hours a day — no more than two until you can learn to control the power flow. Too much will wear you out and either burn out your node or make you sick again with exhaustion.

4.) Eat a lot. If your really a nova and not a poser, you'll eat a bunch of food all day long. These munchies are caused by the power in your body, as you have to keep giving it fuel.

5.) Don't wear a costume. A nova with a costume is either an Elite or a poser. Do not wear capes especially because when you get in a fight, that's the first thing people pull. This isn't a comic book, it's real life. Do pick a cool name for yourself though, but you probably already knew that. Being a nova is being important. You have to look like somebody worth noticing for anyone to care.

**CLICK HERE** to join the OpNet Novas mailing list

**CLICK HERE** to  skip to the next OpNet NovaRing site

**CLICK HERE** to register with the Renegade Nova League

## From a Training Session Video Recording at QuebecFac

[Translated from French]

• **Trainer:** You made some excellent progress yesterday, Jean. How do you feel today?

• **Jean:** A bit tired.

• **Trainer:** Any symptoms to report? Did you need any meds last night?

• **Jean:** I had a nosebleed after dinner last night. And the nurse gave me one adrenocilin, but I only took half the pill. I slept like a baby, but I've got kind of a headache now.

• **Trainer:** I see. What did you do with the rest of the pill? I like your cap, by the way. Are you a Yankees fan?

• **Jean:** Flushed it. Yeah, I like the Yankees. I've got a jersey, too.

• **Trainer:** All right. Are you ready to start for today?

• **Jean:** I guess.

• **Trainer:** Okay. [To technicians] Let's have 400 migs of moxinoquantamine. Okay, Jean, I want you to think about moving this magnet again.

• **Jean:** We did this yesterday.

• **Trainer:** I know, Jean, but I don't want to go forward without making sure you remember how to do what we covered yesterday. [Jean sighs] Ready?

• **Jean:** Yep. [magnet moves visibly, suspended in air. Magnet rotates in air]

• **Trainer:** Fantastic, Jean! Not only do you remember, you're already controlling better than you did yesterday! Great work! Okay, now slow it down°good. Put it down carefully. [magnet clatters to surface of table]

• **Jean:** Dammit.

• **Trainer:** No problem, Jean, we'll just try again. You were doing awesome. This time, though, *feel* the magnet the whole time. I saw you kind of relax your mind before the magnet was on the table. Make sure you give it your full concentration *all the way through*.



PROJECT
UTOPIA

FROM A TRANSCRIPT OF *THE NEW GODS: HUMANITY'S NEXT STEP*, NARRATED BY NATHAN BLACK, JANUARY 2008

GOOD EVENING, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN; I'M NATHAN BLACK. YOU MAY RECOGNIZE ME FROM MTV'S SMASH HIT SHOW *MAXIMUM EXTREME*. ON THAT SHOW, WE LOOK INTO POPULAR NOVA CULTURE AND TRENDS FROM A BASELINE'S-EYE VIEW, SHOWING YOU WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE WORLD OF THE SUPERPOWERED AND SUPERFABULOUS. TONIGHT, HOWEVER, WE'RE LOOKING A LITTLE MORE CLOSELY AT PRECISELY WHAT MAKES THESE NOVAS TICK.

WITH ME IS NOTED NOVA PARAPHYSICIAN DOCTOR TASMIN HARVER. TASMIN'S EUFIBER BODYSUIT COMES COURTESY OF ANIBÁL BUENDIA'S A|B AKTIF SPORTSWEAR LINE. LET'S START WITH YOUR POSITION, TASMIN: WHAT, EXACTLY IS A PARAPHYSICIAN?

GOOD EVENING, NATHAN. I LOVE YOUR SHOW.

THANKS

AS WE ALL KNOW, NOVAS' BODIES ARE MORE EFFI-CIENT THAN THOSE OF NORMAL HUMANS. THEY HEAL FASTER, MOVE FASTER, BREAK DOWN FOOD INTO ITS COMPONENT NUTRIENTS WITH GREATER RESULTS, CAN WITHSTAND GREATER EXTREMES OF STRESS AND ENVIRONMENT AND THOSE TYPES OF THINGS. AS A PARAPHYSICIAN, I SPECIALIZE IN THE INNER WORK-INGS OF THESE OPTIMIZED, SUPERHUMAN BODIES.

KIND OF A SPORTS DOCTOR TO THE SUPERHEROES, EH, DOCTOR?

I GUESS THEY KEEP YOU KIND OF BUSY AROUND HERE.

THEY SURE DO, NATHAN.

DON'T MIND IF I DO, DOCTOR. WOW! IT'S DETROIT'S SANCTIONED "PUBLIC DEFENDER," KIKJAK!

*HOW YOU DOIN', NATE?*

IT'S MORE THAN BEING A SPORTS DOCTOR, NATHAN. I'M PART PSYCHOLOGIST, PART PHYSIOLOGIST, PART PHYSICAL THERAPIST, PART FIELD MEDIC AND TWO PARTS GENERAL PRACTITIONER.

BUT ARE THESE NOVAS REALLY THAT DIFFERENT? AREN'T THEY JUST HUMANS WITH, WELL, *BETTER* PHYSICAL ORGANS?

NOT QUITE, NATHAN. YOU SEE, NOVAS ARE *MORE* THAN HUMAN, AND INDEED, SOMETIMES SOME-THING ALTOGETHER DIFFERENT

CREEPY

JEEZ, THAT'S QUITE A GRIP, KIKJAK.

NOT REALLY. WELL, MAYBE A LITTLE, I GUESS. STEP INTO OUR RESEARCH LABORATORY AND I'LL SHOW YOU A BIT MORE ABOUT HOW THE BODIES OF NOVAS WORK.

YES, STIMULI. LIKE HEAT AND COLD?

ABSOLUTELY, BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE MY WORD FOR IT. I DOUBT MR. KIKJAK WOULD ALLOW US TO SET HIM ON FIRE.

[CENSORED] THAT. IT STILL HURTS, IT JUST HEALS FASTER THAN YOU ALL DO. I'LL LET YOU DO IT IF YOU LET ME SET NATHAN ON FIRE, OKAY?

I DON'T THINK SO. SO, WHAT'S THE DEAL, DOCTOR? WHY DO NOVAS FEEL LESS OF THE PAIN AND HEAL FROM IT MORE QUICKLY?

THEY STILL FEEL IT, ALBEIT DIFFERENTLY. HERE, LOOK AT THIS.

THE NOVA'S CELLS ARE DIFFERENT — DENSER — THAN THOSE OF NORMAL PEOPLE. THE INHERENT ABILITIES NOVAS POSS —

POWERS?

NO, IT'S JUICE

WHATEVER YOUR NAME FOR THEM, THEIR CONTROL STEMS FROM THE FLOW OF "QUANTUM" ENERGY — ENERGY THAT NORMAL HUMAN BODIES AREN'T DESIGNED TO PERCEIVE, LET ALONE MANIPULATE. ALL OF THESE TINY "PATHWAYS" OR NERVE GROUPS ALLOW THAT ENERGY TO MOVE THROUGH THE NOVA'S BODY. THESE NERVE GROUPS ALSO TRANSMIT THE FEEDBACK FROM MORE TRADITIONAL STIMULI...

LIKE ELECTRICITY, HEAT OR KINETIC FORCE. THAT'S WHY MANY NOVAS CAN WITHSTAND BEATINGS, STABBINGS AND EVEN GUNSHOT WOUNDS.

IT LOOKS LIKE SPAGHETTI. BUT, IF THERE ARE SO MANY MORE NERVES, WHY DON'T NOVAS FEEL MORE PAIN?
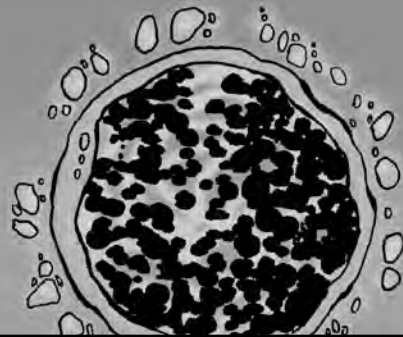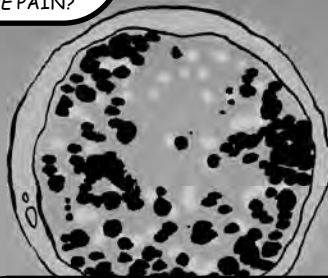
WELL, TO GET TECHNICAL, THEY'RE NOT REALLY NERVES, THEY'RE CALLED M-R COILS, BUT WE'LL GET TO THAT LATER. AS TO WHY IT DOESN'T HURT MORE, THE DELIVERED STIMULUS IS STILL THE SAME, BUT DISPERSED MUCH MORE EXPEDITIOUSLY. LET'S SAY YOU AND KIKJAK GET HIT BY A CAR — YOU BOTH FLY THE SAME DISTANCE AWAY, YOU BOTH SUFFER THE SAME AMOUNT OF PHYSICAL KINETIC FORCE ON IMPACT, BUT YOUR BODY DISPERSES THE FORCE THROUGH BILLIONS OF NERVES, WHILE KIKJAK'S BODY DISPERSES IT THROUGH A LOT MORE, GETTING RID OF IT MORE QUICKLY.

AND YOU CRY A LOT MORE, NATHAN

HA HA HA BUT, DOCTOR, HAVEN'T WE BOTH SUFFERED THE SAME — ER, TRAUMA? I MEAN, WE'LL BOTH STILL HAVE BROKEN BONES, BUT HE'LL JUST FEEL IT LESS, CORRECT?

ALMOST, NATHAN. EACH OF THOSE LITTLE M-R COILS TRANSFERS QUANTUM ENERGY DOWN ITS LENGTH. WITHOUT GETTING INTO LONG-WINDED THEORIES AND METAPHYSICS, QUANTUM ENERGY BASICALLY COMPRISES THE FOUR FUNDAMENTAL FORCES OF THE UNIVERSE: GRAVITY, ELECTROMAGNETISM, STRONG AND WEAK NUCLEAR FORCES. UNDER THE CONTROL OF A NOVA, QUANTUM ENERGY BECOMES...WELL, A SORT OF "COSMIC POWER," IF THAT DOESN'T SOUND TOO CORNY.

HANG ON, THERE, KIKJAK. SO, THIS QUANTUM, IT BLOCKS OUT THE OTHER ENERGY?

ACTUALLY, IT CONVERTS OTHER ENERGIES TO QUANTUM ENERGY. IN FACT, IF YOU WERE FOOLISH ENOUGH TO PUNCH OUR FRIEND KIKJAK—

—YOU MIGHT ACTUALLY BE GIVING HIM MORE POWER, IN THE CASE OF WHAT ARE CALLED "ABSORBER NOVAS" OR "QUANTUM REPLICATORS."

WAIT, SO NOVAS MAKE THEIR OWN POWER? THEN HOW CAN THEY BE BROUGHT DOWN? I MEAN, JUST LAST WEEK, KIKJAK HERE FOUGHT ONE OF THOSE TERAGEN NOVAS — KNOCKED HIM OUT WITH A FORCE BOLT TO THE HEAD

KIND OF

I'LL SHOW YOU SOME COSMIC POWER, SUCKA

YOU CAN HAVE A FREE SHOT, NATE THE SKATE

HELL, YEAH. K-JAK OUTTA D-TOWN STRAIGHT TO DOMINATE IN OH-EIGHT.

OKAY. SO, ON SOME FUNDAMENTAL LEVEL, THIS HIGH RESISTANCE TO BEING HURT—

THE M-R COILS ONLY TRANSFER QUANTUM. NOVAS HAVE ANOTHER ORGAN — A GLAND, TO BE PRECISE, KNOWN AS THE M-R NODE. M-R STANDS FOR MAZARIN-RASHOUD, THE NAMES OF THE SCIENTISTS WHO DISCOVERED THE NODE A DECADE AGO, BY THE WAY. THE M-R NODE ALLOWS THEM TO CONTROL QUANTUM AND CONVERT THOSE OTHER FORCES INTO PERSONAL QUANTUM RESERVES. WE'VE ALL GOT QUANTUM RUNNING THROUGH US, BUT NOT ALL OF US KNOW HOW TO USE IT CORRECTLY, OR EFFICIENTLY, IF AT ALL.

IS ACTUALLY HYPERACCELERATED HEALING, AS THE QUANTUM AUGMENTS THE BODY'S NATURAL HEALING PROCESS. KIKJAK MUST HAVE MANAGED TO DOLE OUT MORE TRAUMA THAN HIS ENEMY COULD CONVERT AND HEAL. THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT EVEN WITH ALL THE QUANTUM IN THE WORLD, IF YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING WITH IT, IT DOESN'T DO YOU ANY GOOD.

SO FIGHTING MAKES NOVAS STRONGER? AND NOVAS DON'T NEED TO EAT? THEY MAKE THEIR OWN CALORIES OR SOMETHING? BY PUNCHING THEMSELVES?

*SNICKER* NO, THERE ARE STILL NORMAL, HUMAN BUILDING BLOCKS UNDER THOSE M-R COILS. YOU CAN STILL BREAK BONES AND CAUSE HEMORRHAGES. THEY DON'T ELIMINATE ALL THE NORMAL OBSTACLES. IN MOST CASES, AT LEAST. IN FACT, BECAUSE THEIR BODIES SPEND SO MUCH TIME AND EFFORT DEALING WITH QUANTUM, MOST NOVAS EAT MORE THAN NORMAL HUMANS; SOMETIMES 10 TIMES AS MUCH OR MORE, DAILY.

*I LIKE BURGER KING. FIFTY WHOPPERS AND A SMALL DIET COKE, PLEASE. THANK YOU, DRIVE THROUGH.*

AND QUANTUM IS SORT OF LIQUID. IT "BLEEDS OFF" IN VARIOUS WAYS — HERE, WATCH.

AS YOU CAN SEE, KIKJAK IS, WELL, *GLOWING* IN THE DARK. THAT'S HIS EXCESS QUANTUM LEAKING FROM HIS BODY

NO, NOT PRECISELY. NOVAS BLEED OFF THEIR UNUSED QUANTUM IN DIFFERENT WAYS. SOME MAY HAVE A STRANGE COLOR CAST TO THEIR SKIN; OTHERS MAY "HUM" QUIETLY OR HAVE UNSTABLE CELLULAR BONDS THAT RESULT IN A WATERY CONSISTENCY TO THEIR BODIES. IT ALL DEPENDS ON THE INDIVIDUAL. MOST NOVAS HAVE RELATIVELY MINOR ANOMALIES, BUT THOSE WHO HAVE USED A GREAT DEAL OF QUANTUM IN A SHORT TIME OR HAVE USED IT OVER MANY YEARS, WE SUSPECT, COULD DISPLAY MUCH MORE... PRONOUNCED QUIRKS.

WOW, I NEVER NOTICED THAT BEFORE. ALL NOVAS GLOW IN THE DARK? YOU THINK I'D HAVE SEEN IT IN NIGHTCLUBS—

THIS COMES FROM THE M-R NODE?

NOT DIRECTLY, BUT WE BELIEVE IT TO BE A SIDE EFFECT, SIMILAR TO THE ATTUNEMENT AND "STREAMLINING" OF NOVAS' BODIES. YOU'VE NOTICED HOW MOST NOVAS APPEAR TO HAVE LITTLE BODY FAT?

OF COURSE

THEY ACTUALLY HOVER BETWEEN ZERO PERCENT AND ONE-HALF PERCENT MORE FAT THAN THE MINIMUM NEEDED FOR BASIC NERVOUS SYSTEM INSULATION, AS THE QUANTUM PROCESSED BY THE M-R NODE MAXIMIZES THEIR BODIES' NATURAL FUNCTIONS AND MINIMIZES THE OBSTACLES THAT IMPEDE THOSE FUNCTIONS. ALONG THE SAME LINES, NOVAS CAN EXIST AT VERY LOW AIR-OXYGEN COUNTS, AND CAN NEUTRALIZE TOXINS ALMOST AS QUICKLY AS THEY ENTER THE BLOODSTREAM.

SO NOVA MEDICINES NEED TO BE CUSTOM-TAILORED?

TRUE, BUT NOVAS RARELY GET SICK — IN ADDITION TO SHUTTING OUT TOXINS, THEIR IMMUNE SYSTEMS WIPE OUT EVERYTHING BUT THE MOST DEBILITATING DISEASES INSTANTLY. NOVA "MEDICINES" LIKE ADRENOCILIN, WHICH ENHANCES QUANTUM CONTROL, ARE VERY PURE RATIOS OF THE COMPONENT CHEMICALS, WHICH WOULD DROP A BIOENGINEERED COW DEAD IN ITS TRACKS. LIKEWISE, IF A NOVA WANT TO "HAVE A QUICK DRINK" IT HAD BETTER BE VERY NEAR 100 PERCENT ALCOHOL FOR HIM TO EVEN FEEL THE EFFECTS, BUT I CAN'T IMAGINE THAT TASTES VERY GOOD.

*IT DOESN'T.*

## From the journal of Dr. Nimal Dharmasena; November 3, 2001

I wonder if Darwin would feel this way, if he were in my place.

For the last few nights, I haven't even gone home. I've called Imira over and over, reassuring her that I'm all right, that I'm just at a critical stage. I feel like I'm lying when I say that; the last batch of test results has sat on my desk for a long while. But I really am being truthful. I *am* at a critical stage. It's just one of decision, not discovery.

The novas seemed so impossible at first. I swear, I almost gave up science and ran out to Nevada to preach the gospel of chaos theory by the freeway. But as it turns out, they might just be quantifiable after all — and now that Utopia wants me, I feel like I've been given the keys to the kingdom. No, scratch that — the *blueprints*.

Humanity isn't evolving anymore, I'm sure of that. And the emergence of the novas tells me that Nature knows this, too; so she jumped ahead, to whatever stage we might have reached eventually. The novas are her gift to us, a way of examining what we might become — and evolving *ourselves*. *Us*, not her.

The potential is endless. One nova alone, with the right gifts, could end hunger, rework the world economy or terraform a continent. If we achieve some level of control over nova powers and who we invest them in, we could achieve *Star Trek* several centuries early — my kids could grow up in a world without pollution, without crime, without famine or fear or disease. And the thought that my research might help bring this about....

Who am I kidding? I've wanted to jump aboard Utopia for as long as it's been in existence. I'm fretting and moaning about what it'll mean to my personal life, what I might have to give up, when all I'm really afraid of is the possibility they'll change their mind.

It's time I made that phone call.

## The Genesis

### From a Social Sciences lecture, Enka High School, North Carolina

Nobody knew what to do about the manifesting novas. Their appearance turned science, religion and society all on their heads. We didn't even know what an M—R node was. We were baffled.

That's when the Æon Society entered the picture. This philanthropic organization had an extensive, if not widely publicized, history of assisting and backing various large-scale goodwill programs, such as the Red Cross, the World Health Organization and similar projects. These fellows decided that somebody needed to stick up for the novas, and it might as well be they. So they started talking to the UN, and a possible solution was worked out.

The Zurich Accord of June 1998 — and you had better believe this *will* be on the test — declared novas to be human beings. I know, this sounds like a common-sense thing, but there was a very real case for considering novas a different species, in which case they wouldn't have all the rights and responsibilities that go with being human.

Can anyone name the movement that disagrees with the Zurich Accord? Anyone? Good, Emily — the Teragen. But we'll get to them later.

Anyhow, Project Utopia was formed in the wake of the Zurich Accord. Its stated goal was "to utilize the vast powers of novas to better the quality of life for all, human and nova alike, on Planet Earth." That's on page 227 — better memorize that. Utopia also had an environmentalist agenda, but people have benefited from that as much as animals and plants have.

The next step for Project Utopia was twofold. First, it began intervention programs, where Utopia contact newly erupted novas and invited them to Rashoud facilities, special clinics designed to help novas adjust to their new powers. Then Utopia announced the formation of a special team of all-nova operatives, Team—

Ah, there's the bell. All right, people, finish reading Chapter 24! Tomorrow, we're picking up where we left off, and I don't want to have to quiz you — but I will if I don't start hearing some feedback!

Æ O N
SOCIETY

H O P E
SACRIFICE

# ACHIEVEMENTS AND GOALS

Excerpt: "Week in Perspective with Walter Donovan"; show aired January 16, 2008

[00:14:26]

• **Donovan:** Next topic: The latest polls have shown nothing but an increase in popular support for Project Utopia, even though UN ambassadors from several nations, including the United States, have expressed grave concern for the autonomy and authority Utopia enjoys. Gentlemen?

• **Culpepper:** Well, I'll go on record as disagreeing with the man on the street and agreeing with the American government. Project Utopia is doing too much, too soon, and I'm very worried about what sort of long-term damage they might do in the name of a short-term fix.

• **Bryant:** Are you serious? Look at the terraforming of the Ethiopian highlands! A virtual Eden on Earth, balancing wildlife preserve with high-yield croplands. Never mind the fact that at least six of the most promi-nent ecologists in the world have praised the—

• **Culpepper:** Ecologists hired by *Utopia*, I might add! Isn't that something like the tobacco compa-nies' hired health experts of last century?

• **Bryant:** Oh, please! If you'd actually research the topic, you'd find that they asked the 10 foremost ecologists in the *field* for their opinions! If they wanted yes-men, they wouldn't have gone to all that trouble!

• **Thomas:** If I could just—

• **Culpepper:** Well, with the amount of resources they have at their disposal, it probably wouldn't be too hard to persuade—

• **Bryant:** So now you're accusing them of *bribery*?

• **Culpepper:** Not at all! I'm hazarding an opinion!

• **Bryant:** You're being contrary for the sake of contrariness! Look at all the other positive works that Project Utopia has completed — the overthrow of Radocani, the virtual elimination of Bangkok's child prostitution trade — *all of which*, I might add, were under *complete* UN sanction! And if you want to talk scientific achievements, what about their assistance in curing AIDS and cancer, the hypercombustion engine, the global environmental cleanup actions—

• **Culpepper:** Maybe *you* like the idea of the UN granting almost total latitude to a group with all the potential military power of any two European nations, but *I* happen to think—

• **Donovan:** Gentlemen, please! If I might change the subject....

## A C H E I V E M E N T S   A N D   G O A L S

**From an Orientation Speech, Manhattan Rashoud Facility**

I can tell what you're thinking. Believe me, I've seen it before. You're thinking, "What is this 'save the planet' politically correct garbage?" You're thinking, "With all the new opportunities available to me, why would I throw in with this giant worldwide hippy-dippy love-in?"

I won't give you some feel-good song and dance about sacrifice and altruism for the greater good. No one — not even the chirpiest Project PR rep — is that naïve. Now, don't get me wrong, Utopia does a lot of good for the world every day, and I'm damn proud to be a part of it. But, first and foremost, Utopia exists for novas. For us — for our protection and, yeah, self-interest, albeit enlightened self-interest. Because underneath all the hype, the cold hard facts are, there are billions of them and a few thousand of us. And those terms — Them and Us, Normal and Aberrant — are what Utopia is committed to avoiding at all costs.

Humanity has a long, long history of destroying the Other, the different. Well, we don't want conflict with the baselines. They're our friends, our families. But while my friends aren't a threat to me, they might be a threat to *you*. Mob mentality and scapegoats are ancient human traditions. Utopia is demonstrating aggressively what we novas can offer, how we can help. It's altruism and it isn't — you might call it altruistic self-interest. It's loving your neighbor now so that your neighbors, those billions and billions of anxious, shell-shocked, understandably worried people, will realize that ultimately, we're not so very different after all.

And that's a goal I, for one, can work to support. Your future is your own, but I hope you'll give some thought to staying with the Project. We've got a place for any nova who asks, and the world could use someone like you.



## Skew

**Birth Name:** Andrew Thomas Parker
**Date of Birth:** September 15, 1989
**Place of Origin:** Jacksonville, Florida
**Occupation:** Team Tomorrow agent

**Powers:** Skew has exceptionally potent control over magnetism, and he is capable of manipulating up to 22 tons of ferrous metal at a distance of 300 meters. He can generate electromagnetic pulses capable of shorting out even shielded electronics and manipulate magnetic fields to create powerful force shields. He has even been noted to exert his power wildly in a 20-meter radius, creating a cyclone loaded with metal weapons. His top flight speed is presently unclocked (or possibly just unavailable to the public), but he is certainly capable of holding his own in a casual dogfight.

Rumors give Skew some ability to affect the iron in a foe's bloodstream, allowing him to tamper with the blood flow to a target's brain and induce vertigo or hallucinations. He is also allegedly able to generate pulses that interfere with the electrical impulses in a human nervous system. However, he has yet to publicly demonstrate anything requiring this level of subtlety and control.

**Background:** Andrew's eruption wasn't one with a lot of witnesses, but it certainly captured the nation's attention soon enough. After an electromagnetic pulse hit the greater portion of Miami in February of '07, causing widespread blackouts, government and Utopia personnel alike combed the area for months afterward, searching for terrorist activity or newly erupted novas. It wasn't until April that they found who they were looking for Ñ or rather, he found them. He arrived with a crash at Miami's Utopia offices, dropping an armored car into the parking lot that was found to contain a small legion of Spangler Posse repeat offenders. When Utopia personnel poured out to investigate, they found that the self-titled "Skew" wasn't going to take anything from them but a job application. He got it Ñ delivered in person by Caestus Pax.

As wildly erratic and creative as the skew-metal music from which he takes his name, Andrew is often hailed as Team Tomorrow's "loose cannon." He's as likely to wrap a foe up in a midsized sedan as he is to try subduing him with a barrage of blunt-edged metal projectiles (which double as jacket accessories, no less). Some observers wryly note that he has the dubious honor as leader in the "casual property damage" statistics, but nobody can accuse Skew of refusing to help out with cleanup afterwards.

**Estimated Power Levels:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Strength:** | 4 |
| **Intellect:** | 3 |
| **Speed:** | 6 |
| **Offense:** | 7 |
| **Defense:** | 7 |
| **Versatility:** | 7 |

**N** the news

CNN News report, 4/19/2005

## Daphne Myung; Skopje, Macedonia

· **Myung:** Suddenly and abruptly, before anyone could blink, it's over. Yaroslav Radocani, the dictator who declared himself the president-for-life of Macedonia, has been removed from power by Team Tomorrow Europe. The operation took the world by surprise; not more than 15 minutes after Secretary-General Ghali of the UN announced that Project Utopia was designated to act as a peacekeeper in this instance, Radocani's personal flag was toppled from the royal palace.

Although the exact details of the operation have yet to be disclosed fully, it's apparent that Team Tomorrow managed to infiltrate the city under cover of nova powers. Radocani and his black-market technology didn't go down lightly — reports of devastation to the royal palace and its bunkers beneath estimate that an earthquake would have been far more gentle. However, Team Tomorrow announced that it suffered no casualties, and that only a few of Radocani's loyalists were killed in the fighting.

Radocani is, by all reports, scheduled to be entered into Project Utopia's controversial Bahrain rehabilitation center. There he is to, in the words of The Saxon, "receive all the psychiatric assistance he requires." Authorities are divided on the issue of whether the intent of this is somehow to cure the "Bitola Butcher" of his sociopathic tendencies and release him back into society, or whether this is simply incarceration by another name. However, at the moment, many of Radocani's former subjects couldn't care less.



· **Translator:** God bless Team Tomorrow! May we never see the devil Radocani again!

32

## From the journal of Dr. Nimal Dharmasena; March 16, 2007

Reported to Antaeus again today. It gets more unnerving each time. He was very, very deep in Sector 3; I could have sworn that one of the imported leopards was going to take my throat out, safety transmitter or not. I walked around for a whole hour, sweating like a pig, until I finally sat down to rest. And sure enough, there he (she?) was, heaving his body out of the ground, geocarapace and all.

(Is it really a carapace? I'm starting to wonder. Is it possible that Antaeus's entire cell structure has been replaced with soil and plant matter? Is he really disembodied? Gossip is that he sometimes mentions having "transcended" in some way….)

Anyway, I laid out the month's plan of attack. He listened, then sat quietly for a few minutes afterward. I was starting to think maybe he wasn't listening after all until that strange, deep, rich voice came welling out of his… well, vicinity.

Turns out that there's some sort of privately owned plant starting up in Madagascar, and Antaeus has just made it our next concern. I double-checked the OpNet for as much info as I could scrounge, and couldn't find a thing about it. But sure enough, there was a dossier waiting on my desk by 5:00.

How the hell Antaeus gets this information is beyond me; we get visits from other directors maybe once every three months, and they don't usually visit the gardens. He makes me redefine my idea of the word "nova," that's for sure. How is it that he can be so impossibly brilliant in the field of ecoscience, so erudite as "Dr. Balmer," and yet, as "Antaeus," practically autistic when dealing with people? I swear, I've learned gigabytes of information since coming to Utopia, but I sometimes feel more confused than ever.

## OpNet post, alt.fan.utopia

Subject: Re: LOOK AT THIS!!!!
Date: 9/18/07
Sender: SliderFetish@unca.edu
2Wikkd@im.not.going.to.let.them.trace.me.com wrote:
>i can't believe you people! everyone here is just talks on and on
>about how great project utopia is but none of you see the whole
>picture! what about all the things they don't let us see or have? my
>brother is a scientist, and he was working on something relly important
>that would have made all our live alot easier but they came in and
>took all his files and now he drinks alot and can't get a raise cause
>he just wasted all his time working on something that utopia wont let
>us have! you utopia slaves suck! by the way this story is TRUE but i'm
>not going to say who my brother he works for because they (utopia)
>might find out and he'd get fired or arrested or something.
>you all suck!

So? Look, hobgoblin, the UN granted Project Utopia the power of scientific regulation for a reason. Did you hear about the guy who was working on a virtual OpNet interface that would be wired right into the user's pleasure centers? I know that sort of thing sounds pretty good at first, but do you know how damn addictive that'd be? It'd be like unleashing a new drug, something worse than spike! As far as I'm concerned, Project Utopia (something spelled properly with the *shift* key, loser) has every right to their environmental and scientific regulatory powers. Might as well go to somebody with the staff smart enough to use them wisely.

Dev

:::::— If you're reading this, Slider, please marry me. —:::::

...when most people think of Project Utopia, they think of Team Tomorrow. But "T2M" is only part of our organization's overall structure. They're the ones who get a lot of our work done, that's true, but I'd like to focus first on the many thousands of men and women who work just as hard to further the Utopian ideals — the unsung heroes, if you will.

Few are interested in the administrative wing — after all, when you have Caestus Pax destroying entire chemical weapons plants by his lonesome, the lot of a bunch of paper-pushers doesn't seem all that interesting. But if it weren't for Admin, we wouldn't be here today. Admin keeps our budgets balanced — even though we get a good amount of funding from private concerns and philanthropic organizations, to say nothing of licensing and corporate enterprises, we aren't as filthy rich as you might think. Most of that money is sunk right back into our various projects. Admin also operates our Rashoud facilities (where we help newly erupted novas come to grips with their new selves) and coordinates our main offices — considering that we've got an office in almost every US state, and almost every country across the globe, that's a lot of coordination!

Oh, and I can't forget our overworked legal department. If it wasn't for Legal's efforts, we'd be so restricted by misguided lawsuits, outmoded strictures and just plain cross-boundary legal confusion that we wouldn't get anything done. The folks in Legal have done a lot for promoting civil rights of nova and baseline alike, as well as helping pass legislation that takes the planet well away from the ecological and societal stagnancy of the late 20th century. Our diplomatic experts, legal eagles, fund-raisers, planners and educators are all part of Admin — as you can see, it's not as boring as you might think. Think of working for a charity organization and a national government at the same time — that's what it's like for us.

I'm sure you've heard quite a bit about our science and technology folks. Unless you're in the field yourself, you might not know the names of our top SciTech experts — but I'm sure you're familiar with their results. Anybody here been on a cruise lately? Right. Did you notice how much better the ocean looks? If the boys and girls in SciTech can help it, your children won't believe you when you tell them how polluted and misused the world was when you were their age. There are three major divisions to the scientific wing — Environmental, Medical and Hardtech. Each one has labs scattered around the world, and the staff does a lot of field work. We don't encourage our staff to stay locked in their labs, never seeing much of the world they're trying to better. And the results are pretty dynamic.

The Triton Foundation isn't part of our direct chain of command, but it's the best example of the semi-independent projects that we sponsor. It's also one of the divisions that we're most proud of. Not one person in the world — especially you college students — misses AIDS one bit. We can only wait and see what the wizards at Triton cure next.

All right, I can see you're about ready for me to start talking about Team Tomorrow. [*laughter*] As you know, it has four main branches, each one with about six to eight nova personnel, plus a rotating pool of floating operatives. Heck, I'm sure you can probably name them all. But "T2M" is a lot more than just novas. You don't see as much of the pilots, translators, trainers, investigators, support staff and computer wizards who are all as much part of Team Tomorrow as our nova agents — but they're there. Any one of you could be part of the team, if you impressed us.

Clearly, we're keeping ourselves quite busy — and we're doing our best to grow even further all the time. I hope to see some of you in a few years around the offices — trust me, we're always looking for the best.

Now I'd like to open up the floor to questions. Who's first?

'Stasia,

So, you've gotten on the wrong side of the Utopians, have you? Shame on you. You knew they would enjoy nothing better than tweaking our noses, and to put yourself on their list before you're ready to cope with the consequences — well, darling, it lacks class. I should leave you to their tender mercies; Mal would like nothing better than such a test, I'm certain. But… well, I've always had a compassionate streak. So at least I can tell you where to hide.

There's no getting around the fact that Project Utopia is tight with the United Nations. For Heaven's sake, they've managed to buy off the UN debts of every single member of the Security Council — and now they're a member, albeit an "advisory" one, of the council itself! This just makes it even more difficult to get an "in" among the right people. Most UN member nations just won't hear it, and the Continent, of course, is right out.

This heaping helping of goodwill doesn't extend everywhere. The United States, bless its jealous little heart, can't stand Utopia's success. Public-opinion polls might not reflect that — but just try to push some bit of pro-Utopia legislature through Congress and watch what happens. It doesn't seem to bother Utopia much; note that their continental headquarters are situated in the much more receptive Mexico City, and nobody seems unhappy with that arrangement. But you weren't planning a trip into Mexico, were you?

The United Kingdom's not in love with Utopia, either; that might be a secure place for you to lie low for a while, although you might well be bored to death there. Mumbai might be a better choice, since the Kashmir intervention left a bitter aftertaste in India's mouth. You can mingle with the up-and-coming movie stars while you're there, although for Heaven's sake, don't be *seen* with them!

Ironically enough, Japan seems to be doing its best to create a Project Utopia of its own — or hadn't you noticed the similarities between Nippontai and Team Tomorrow? I suppose Utopia strikes a chord with the Japanese psyche, but it irks them that they've lost a nova or three to Utopia, particularly T2M Asia, rather than to their own patriotic interests. So here they go with their own nationalistic project. What fun. They might ignore you, since they have no personal problems with you — then again, it might tickle them to capture one of Utopia's sworn Teragen enemies.

As a last resort, there's China — but frankly, they're not friendly to anyone. I have a friend or two there, but they're quite busy with their own conversion projects and wouldn't have time to nursemaid a little white girl.

Well, that's about as much as I feel like sharing with you. You should've thought this thing through before starting your little war with them. I hope this will teach you some subtlety.

Raoul

# N!terview

Is Project Utopia handling its power responsibly?

· **Soon Pak, policeman, Seoul:** "They are a fine example to all of humanity, nova or otherwise. Who else has achieved so much?"

· **Terrence Rather, prosecution lawyer, Chicago:** "I suppose it could be much worse. It's an awful lot of power they've got, but they've done all right by it — so far."

· **Jeanne Griseault, elementary school teacher, Paris:** "What sort of example do they think they are setting if they are willing to resort to violence? Nothing can ever be settled by the fist, no matter how powerful the fist."

· **Cory Evert, student, London:** "Utopia's corkin'! So what if those stateside wankers get all knotted up over 'em? If I had that power, I'd use it too! Screw the polls!"

· **Ketema Alemu, farmer, Inewari:** "What kind of answer could you expect? Ten years ago, I and my children were sick, poor and hopeless. Now I eat three meals a day and my son is second-placed on his university's track team. Utopia and the Team Tomorrow are a blessing, and I cannot believe that you would ask otherwise."

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# N!tertainment

Excerpt from introductory sequence to N! news show, *Nova Planet*, air date 03/20/08

Good evening, this is Violet Cameron, and welcome to *Nova Planet*. Tonight, our feature profiles are four of the most prominent figures of Project Utopia — people who work harder than we can imagine every day to make our world a better place. Whether they work on Team Tomorrow or behind the scenes, on-site or in the labs, these four novas are beacons to a brighter future.

**Caestus Pax** — The anchor of Team Tomorrow Central, and the heart and soul of the entire Team Tomorrow project. Some say he's the most powerful nova in existence today. But more than that, Caestus Pax is the ideal of dedication — he is the voice of Project Utopia's vision of hope, peace and the betterment of life on Earth. Tonight, we'll follow him around to watch a day in the life of Pax.

**Jennifer "Slider" Landers** — The spirited young member of T2M whose gifts have saved countless lives from disaster or violence. To many, she is the living counterargument to the Null Manifesto — the girl who proves that no matter what, novas and baselines are not so very different after all. Our cameras go to the locations of her operations, and tonight we'll hear from those who might not be here today if not for her intervention.

**Ana Graça Texeira** — The Brazilian beauty who's equally at home scouring the ocean bed, taking guns away from terrorist guerrillas or helping in the construction of new housing for the homeless. We trace her career from her eruption to the modern day and collect reports from around the world on her latest activities.

**Antaeus** — The reclusive ecological mastermind who spearheaded the close of the ozone layer, the revivification of the world's oceans, the terraforming of the Ethiopian highlands, the Amazon restoration project and countless local environmental-recovery programs. Everything he touches turns to green — so what's next on this hypergenius's schedule? We'll find out.
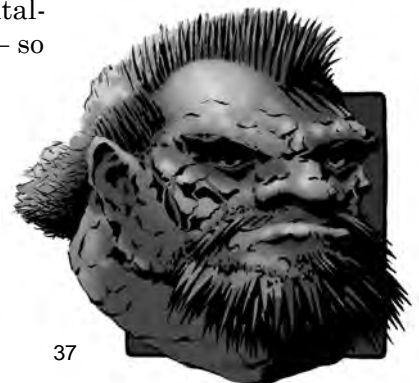
All tonight: on *Nova Planet*.

**Excerpt from a lecture given to prospective Team Tomorrow applicants,** *9/14/06*

I'll skip introductions. By this point, the five of you should know who I am and why you're here. You'll have time to get to know one another, too; this training program makes for excellent bonding material. Think of it as a kind of boot camp — if that scares you, you shouldn't even have made it this far. You're powerful, sure, but are you ready to represent all of Project Utopia when the entire world's looking at you?

You've undergone the Project's training, so we know you can control your powers. Here you'll learn how to *master* them. You need to know everything you're capable of; raw power can cover up for a few mistakes, but one's all it takes to screw you up for good. You'll learn how to apply your potential, and you'll learn self-defense. After all, you're novas — you already have enemies, whether you know who they are or not.

But this isn't the Army. You'll learn much more than self-defense. You'll learn fluency in foreign languages if you didn't have any already. That's right, you have to leave your isolationist ideals at the door here — we're Team Tomorrow, and we represent the world. Not your home country or state or province or county or village — the *world*. Look at your fellows here; doesn't seem too representative of any one country, does it? Your cell won't seem that way, either. We take the best, and excellence doesn't recognize political boundaries. It's no accident that Caestus Pax and Slider serve alongside Makara and Ana Graça Texeira, and them alongside André Corbin and Jinshu Shan.

With that in mind, you'll also be taught etiquette. And I damn well recommend you pay attention during your tutoring. You will be taught how to deal with public speaking, how to act responsibly around crowds, how to be an ideal specimen of humanity whenever the cameras are on you. A poor public image won't get you anywhere in this world.

You may be asking yourselves, "Why should I go to all this trouble when I can get an easier job elsewhere?" You already know the reasons. A generous eight-figure salary. Unmatched health care and insurance benefits. Fame and fortune — a whole world's acclamation, if you think you can handle it. And most importantly, you can go to bed at night richer, more popular and without a scrap of a guilty conscience — because you are doing the right thing with us. And you cannot get that to such a degree anywhere else.

Hi! Nice to see you! I'm Terri, and I'll be your virtual hostess and tour guide. I must say, you've chosen a very popular package. Seems like everyone wants to see inside the headquarters of the four main Team Tomorrow cells these days. Well, we're here to oblige! Naturally, some details have been changed; after all, Team Tomorrow is hardly without its enemies. But for the most part, this tour will give you the impression of what it's like to live with the brave members of Team Tomorrow!

This tour is patterned, appropriately enough, after the headquarters of T2M Central, located in the Addis Ababa Utopia complex. And what a complex it is! Acres and acres of lush garden paradise, filled with animals and plants of the most phenomenal beauty. Of course, no bugs can bite us here — but they couldn't bite you in the flesh, either. Visitors are supplied with special pheromone-treated badges that keep the worst pests at bay.
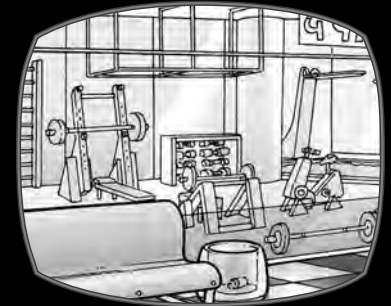
Let's get started! First of all, this is the reception area. I wonder if we'll see anyone from T2M Central here — oops, no luck. I guess they're all too busy to hang out here for any length of time. Note the replica carpets — and yes, that Rodin over by the bay windows is an original. And the

wonderful lighting effects are because this entire complex was designed by none other than Piotr Enrikssen, the nova genius behind much of Project Utopia's architectural engineering projects. No, he doesn't just build dams!

Okay, now let's go to the gym. I hope you won't be disappointed — there's not much by way of combat training equipment there. Team Tomorrow conducts much of its battlefield readiness training on highly specialized staging areas, and we're not told a thing about that. But there's still plenty to see. There's the Olympic-sized pool —

ooh, it looks refreshing. Now note the variable-level gymnastics equipment; it's a lot more impressive than your average set of monkey bars, isn't it? And wait — who's that man using the hydraulic weightlifting press? That's right, it's Makara! Gee, he sure doesn't look like he needs the exercise, does he? What a hunk of muscle!

Now we'll be going to the dining room. You'll note the 13th-century tapes-tries — we understand that they—

INTERRUPT
You have chosen to end this virtual tour.
Please select alternate headquarters tour:

A  T2M Americas
   Mexico City, Mexico

B  T2M, Europe
   Venice, Italy

C  T2M, Asia/Pacific
   Talaud Island

### INTERNAL ÆON SOCIETY MISSIVE

## TOP SECRET • Babel Dossier — File #753-1998-07-09-P • EYES ONLY

**Arena:** Global

**Status:** Active

**Author:** Margaret A. Mercer

**Subject:** Project Pandora

**Minimum Security Rating:** Theta

We are on the verge of a new millennium, one vastly different from any previous age. I speak not only of rapid technological advances, but of new developments in human evolution. Specifically, I refer to three possible offshoots of *Homo sapiens*.

Our zealous colleagues in Project Utopia focus upon the first — and by far the largest — group, eximorphs, or "novas." We in Project Pandora study psychomorphs, or "psychs." The difference between these two is not always apparent. The clearest distinction is that psychs do not appear to experience the physiological transformation that most novas do. In fact, psychs' capabilities are not as potent as those of novas, and they even seem to lack a Mazarin–Rashoud node.

(I mentioned three groups. The last, categorized as paramorphs, are only a theoretical possibility. It is possible that they may be folded into eximorphs or psychomorphs, but that is left to the dedicated few of Project Tantalus to determine.)

Some wonder why we plan to unveil Utopia yet keep Pandora — and Tantalus, for that matter — shielded from public view. Only novas have made enough of an impact on society to warrant establishing a visible front. The number of known psychs remains exceedingly small (a handful confirmed to date), and there is only one documented paramorph (based on records that my grandfather left from the early days of Æon). As such, maintaining a covert agenda helps ensure that we can learn more of our curious subjects with a minimum of distraction.

This does not mean that Pandora is less vital to Æon and humanity than Utopia is. Indeed, one could argue that it is *more* important. Now that these "novas" are well known, literally millions of people are hard at work, hoping to discover the eximorphs' full potential. The compelling psychs have only you: the few diligent souls of Project Pandora.

**From transcript of *Homo Sapiens Novus*, History Channel documentary, original air date February 3, 2008**

So what does someone do once his Mazarin–Rashoud node manifests, and he finds himself possessed of the power of a demigod?

Some have joined with Project Utopia, to pit their astounding powers against a challenge just as great — changing the world for the better. Here novas from all countries use earth-shifting telekinesis to dig canals, or superhuman scientific prowess to cure diseases. Some even join Team Tomorrow, the elite cadre ready to fight rogue novas or raise housing, all depending on the needs of the day.

Others follow their patriotism, joining government agencies such as the armed forces or aerospace programs. Now the human race has walked unaided on the moon, and the possibility of colonizing other planets has leapt centuries sooner to becoming reality. At least one FBI nova has managed to solve baffling cases on an almost daily basis, bringing previously untouchable criminals to justice.

Some have entered the entertainment industry, and they continue to offer us spectacles of sight and sound the likes of which we've never seen.

Some have entered the employment of powerful multinational corporations, serving as spokespersons, special security consultants and even advisors to their employers.

Some have gone freelance, offering their powers to the highest bidder — often in a military capacity. These, the "elites," have been the deciding factor in border conflicts around the globe.

Sadly, a few have decided to use their phenomenal powers for personal gain or advancement. In fact, if not for the efforts of Project Utopia and other novas working for law-enforcement agencies, it's difficult to say if any of these übercriminals would ever have been brought to justice at all. And looming beyond all the independent nova criminals is the terrorist organization known as the Teragen.

The specter of conflict hangs over all these cliques and organizations. Larger than life in every way, many novas find themselves drawn into conflict with their fellow superpowered beings at least once in their lifetime. Sometimes the deciding factor is egotism run out of hand; sometimes it is a conflict of interest, whether an employer's or one's personal issues. But in a world where the only thing that can reliably stop a nova is another nova, these Promethean giants find themselves thrown against each other by chance or design. And the results are always dramatic.

Tonight we'll look at the role of the nova in modern society, from that fateful day in 1998 until...

## Alejandra

**Birth Name:** Alejandra Maria Magdalena Carranza
**Date of Birth:** February 5, 1984
**Place of Origin:** Mexico City, Mexico
**Occupation:** Novox singer

**Powers:** Alejandra is gifted with the power of enhanced vocal projection, as well as some manner of control over sonic energy. She is capable of producing sounds from 200 dB to subsonic levels. Her ability to control ambient sound is currently unmeasured, but she can lower or increase the volume of background noise in her vicinity, and often does so with precise control as part of her novox concerts. She is also capable of a form of superpowered ventriloquism, mimicking and projecting specific voices or sounds anywhere within earshot.

**Background:** Alejandra is another of the dramatic rags-to-riches stories that the M-R node has made possible. Her family was eight strong, all stuck in a Mexico City tenement. As she tells it, only their faith kept them going even in the wake of disasters such as the earthquake of 2002.

Alejandra was a member of her church's choir, and it was there that her power first manifested itself, filling the church with a song of celestial beauty. It didn't take long for the news to pick up on this, and almost instantly her family was besieged with offers of employment from music agents, Hollywood and Bombay movie studios, Project Utopia and more. Alejandra and her father gracefully shooed the majority of these people away, negotiated a simple contract with New River Records, and proceeded to make novox history.

**Estimated Power Levels:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Strength: | 4 |
| Intellect: | 3 |
| Speed: | 6 |
| Offense: | 7 |
| Defense: | 7 |
| Versatility: | 7 |

*I'm waiting on the patio of DuMonde's, sifting through the publicity photographs her office sent for this interview, and already I don't feel up to writing this article. She's possibly the most beautiful woman I've seen — Elizabeth Taylor and Marilyn Monroe, two of the 20th century's biggest sex symbols, seem almost tawdry when compared to her. As I shift over a shot of her sitting pensively on the balcony of her Cancun home, it occurs to me that words just don't seem to do her justice.*

*Then she whirls into the room and settles at my table like a summer wind, a zephyr adorned with a white silk button-down blouse and flared collar, perfectly flattering black Rochellaux pants, and the midnight hair and eyes of an Aztlan angel — and I realize that the pictures didn't do her justice, either.*

*This is, of course, Alejandra — the nova who has redefined Hispanic pop music and is currently shaking the pillars of the entire music industry. She laughs an apology for her tardiness (as if anyone could hold anything against a novox deity-diva like herself) and gently asks the waiter what local fruit is in season right now. I've never seen a DuMonde's waiter so attentive before — he hangs on every one of her murmuring-stream syllables as if she were telling him her phone number, and then he snaps off to the kitchen like St. George after his dragon. Then she turns her attention fully to me, and I feel like Moses having brunch with the burning bush. You would, too.*



• **Vox:** I don't know where to begin, except to thank you profusely for agreeing to this interview.

• **Alejandra:** [*laughs*] Oh, it's nothing.

• **Vox:** You've captured the hearts of the world in less than two years. Since your eruption, you've been consistently wooed by music agents, Hollywood and Bombay studios, Project Utopia — the list goes on and on. And yet you signed a contract with the then-obscure New River Records, and went on to make novox history.

• **Alejandra:** And still the offers come. [*smiles*] Thankfully, my family is always there for me; I don't know what I'd do without them politely shooing away some of these people.

• **Vox:** It's common knowledge that you've used a portion of your earnings to move your family to wonderful houses and put your siblings through college. Obviously, there's a strong bond there. Can you tell us something about your childhood?

• **Alejandra:** It was not easy. My parents raised us as best they could, but we did not live in one of the better portions of Mexico City. Life was very difficult, and I almost never saw Papa on weekdays or Saturdays unless I had secretly stayed up very late to see him come home. Sunday morning was our

special time, when all the family was together and we could go to church together. God was very kind to us in allowing us this time, and I always looked forward to it all week. We had faith — mercifully, enough faith to keep us together during the earthquake of 2002. *(pauses)* We lost almost more than we could bear. But we worked harder, and prayed harder. And then… Well, then I erupted.

• **Vox:** Yes, of course. In your church's choir; we only wish we had a recording of your first song with your new powers. By description, it was positively celestial. But if you'll pardon the question — I know you're probably asked this all the time — what was your eruption like? I mean, can you describe the sensation?

• **Alejandra:** [*laughs*] It's not so easy to describe as you might think!

[She becomes pensive here, and rests one exquisite finger along her chin.]

• **Alejandra:** I think it might be best described as being blind and deaf, and suddenly becoming exposed to light and color and sound all at the same time. It was a tidal wave of new sensation, a wave that drenched me from my skin down to my skeleton. I hear things now that nobody else can, and my voice… [*laughs*] It is something I believe I have to write a song about; perhaps the experience can be properly conveyed only through novox.

• **Vox:** I can hardly wait. Um, now an obvious question is one of musical influences. Apart from your own powers, what other influences have there been on your unique sound?

• **Alejandra:** [*winsome, apologetic smile*] I don't know if I can say for certain. Artists study their art from all angles and choose the elements they prefer. I don't think I can be called an artist — I'm more of a channel for the sound that runs through me. Oh, I've always loved music,

everything from older Crystal Method to DJ Faiz to Roy Orbison — but when I am on stage, my voice is not quite my own.

• **Vox:** You make it sound as if it has a mind of its own.

• **Alejandra:** [*silvery laugh*] Oh, I don't think so! A river doesn't have a mind of its own; it just flows where it must and pours through where it was meant to.

• **Vox:** The media has already made a fairly big deal of your open commitment to your religion. With the rise of sects such as Kamisama Buddhism and the Church of the Immanent Escheaton, as well as the media cults to novas in general, it seems almost that traditional religion is falling out of favor.

• **Alejandra:** [*gentle smile*] Religion isn't something that matters only when it's in favor. Christianity was not "in style" in the time of the Roman Empire.

• **Vox:** Good point. Do you like to think of yourself as a role model for Catholicism, then?

• **Alejandra:** Not really, no. I aspire to live a good life. My mother always taught me that pride was the first and worst sin, so I don't want to think of myself as a role model. If other young people look at me and say, "Alejandra is being a good Christian even though it isn't popular — maybe I should give it a second chance," then wonderful. But I cannot let myself believe that this is what *should* be happening.

• **Vox:** So I take it you don't care for Reverend Tuley's accusations that the nova population will naturally set themselves up as, well, gods on earth?

• **Alejandra:** *Madonna*, no! These powers we have are extraordinary, yes — but to place ourselves above God is ridiculous! You might as well have announced Albert Einstein or Kevin Tuleaud as the second coming of Christ! To be sure, these powers

are a gift — but how very much different is that from being born rich, or intelligent, or with wonderful parents?

• **Vox:** Beautifully put.

• **Alejandra:** [*laughs*] Why, thank you, sir.

• **Vox:** Does anything else really get under your skin?

• **Alejandra:** Yes. The word "aberrant." What started as a term of misunderstanding is becoming a thing of hate. [*stern tone*] I advise your readers never, ever to use the word around me.

• **Vox:** Oh, of course not! We'll move on. Now, some might say you're bucking all the hottest nova trends. You haven't taken a stage name, and you don't bother with any masks — which, I understand, was a tradition originating in Mexico.

• **Alejandra:** It has something to do with the persona, you see. Many novas, particularly the elites and those who emulate them, believe that the mask is their "battle face" — that their persona and their own, personal self are two different people. I understand that Infierno and Esteban Caraçon are in many ways just that, different people with different goals — but no matter whether I am on stage, in church or here with you, I am always Alejandra. [*scintillating smile*] I am perhaps a minority among novas, but I prefer to think of myself as in the majority of people.

• **Vox:** You're maybe too modest. Do you have any idea how… how easy it is for you to change someone's life, simply speaking a few kind words to them?

• **Alejandra:** [*mischievous smile*] How do you mean? Have I changed yours just now?

• **Vox:** Truthfully?

## [Representative Nova Private Employment Contract]

Contract Between Linda Raphael dba Lotus Infinite and TransEurope Expediting, Inc.

This contract is entered into effect as of 5 October 2007 between the parties hereto, who agree as follows in consideration of the mutual promises contained herein:

1. PARTIES. This is a contract by and between TransEurope Expediting, Inc. (henceforth "Corporation"), whose mailing address is 754 Pharr Rd., Richards Building Suite 1108-D, Atlanta, Georgia 30341; and Linda Raphael dba Lotus Infinite, with offices at the DeVries Agency, 808 7th Avenue, Suite 1301, New York City, New York 10011 (henceforth "Operative").

2. RESPONSIBILITIES OF OPERATIVE. The Operative hereby agrees to locate and retrieve 13 OpNet-capable computer information servers, serial numbered XB4365023WQ, XB4365023WR, XB4365023WS, XB4365023WT, XB4365023WU, XB4365023WV, XB4365023WW, XB4365023WX, XB4365023WY, XB4365023WZ, XB4365024WA, XB4365024WB, and XB4365024WC, tentatively titled "Operation: Upgrade" (henceforth, "the Mission").

This Mission shall be performed according to certain specifications provided by the Corporation, and the Mission shall be undertaken for, and in the name of, the Corporation. The Corporation is the sole owner of copyrights exclusive of the Operative's payment fees; the Mission constitutes "work for hire." The Operative is solely responsible for completion of the Mission.

The Mission shall incur operational expenses of no more than one million (1,000,000) dollars in excess of the Operative's payment fees.

The Mission shall commence upon 11 October 2007.

The Mission shall conclude by 18 October 2007.

3. PAYMENTS TO THE OPERATIVE.

a. The Corporation agrees to pay the Operative a flat fee of four hundred thirty-seven thousand (437,000) dollars in two installments, 10 percent of which shall be paid as management fee to the DeVries Agency.

(i) The first installment, of 1/2 total payment, will be paid upon the Corporation's receipt of the signed contract. The second installment, of 1/2 total payment, will be paid upon receipt of the aforementioned servers.

b. A kill fee equal to 10% of the total payment will be paid to the operative should this contract be terminated by the Corporation.

(i) If the servers or any part of the servers or their required components are delivered to the Corporation after the specified deadline, a penalty of 2% of project's total payment will be imposed for each day that the Mission remains unfinished after the specified date.

c. The Corporation will pay to Operative a royalty of four percent (4%) of the net profit per recovered server sold.

(i) On servers destroyed, given away or sold at or below cost, no royalties shall be paid.

4. RELATIONSHIP. The Operative represents and warrants that, between the Mission Dates specified by the Corporation, the Mission shall be disavowed and denied by the Corporation and representatives thereof, nor shall the Corporate be under any legal liability to avow this Contract or the terms herein. The Operative shall not rely on or reveal the nature of contents of this contract to any individual outside the Corporation or its duly recognized fellows. Should such individuals exist, the Corporation shall provide detailed, written descriptions of them and shall assume all responsibility for the veracity of those descriptions, provided suitable precautions regarding security are taken, in good faith, by the Operative. The Operative shall under no circumstances discuss the Mission with government or law-enforcement agencies, even if the circumstances of the Mission lead the Operative into conflict with said agencies.

5. CIVIL LIMITATIONS. The Operative will endanger no innocent lives, participate in no unwarranted attack upon individuals not associated with the person or entity responsible for theft of the Corporation's property, and kill no individuals directly associated with the person or entity responsible for theft of the Corporation's property. Due to policies upheld by the Corporation, the Operative shall perform neither the Infinite Wind Technique nor the Infinity Justifier while carrying out the terms of this contract. Property damages caused by the Operative are considered to fall under operational expenses outlined in Paragraph 2, and are to be reimbursed by the Corporation to the extent discussed therein.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY. In consideration of the confidential material and business plans supplied by the Corporation to assist in the performance of the Mission, the Operative agrees not to reveal any of said confidential material or business plans to anyone not working for or in behalf of the Corporation without the Corporation's prior written permission.

7. TRADEMARK AND PROPERTY PRODUCTION AND PROTECTION. In consideration of the fee paid under this contract, the Operative agrees that, upon execution of this contract, he will not participate in any Operation: Upgrade-related project except for the Corporation or its licensees, unless the Operative receives direct written permission from the Corporation. "Participation" shall include subsequent "re-recovery" of the specified servers or their contents, destruction of or security relaxation of the specified servers or their contents, tampering with or other consultation on matters regarding the specified servers or their contents. "Contents" shall include intangible data or information contained as

data on the specified servers. This shall in no way limit the Operative's right to write or be interviewed for magazine articles, perform compensated endorsements and the like, subject to Paragraphs 4 and 6.

8. MISCELLANEOUS.

a. Governing Law. This contract, including all matters relating to the validity, construction, performance and enforcement thereof, shall be governed by the laws of the State of Georgia.

b. Severability. The provisions of this agreement are severable, and if any provision shall be held illegal, invalid or unenforceable, such holding shall not affect the legality, validity or enforceability of any other provision. Any such illegal, invalid or unenforceable provision shall be deemed stricken herefrom as if it had never been contained herein, but all other provisions shall continue in full force and effect.

c. Final Agreement. This contract contains the entire agreement between the parties with respect to the subject matter hereof and supersedes any prior agreements between the parties, written or oral, with respect to such subject matter.

d. Notices and Reports. All notices or demands required or permitted under this agreement shall be in writing and shall be deemed served when deposited in the United States Mail, first class postage prepaid, certified or registered mail, return receipt requested, addressed as provided in Paragraph 1 of this contract, or to such other address as either party may from time to time designate in writing. All reports or payments required under this contract shall be served as above, but no certification or registration shall be required.

_____  
Corporation

_____  
Operative

_____  
Social Security Number

_____  
Date

_____  
Date

## Duke "Core" Baron

**Birth Name:** Louis Martin Freeman
**Date of Birth:** August 4, 1979
**Place of Origin:** Brooklyn, NYC
**Occupation:** Tournament shootfighter; current XWF World Heavyweight Champion

**Powers:** Core possesses powerful plasma-generation powers, which he can manifest in several ways. Most common is the projection of plasma bolts capable of liquifying solid steel. However, he is also able to manifest a plasma shield that can stop small-arms fire, as well as channel his excess energy through his own form to increase his physical strength and durability.

**Background:** By his own accounts, Louis Freeman manifested his powers almost immediately after the Galatea explosion of 1998. Nobody could approach the whirling mass of plasma that surrounded him Ñ until the effects died down two hours later. Louis fled at that time, evading police and National Guard alike to find his way underground.

He resurfaced in Japan two years later, where the first nova-level shootfight competitions had begun. Having learned to control his innate abilities, as well as keeping his already potent fighting prowess up to date, he rapidly made a name for himself in the independent fighting circuits. When the XWF first formed in 2004, Freeman Ñ now under a new name Ñ became one of its first recruits.

Core is most famous for the radiant yellow-white glow of his energy powers, which emanates from his eyes and mouth when he experiences "power buildup" Ñ an event often accompanying an aggravated emotional state. In other words, the angrier he gets, the more his power builds. This happens now and again in tournaments, and when it does, watch out Ñ because the Core Meltdown[a] isn't far behind!

**Estimated Power Levels:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Strength: | 6 |
| Intellect: | 3 |
| Speed: | 6 |
| Offense: | 8 |
| Defense: | 7 |
| Versatility: | 5 |

**Excerpt: Carson Whitland's orientation interview, Holistics Research, Incorporated, 08/17/05**

• **Meade:** Formalities aside, Carson, it's wonderful to have you aboard. We're all very excited about the potential you're bringing to Holistics.

• **Whitland:** Thanks very much, Ms. Meade. I'm looking forward to it.

• **Meade:** Oh, please — call me Sara.

• **Whitland:** Um. Sure thing, Sara.

• **Meade:** Great! Now, let's get started. We're pleased that you've accepted our offer of employment; I can't stress enough how happy we are to have you aboard.

• **Whitland:** Well, to be honest, I *have* heard the stories about nova-run corporations, and it did sound pretty tempting — but I'd rather go ahead and work on research full-time. I don't have much of a head for business, and my... um, powers seem to lend themselves better toward research and analysis than playing the stock market.

• **Meade:** Well, we're glad to hear that. And as I've mentioned before, we're more than willing to make it worth your while to stay on with us.

• **Whitland:** [*laughs*] It's sure hard to say no to a seven-figure startup salary!

• **Meade:** More than that, Carson. Your hyper-enhanced senses are a very valuable asset to us, to say nothing of your ability to handle dangerous chemicals without harm. We've put together one very attractive package of benefits for you — full medical and dental with the Rostrem Clinic—

• **Whitland:** Really! Ahem — sorry.

• **Meade:** Quite all right. Anyway, there's also a multimillion-dollar life insurance policy, expense account, company transport, provisions for retireElitesment, shares in the company stock — I don't think you'll be able to find a better offer out there.

• **Whitland:** Well, uh, probably not. But really, I'd already been kind of keeping track of the various research institutes while I was in college, and this seemed like a great place to come and work. Doing what I want to do, I mean. You know.

• **Meade:** [*laughs*] You've got the job, Carson! There's no need to butter us up — you can save that for your first performance review!

• **Whitland:** [*sheepish laughter*] Yeah, I guess you're right.

• **Meade:** Well, if you'll just sign here, then, I'll give you the full tour of the facilities and start making introductions. All right?

• **Whitland:** Sounds great, so long as we stop somewhere and grab some lunch soon. Nova-sized appetite, you know....

• **Meade:** [*laughter*]

# N the news

## Excerpt from General Tobias Gahagan's press conference, August 10th, 2000

We are proud to report a unilateral success in the Desert Hawk operation, in the most part owed to the successful deployment of our official US Armed Forces nova operations agents. Over the course of three days — which was the operating window — the United States military suffered only three casualties. Our nova ops completely disabled the enemy's nuclear silos and brought down the two launched missiles without so much as a scratch in the casing.

It is the intention of the United States Armed Forces to continue to recruit novas for just such operations. One nova can prove to have all the firepower of a jet squadron at a fraction of the cost to the taxpayers. That's why I'm pleased to announce the Nova Recruitment Initiative, a program which offers benefits and rewards commensurate to the obviously high value of a nova volunteer. We want any young novas out there to know that they have a place in the United States military, a place where they will be treated with honor and respect….

It's no surprise that the military potential of novas was put to the test almost immediately. After all, a combat-trained nova is worth a platoon of men, and he doesn't require near the amount of resources to maintain. As costly as retaining a nova (or a force of novas) is for military purposes, doing so relieves a much greater tax burden otherwise spent on conventional armaments, thus freeing up previously unheard-of resources for social programs or otherwise "kinder, gentler" government initiatives.

N!tertainment

N!terview

N! the news

N!sight

N!tre nous

N!ternet

N!tv

fun N! games

help!

awards

legal stuff

search

[          ]

f i n d !

N contact us

# N!sight

The "elites." Nova mercenaries. Superpowered soldiers for hire.

By all accounts, it's a glamorous job. A standard contract can pay an elite over $10 million a year — and that's for a relatively raw and unproven nova. Veterans can demand much, much more. They are among the most notorious and respected men and women in the world — and yet, they are also tied into a world of blood and death, where "minor" wars such as the 2007 Trans-Tanzanian Conflict are fought entirely by elite proxies.

Tonight we delve into the deadly world of the elites, where international boundaries mean little next to nova-level power, tarnished glamour and, of course, the universal law of currency. We look at the practices of these mask-wearing, code-named agents for hire and even travel on a mission with one. All tonight, on the Cutting Edge.

[Opening credits roll]

When discussing the elites, the most obvious place to begin is with the mask. Where so many other novas are proud to let the world look on their features, the elites have evolved a subsociety in which the mask, the persona, is more important than the person beneath. Certainly, some of this stems from the desire to keep one's identity concealed, particularly when jobs take one far from home — or too close to home.

But a mask is hardly anonymity. It's a persona, a character larger than life. Take, for instance, the golden skull mask of Tötentanz. It's a symbol that has come to represent professionalism and surgical precision — not mercy. When his mask comes into view, his opponents, whoever they may be, give little thought to the man underneath the mask. Instead, it's Tötentanz they fear, a modern-day incarnation of death. The mask is pure intimidation, pure publicity, without giving away anything of the man beneath.

In such a society, it's no wonder that unmasking is a ritual of its own. When two elites develop such a grudge that they're driven to duel with one another, the stakes are rarely to the death. However, sometimes one's whole persona is on the line, as the winner takes the loser's mask as a trophy. In many ways, this is very much like the myth of the Old West, where gunfighters would challenge one another to see whose legend would emerge paramount. The winner of such a duel gains boasting rights, which can lead to more lucrative contracts — after all, he's just proven himself a better fighter than at least one rival. But the loser can never really put on his mask again. The image has been shattered. The immortal is now a little more mortal.

And yet, the power of a nova is such that even an unmasked elite can command great respect. One need look no farther for an example than the self-proclaimed "Stone Badass," Lance Stryker. When unmasked by rival elite Borealis in the spring of 2007, he rallied back with such drive and charisma that his name is now a household word. His licensing arrangements are as profitable as even those of Caestus Pax and André Corbin — not bad for a mercenary.

[Add footage of interview with Lance Stryker, prior to resolution of 5/06/07 Corpus Christi incident]

**Stryker:** "Yeah, I've heard your fancy-ass press releases about how you think your sorry asses are so superior to normal people and how you think you can lick just about any man on the face of this planet. You bitch and you moan and then you don't get anything done unless you count hiding behind a bunch of women and children. You wanna sit there on top of your "moral superiority"? Well, you're about to get Lance Stryker's boot so far up your ass that your moral superiority's gonna be fired on out your nose, and that's a damn fact!"

[END SCRIPT EXCERPT]

## [BEGIN AUDIO CLIP; RECORDED MESSAGE]

Good evening, Dr. Moran. I hope this message reaches you in good health.

My name is Elaine Katzenbaum, and I'll be your contact with the DeVries Agency. First of all, I'd like to thank you for your interest in our operation. We've worked very hard to attain our reputation as the foremost contracting agency for freelance novas, and we hope that we can prove to you that our reputation is justified.

Regulations forbid us from attaching an extended file of our nova operatives, so you'll pardon me for the omission. I'd like to arrange a meeting with you at your earliest convenience; there we can discuss the nature of employment and the available agents that would be best suited for your purposes. Rest assured that should you require a task that runs a high risk of nova-level conflict, we have agents that are fully capable of meeting that challenge. Naturally, our elite agents such as Pursuer are available as well, should you require a very visible presence. Our resources are such that we feel confident we'll have someone available to suit your needs, no matter the place, time or job description.

We've already completed our credit check, so don't let that be a worry. We can discuss exact terms when we meet face-to-face. Again, I look forward to it, and thank you once more for coming to us. Rest assured that your task is as good as completed.

## [END RECORDED MESSAGE]
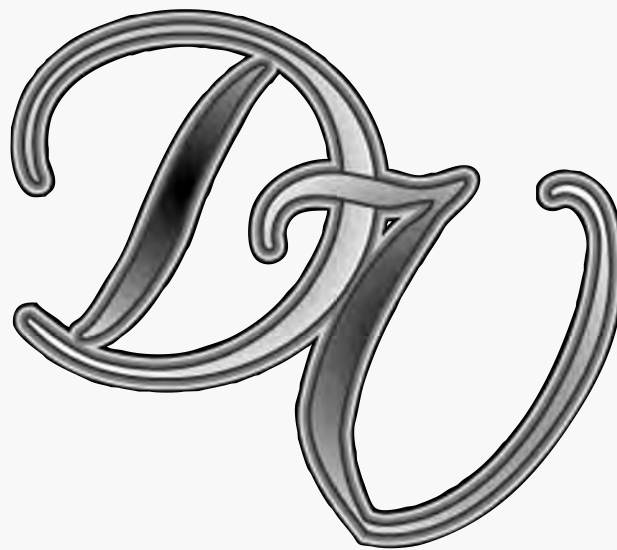
# N! the news

…And in Kyoto today, the highly enthusiastic reception for the vacationing Pursuer fell a little flat with the arrival of Caestus Pax. Pursuer was disembarking from his private jet and acknowledging the crowds when Pax dropped out of the skies, landing well clear of Pursuer's entourage but certainly close enough for conversation. Seemingly, no clear words were exchanged, but a staredown of sorts emerged, one that the crowd encouraged with cheers for both sides. It ended inconclusively when Pax pointedly turned his back on Pursuer and lifted off into the skies again. Although Project Utopia has made no official comment, most experts believe that this was certainly a statement of disapproval regarding Pursuer's part in the latest Argentinian operation. It certainly wouldn't be the first time that the Utopian agents have clashed with DeVries elites over ideology; the DeVries Agency has constantly and aggressively promoted the belief that their elites are more professional and efficient than the "Tomorrow idealists."

And when these two forces clash, even nonviolently, who benefits? Well, the licensees, for one. Toy sales show an average 10% increase for Utopia and DeVries licensed products just after any threat of hostilities between the two. Apparently if the nation's youth can't see the Highwayman and Skew duke it out on national TV, they'll have to settle for staging their own battles on the playground or in the arcade.

**N**
TV

## From an N! Broadcast of *Two Minutes Hate* on January 21, 2008

The following television program does not represent the opinions of N! or its employees. *Two Minutes Hate* is intended as a public forum, whereby novas of all creeds and orientations may make their views known. It also serves as an abstract index of nova popularity, as interpreted from independent polls conducted by the N! Network.

### Recommended highlights this week on N!:

• **Sunday, 8 pm:** The broadcast premiere of Yoshiro Kumito's controversial film *Hand of God*, starring Michelle Caspar and Tora. Religion and quantum powers are explored in this powerful vision of what it means to have the power to change the world. Viewer discretion is advised.

• **Tuesday, 9 pm:** *Bucking the Odds*, the documentary covering the XWF from its inception to today. See what it's like to work behind the scenes at this multimillion-dollar organization, and find out just how it manages to keep on delivering top-notch battles every week.

• **Wednesday, 10 pm:** The highly controversial interview with Mefistofaleez makes this week's edition of *Constellation* a standout. Parental filters are strongly encouraged.

• **Friday, 2 pm:** Kirsten Dunst returns to *Storms at Sunset* as Violet rises from the dead in the landmark 200th episode. Will anything ever be the same in Storm Bay?

"I hereby swear to become the ravager of humanity, harbinger of misery and the reaper of souls. Everywhere I pass, I will leave despair and wretchedness in my wake. Children will die when I gaze at them and mothers will take ill when I turn in their direction. I will eat only bones and drink only blood. I have become anathema. I have become the absence of hope. My footsteps leave flame and I travel at the velocity of pain. Where I tread, nothing grows; who I touch, never heals. Sickness and famine are my brothers, and I am a companion to owls and a father to bats. The pious curse me as I strike them down; the virtuous shudder as I slay their wives and consume their children. I feel tenfold the pain I inflict, yet it drives me on to greater brutality. Hide your daughters and arm your sons, for I walk among you."

— Count Dragunov, popularity rating 62 percent

"I'm calling you out, Dan Miller and Crystalhawk! You think the Face could give a half a damn about you, Miller, and your pissant problems? Well have no doubt, next week is gonna be the week of the Face. So what the Face wants to know is if you two pansy-ass chuckleheads don't have too much powder in your panties. Yor step up to bat, you face the Face two-on-one, I'll make your chump asses famous, 'cause the Face will be smack dab right in the middle of the intersection of Hollywood and Vine. And what he plans on doing, is the Face will take his right fist, the Face will take his left fist, and then the Face will commence on laying the almighty beatdown on both your punk asses. Now, what the Face will do after that, is he's gonna hulk up the Face Hammer, he's gonna drop the Face Anvil and one of you loudmouth chesters is gonna suffer the Atomic Face Genocide right in the middle of the street. And then the Face will proceed to climb the N! broadcast tower foot by foot *by God-blessed foot.* And when it's all said and done, and when all the world is through chanting the Face's name — and the fireworks are over — you two chuckleheads will have joined the billions and billions of the Face's devoted followers who know damn well that the Face is, and will forever be — and the Face means *forever* be — the most hardcore in the world."

— Rocky "The Face" Elizondo, popularity rating 98 percent

## Letter to the Editors

As I had no doubts, Issue 37 sparkled and shone, particularly Will Fraser's fascinating look at the decline of the two-party system in American politics. Not that it's any of our business what the presidents choose to do, but they must accept responsibility for those actions should they come to a public light.

Three years ago, Congress brought up a legislative proposal that would have created a greater role for the government in media, entertainment and cultural development. Proponents of the bill, citing too much emphasis on novas in the media, on the big screen and in other entertainment venues, claimed society sought unattainable role models. Those opposing the bill upheld the independent studios' rights to make whatever their audiences wanted to see, culminating in then-presidential candidate Earvin Waterman remark, "as long as it keeps [novas] out of politics." Well, I've got news for you, Mr. Waterman. From what the public sees of novas, we know their plans and agendas. They don't hide behind petty smokescreens and spin-doctoring campaigns funded by taxpayer money. Perhaps if this country took a *political cue* from its novas, we wouldn't have suffered the collapse of our political engine in the first place.

Anthony Freeman,

Tulsa, OK

Anthony's plea for honesty in politics couldn't come at a better time — to refute his point. See Mim Udovitch's shocking exposé of RusCon's Sierka administration, page 125, for more insight into the nova-political arena. — Ed.

# N!tertainment

## Sports Entertainment

Most team sports simply don't allow nova participants. After all, where's the fun of a basketball game if one man with superhuman reflexes consistently wins every game for his team single-handedly? At least Michael Jordan's opponents had a *chance*....

Nonetheless, the 2004 Olympics saw the first nova-specific track and field events, although naturally, not all countries were able to field a representative, much less a team. Similarly, Project Utopia often sponsors certain all-nova athletic events as charity fundraisers; even a comparably sedate sport like tennis gets pretty amazing when the participants are Skew and Hammerlock. Conversely, there has been a marked decline in interest for most sports without nova involvement; the glory days of multimillionaire professional athletes are no longer with us.



Of course, there is one arena where novas can test their talents against each other and rake in a fortune in merchandising, pay-per-view proceeds and endorsement deals....

KNOW I'VE SAID THIS BEFORE, BUT WE REALLY COULD BE LOOKING AT THE GREATEST MATCH IN THE HISTORY OF OUR SPORT! CORE HAS BEEN RIDING HIGH ON TOP OF THE HEAVYWEIGHT DIVISION FOR TWO MONTHS NOW — AND IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT THESE TWO WOULD NOW COLLIDE!

• **DUSTIN MCSHANE:** ROB "SUPERBEAST" STEELE! THE ONE NOVA WHO'S NOT ONLY MAN ENOUGH TO TAKE CORE DOWN, BUT WHO VERY WELL MIGHT LAND THE INVINCIBLE ONE IN INTENSIVE CARE!

• **DYLAN:** PARTICULARLY WHEN YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THE VARIABLE-ENVIRONMENT ARENA THAT WE HAVE SET UP HERE TONIGHT! SUPERBEAST EXCELS AT VARIABLE-LEVEL PLATFORMS AND A VARIETY OF SURFACES — AS HIS MATCH LAST MONTH WITH MAXX MAULER PROVED. ALTHOUGH THE EXPIRED TIME LIMIT MADE THE MATCH'S RESULT INCONCLUSIVE—

• **MCSHANE:** MAULER WAS SAVED BY THE BELL! IF THAT MATCH HAD GONE ANY FARTHER, MAULER WOULD BE DOWN DEEPER THAN OUR BOTTOMLESS PIT™!

• **DYLAN:** I DON'T KNOW IF I'D GO THAT FAR, DUSTIN. AND IT LOOKS LIKE OUR ANNOUNCER IS READY TO BRING THE CHALLENGER TO THE RING!

• **ANNOUNCER:** LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE FOLLOWING CONTEST IS STIPULATED AS "NO TIME LIMIT," AND IT WILL PROCEED UNTIL ONE OF THE COMBATANTS IS NO LONGER ABLE TO CONTINUE. IT IS FOR THE XWF HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE! INTRODUCING FIRST — HAILING FROM DETROIT, MICHIGAN AND WEIGHING IN AT 613 POUNDS — THE CHALLENGER! HE IS THE NOVA WITH NO HEART — THE LORD OF THE DEAD — THE CORPSEGRINDER! HE IS ROB STEELE — SUUUPERRRBEEEEAST!

• **DYLAN:** GOOD GOD, WHAT A MONSTER!

• **MCSHANE:** LOOK AT HIM LICKING HIS CHOPS! HE CAN'T WAIT TO SINK HIS TEETH INTO CORE!

• **ANNOUNCER:** AND NOW — FROM BROOKLYN, NEW YORK CITY — WEIGHING IN AT 280 POUNDS — HE IS THE REIGNING CHAMPION OF THE SPORT AND THE MASTER OF THE CORE MELTDOWN™. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, YOUR X! W! F! HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION OF THE WOOOOORRRLD — DUKE! CORE! BAROOOONNN!

• **DYLAN:** THE CHAMPION! LOOK AT THAT PLASMA ROLL OFF HIM!

- **MCSHANE:** THESE TWO GUYS ARE GONNA BEAT THE CRAP OUT OF EACH OTHER WITH PUNCHES THAT COULD STOP TANKS! I CAN HARDLY WAIT!



- **DYLAN:** THERE'S THE BELL — AND THERE THEY GO!

- **MCSHANE:** OH YEAH, BABY!



- **DYLAN:** DEAR GOD! LOOK AT THAT! CORE HAS BLASTED SUPERBEAST STRAIGHT UP THROUGH THREE CONCRETE PLATFORMS! NOBODY CAN WALK AWAY FROM THAT!



- **MCSHANE:** DON'T COUNT YOUR CHICKENS, JOJO! LOOK AT THAT!

- **DYLAN:** ALREADY REGAINED CONTROL! SUPERBEAST HAS RICOCHETED OFF A — GOOD LORD!

- **MCSHANE:** I COULD BARELY SEE IT! HE HIT HIM, BUT—



- **DYLAN:** FANS, REMEMBER THAT THE RECORDINGS OF THESE MATCHES — FLURRY OF PUNCHES! NO! CORE'S BLASTED SUPERBEAST FREE! — THE RECORDINGS AVAILABLE FOR SALE THROUGH THE XWF ARE CAREFULLY EDITED FOR THE BEST ANGLE OF EVERY BLOW, AND DOUBLE-TAPED: ONE AT REGULAR SPEED, ONE SLOWED DOWN SO THAT THE HUMAN EYE CAN—



- **MCSHANE:** LOOK OUT! SUPERBEAST HAS A CHUNK OF THAT CONCRETE PLATFORM!

- **DYLAN:** HE'S RUNNING — IS HE GOING TO...? NO! HE'S HURLED IT LIKE A SHOTPUT!



- **MCSHANE:** CORE'S DOWN! CORE'S DOWN!

- **DYLAN:** THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS IN THE XTREME WARFARE FEDERATION — THE UNCHALLENGED LEADER IN NOVA SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT!



- **MCSHANE:** IS THIS IT? IS IT OVER?

- **DYLAN:** NOT BY A LONG SHOT! CORE'S BACK UP AGAIN — AND SUPERBEAST IS ALL OVER HIM!

# From the *Book of Kalpa*

## Foreword:

Response to the coming of the novas and their role in the modern world has been so strong that, as of this printing of the *Book of Kalpa*, membership in the Church of the Immanent Escheaton has eclipsed that of many Christian denominations. Since our inception in 1998, we have converted a vast cross-section of the Western world to our point of view, glory be to the One, through the mysteries with which He has aided our crusade.

— Chrystian Kalpa

## Chapter Three: On Holy Living:

The thetans, which may suffer plague or spiritual decay, may best be kept at peak health through a regimented diet. As the Apostles themselves ate bread and drank wine with the nova Christ at the Last Supper, so should the pure seek to emulate them, succumbing neither to gluttony nor the lusts of indulgence. Bland foods do not excite the body unduly, and so should they support the mind with their foundation of simplicity.

## Chapter Four: Ascension to Immanence:

We may all become Immanent, awakening the blood of the nova within all of us. A proper diet, and observance of the 30 Escheatic Commandments, paves the way. Listen to the higher soul during the daily meditations, for only by denying the lower soul may one reveal the path toward Immanence.

And those who have earned their transcendence shall bear the Unknown's Eye, though it shall be invisible to all but others who share it. Whether this is known by its temporal name — the Mazarin–Rashoud node — or by its spiritual significance as the mark of the deity's favor, those Immanents who have become so blessed shall know the way to Heaven.

## Chapter Six: Meditations:

Yet the fundaments behind the revelatory Church of the Immanent Escheaton are logical outgrowths of established faith. We do not form a cult, nor are we heretics. Observance of the Immanent Escheaton is a philosophy, a way of life. God is here among us, just as He was among the Catholics of the Middle Ages and the Protestants during the Reformation, and just as He is still among them. God — the One — loves all His children.

## Chapter Seven: A Chorus of Voices:

And so numbered among those practicing the Immanent Escheaton were Gautama Buddha; Jesus Christ; Martin Luther King, Jr.; the Comte St. Germain; Louis XIV of France; and Madame Blavatsky. And so numbered among those practicing the Immanent Escheaton are those who are born into the world, for in the purity of birth lies the introduction to Immanence and the faith that one basks forever in the love of our lord God.

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All eyes in Japan have turned upward to view the grandeur of Bodhisattva Masato, the nova leader of the country's nascent Kamisama Buddhist movement.

According to Kamisama Buddhist belief, novas are reincarnated 'bodhisattvas' and 'asuras,' divine beings placed on Earth as avatars to lead the rest of the world toward enlightenment.

Such beliefs are not uncommon elsewhere in the world, and this phenomenon sees parallels in the Western doctrine of the Church of the Immanent Escheaton and several smaller, less recognized but no less devout faiths in any number of countries.

The trend has taken a disturbing turn in Japanese culture, however, as the nation's youth, obsessed with the nova as a popular cultural icon, form cults of personality centered on certain members of Japan's nova population. In a society so inundated with a constant flow of media as Japan, these 'new messiahs' come and go as quickly as one can change the channel. For the devoted, however, the nova becomes a way of life as well as a conduit to the heavens.

Seven youths were found in an Osaka school yesterday, naked and cold-bodied, their bloodstreams robbed of oxygen by fatal quantities of adrenocilin, a drug used by fledgling novas to control their quantum powers. Less than an hour after the students' bodies were found, 14-year-old Toshiro Shigematsu turned himself in to Osaka authorities. A documented nova for three months, Shigematsu claimed to have persuaded the other children to take his prescription adrenocilin, telling them it would make them novas. When questioned as to his motive for telling the children this, Shigematsu stated that he was a demon sent back from Hell to reap the souls of the innocent.

Bodhisattva Masato has issued a public censure of the event, but when pressed by Japanese media representatives, he claimed that, quote, 'with good must come evil, and the asuras wickedly follow the paths the bodhisattvas tread.' Other members of the Kamisama Buddhist camp have expressed displeasure at the circumstances surrounding the Osaka child-suicide.

Osaka authorities, with corroboration from other Japanese law-enforcement agencies, claim that incidents like this are not isolated, however. In fact, though the island nation claims as much as a nine percent population of Kamisama Buddhists, several known groups draw constant police scrutiny, as officials grow ever wary of terrorist acts performed under the auspices of religious fervor.

Until further events develop, I'm Lotta Voorhies, CNN Netherlands correspondent in Japan.

**From *Full Nova Extra*, on N!**

"Hell, I should go over to Japan. They *worship* novas over there. It's part of that Buddhist thing."

— Starchylde

keep reading

# From the Associated Press

**Dime Box, Texas** — Houston-sponsored nova Graham "Houston Tornado" Herron was found shot repeatedly with heavy-gauge shotguns and high-powered hunting rifles, then stabbed and beaten Monday night just after nine p.m. Dime Box Sheriff Tom Boddard found the body, which was reported to have been marked with various symbols associated with the Church of Michael Archangel. Powder burns marked the weapons as having been discharged at close range.

"There must have been a lot of the Michaelites to take one of these boys down," stated Sheriff Boddard. "We haven't heard of any of their compounds around here, but maybe they came from Austin or Nacogdoches. We rarely see any of that group around here, let alone novas."

A spokesman for the Church of Michael Archangel's Austin compound, Grand Deacon Micah Piper, had much to say on the subject. "We don't like aberrants. I'm not saying we did what happened to Herron or whoever he was, but he obviously met his match in God's chosen." Other members of the Michaelite church shared the sentiment via OpNet and Internet, issuing letters of support to the Austin branch. According to Disciple Stephen Leeds of Montana, "Aberrants don't belong among normal people"; in the words of Virginia Michaelite Suzanne Haslett, "Why should we weep for the passing of the Devil's own?"

Seven-year-old Lucy Corgan issued perhaps the most telling remark: "My papa has a gun that will drop an aberrant dead in his tracks, and so do all his friends."

The weeks to come may be tense, as Graham Herron's DeVries-represented companions Linda Raphael and Elijah Crane have returned to Houston to "rally some novas interested in justice." Grand Deacon Piper claims not to be scared, boldly responding, "The righteous God is with us, you spawn of Satan. We've got enough guns and faith to lay you out just like what happened to your friend."
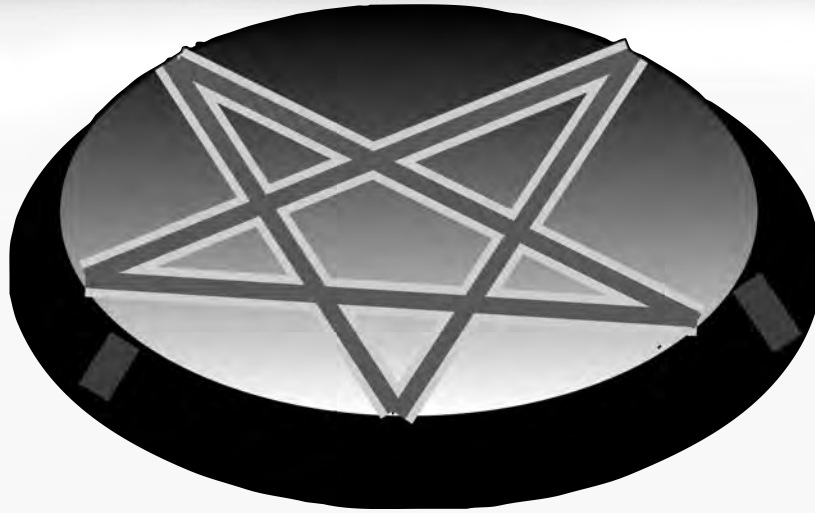
Welcome to the **Dark Altar**, the online home of Astaroth and his avatars Beltaine, Belial and Grimskull.

Member Name: [                    ]

Password: [                    ]

"The forth angel poured his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire; they were scorched by the fierce heat, but they cursed the name of God, who had authority over these plagues, and they did not repent and give him glory." — Revelation 16:8

Astaroth has spoken, and his word takes precedence of those of the feeble Christian armies lined up for the slaughter. In the name of our lord Astaroth, the world shall be consumed in a firey cloud, burning those who welcome the Word of God or the Immanent. And lo, the world shall end on the Candelmas of 2017, for that is the number of the great Harbinger Belial.

**News of Astaroth:**

• Thanks to everyone for the donations for Brother Elias's court appeal legal fees. Send money to Brotther Elias (Stanley Welty), #68291-013, MCFP Springfield, PMB 4000, Springfield, MO 65808-4000. DO NOT TALK ABOUT THE CASE OR THE INFANTS. That will just get your letter torn up. You can also email brother Elias at **Error! Reference source not found.**

• The Burning Man Astaroth Reunion drew over 100 (!) Astaroth servants. Click *here* to see some of the pictures and read the Convocation Litany as spoken by the Astaroth himself!

• Legal procedures have been finished! The Dark Altar, under the name Church of Astaroth, is now a legally-recognised, tax exempt Church!

**N!sight**

**From "Masks and Marvels"** in *Nova Nouveau* **Magazine, April 2007**

Novas, often perceived as "superheroes" among the less educated ranks of our society, seem to have adopted a few of the comic-book traditions of their fictionalized predecessors. A Mexican innovation formerly sported only by elites, the mask has become fashionable among other novas recently, and may be well on its way toward becoming the hot accessory for novas and wannabes alike. *Nova Nouveau* looked into this burgeoning trend, hoping to gain a bit of insight into the trend. What we found was… *interesting* to say the least.

## Why do you wear a mask?

• **Shannen "Shard" Borland:** Um, I thought all novas were supposed to. You know, part of the tradition and all that.

• **Mefistofaleez:** So when I beat your punk white ass, you can't serve me with a summons. *[Ed. Note: In the case of Hogan v. Mefistofaleez (Dec. 2007), the Supreme Court upheld non-novas' rights to bring charges against the personas of known novas, regardless of whether or not those novas were operating in a public or private capacity.]*

• **Jonas "Kikjak" Kincaid:** A mask commands respect. You know you're dealing with a nova when you see the mask — when I yell at an ogling crowd to get the hell out of the way, they all know that I'm about to throw something big over there.

**We asked the same question of baselines: Why have some novas taken to wearing masks?**

• **Vernon Gosselaar:** Because they're ashamed of the aberrant freaks they've become. Twenty years ago, it was athletes on steroids; now it's this.

• **Billy Li:** Aren't they like uniforms? A nova with a recognized mask is part of the govern-

keep reading

• **Nha "Lady Ion" Nguyen:** It lets me adopt a different personality. I've actually got two nova personas, one of which has a contract with ViaSoft and the other with IBM. Of course, they were smart enough to put noncompetition clauses in those contracts, so I just made up another "character" to get around that little obstacle. And my lawyer says it's airtight.

• **Sean "Switch" Connell:** It looks cool, and it hides the fact that my eyebrows grow together. I keep a secret, private identity aside from my public, nova identity, so I don't have to deal with all the public-servant bullshit when I'm not "on."

• **Lance "Stone Badass" Stryker:** Masks are for cowards. I don't do nothin' I'm afraid to own up to, and that's a damn fact!

ment or Utopia or something.

• **Sabrina Vasquez:** They are so beautiful, it would destroy our minds to look upon them without masks.

• **Joaquin Bialik:** It's all part of the franchise. If Captain Eon or whoever looked like John Q. Public, he couldn't sell T-shirts, Halloween costumes, computer games and posters, you know?

## From *The Londoner Abroad,* Volume II, Issue 9 (September 2007)

**Novas-Only Club Draws Fire From Local Scenesters:** When entrepreneusse Travius Diaz designed her latest night-spot for the beautiful people, she had a specific group of beautiful people in mind: novas. A strict novas-only policy at the glamourous Amp Room (with one exception made for hostess Diaz herself) ensures that only the superpowerful get in, and the mundane remain without.

"This isn't bigotry," Diaz claims, despite no intimation of the journalist to that effect. "Novas prefer each other's company. That's what led me to my decision for the novas-only club. Recent research into the sociology of novas indicates that their biochemistries cause sympathetic reactions in other novas. They may fight and feud on N!, but on a basic nova level, they really do share a vibe."

Diaz' theory seems to have more than a grain of truth to it, if her cover charges and refreshment prices are any indicator. The price to pass from the street to the door is £60 and the price of a signature "Amp Well" (a drink consisting of fruit juices, coca extract and dubious other ingredients, rumoured to include adrenaline from human glands and ketamine dosages fatal to baselines). On a special night, the club sees as many as 300 nova guests and mixes as many as 2,000 Amp Wells.

Local nightlife veterans are outraged, however. Ranging from the usual cries of prejudice to the more rare legal actions (which Diaz has already employed a full-time solicitor to handle), local patrons want access.

"It's ridiculous not to let us in. Parties make Ibiza what it is, and the professional partiers should be allowed to enter." So says Nero Krauss, a German transient who washed up on Ibiza's beach with 10 quid in his pocket and half an eight-ball of cocaine in his brain. As part of Ibiza's insolvent population of starstruck, unemployed clubgoers-by-trade, Nero's statement echoes through the ranks of the youth.

Diaz has no sympathy. "These Eurotrash drifters, they want to get in, but all they do is upset the clientele. I vacationed in Ibiza 12 years ago, and all the clubgoers snubbed the visiting middle-class continental men, calling them 'lager louts.' Now that the same thing's happening to them, they're up in arms about it."

Don't expect anything to change, either. Among the jet-setting novas who attend the Amp Room — many of whom travel to Ibiza for one or two nights solely to visit the club — are noted Indian movie producer Deepak Palit, American elite Sarge In-Charge, radical Teragen aristocrat Raoul Orzaiz and even high-society celebs like Amanda Wu. According to all of these and more, novas enjoy the policy. "We're very public figures, and this gives us a place to be private," says supermodel Lydia Divine. (Needless to say, the Amp Room bears a constant wreath of paparazzi.)

"I've got 100-plus enormously famous and fabulous personalities to deal with nightly, all of whom require individual attention," claims Diaz. "My policy is no more restrictive than — and just as appropriate to my patrons as — a dress code."

# I VIOLATED RULE #1:

Don't do anything stupid.

As a journalist, I had often found myself in curious places, full of curious foods, looking down the barrels of curious guns and running like all hell with curious people on the lam from even more curious people. All for the sake of the story, I jumped headlong into whatever situation I was supposed to be covering. After a few sessions of balls-out, all-hell, batshit lunacy, I decided that sooner or later this reporting thing was going to get me killed. In an effort to even out some of these rough patches of my investigative techniques, I sat down to make a list of rules that would allow me to get the story and preserve my hide.

I never got past rule one. It seemed to sum up everything I needed to avoid.

The problem with such generalities, however, is that they are, by nature, less than universal in application. While I thought to myself then, "Going with these heroin dealers to seal a buy is just the element I need to lend this story on Russian drug traffic some gravity by way of example," I think to myself now, "What kind of dummy leaves his passport in the hotel and hops into a broken-down Eastern European sedan with a cell phone and expects not to be beaten senseless by the undercover cops who invariably show up for this kind of thing?"

In any event, hindsight is 20/20, and there I stood, handcuffed, legs spread wide and with a mouthful of post-Czarist masonry. No small amount of snow had found its way past the collars of my shoes.

"Barg zerg gudania flovosh harma harma woodle berdla," the cop with his nightstick poking the base of my spine growled at me.

"I'm sorry, I don't speak any Russian. *Habla Englais?*" I replied. My erstwhile companions sneered — they spoke English, but they sure weren't going to translate for me.

"Flermovich grim gram boobla steenick."

"You mean to tell me I'm being arrested? What the hell are you saying? Why don't you hounds speak any English? What the hell is the world coming to? Dammit, I want to see my ambassador!" I quit screaming in time to see the Cyrillic thugs with whom I had foolishly aligned myself pointing at me. The officer above me raised his stick, and about seven marginally interesting seconds of my life passed before my eyes in an instant.

And then my phone rang.

No doubt thinking he was intercepting the cruelest of phone calls, perhaps between dealer and client, the Police Hun grabbed the phone from my belt and answered it with a sneer. Expecting him to offer me a wicked smile and begin dashing my brains out with his stick, I sniffled feebly. Instead, however, he coughed out a few words, turned white, looked around with an air of panic, and placed the phone in my jacket pocket. He then undid my manacles and helped me to my feet.

With my freedom returned, I grabbed my phone and praised the gods.

"Who is this?" I mused.

"It's Lester, you fool, now get out of there and go to the airport. *Flare* wants a video-OpNet documentary on 'the world after the novas came' or something." Bless him; Siegfried Lester, my agent, had pulled my fat from the fire.

"You told them that and they let me go?"

"No, I told them you were a Utopia agent under deep cover and that a field team was surveying them. Now get to the airport!"

I only hope that in the future, when *I* ring up a friend and some foreign brute answers the phone, I have the presence of mind to not only speak the

## From Flare's "Normal Lives" column by Dr. Duke Rollo

language but come up with an impossibly implausible yet compelling story with which to save my acquaintance's life.

Anyway, without further ado, I headed to the airport, catching the next plane to Amsterdam and billing it to my revolving expense account maintained by N!

• • •

I stopped at the hotel in Amsterdam just long enough to shower, shave and pick up my media bag from a rapscallion Hindi named Nazir. A Dutch citizen in only the loosest sense of the word, Nazir had relocated from Saudi about 10 minutes after the Middle Eastern "Midnight Sun" event the rogue nova Asif ibn Karim had caused in late 2004. "It's okay," Nazir told me. "I don't miss it." The little fiend had originally established himself in the global nightlife circuit as part of the late 1990s' world music scene, but that had since gone bottom up and Nazir had reinvented himself as a "shaman" of techno music.

That term — techno — has always caused a subconscious shudder in those who don't understand it. Perhaps it's ingrained in us; after centuries of making music with "analog" equipment like sitars, drums and flutes, some people just can't relate to music composed with no instruments. Since its creation in the late 1970s, what may generally be called "techno" has evolved to eclipse the more traditional rock and roll of the late 20th century. Past its primitive (yet compelling) beginnings, techno has become the *lingua franca* of music — the "establishment," as it were. Whereas the American "rebel" would pick up a guitar, his European counterpart would instead learn to make music on a computer. Somewhere after Aerosmith's 75th album, the pop music enthusiasts of the world grew bored with tedious power ballads sung by 60-year-old men pining for the "hot sugar" in teenage girls' panties. They turned to electronic music — dubbed techno for ease of reference — which was created by and for energetic young audiences, and which was performed in the greatest quantity (if not quality) in Europe. Vulgar, raw and at once emotionless and furiously passionate, techno ignites the hearts of the dance floor-regular and partygoer alike. It is not that unrealistic, then, to understand how techno has "taken over the world," to use mediaspeak. Music is an escape, and where better than the synthetic drums and electronic Avalons evoked by techno?

To simply say all that, though, denies the basic attitudes of youth and music. Music is for nightclubs and nightclubs are about excess performed to a backdrop of music. This much always rings true, as Nazir showed me at a nightclub called (roughly translated) the Echo's Lick, no matter where in the world one finds himself.

Bodies whirled and pogoed like the pistons in an internal combustion engine. Clubcrawlers threw back drink after drink — beer, liquor, enzyme-boosting vegetable elixirs, you name it — and catapulted themselves back and forth across the dance floor. Every pharmaceutical of man's device and then some could be found in the Echo's Lick, often over the counter. (The club had somehow procured a license to prescribe drugs, which, when coupled with the Netherlands' lax controlled-substance laws, made for one hell of a refreshment bar.) Spikeheads bumped into herb-smokers, who crawled past agitated Mitoids who whirled like dervishes through clusters of hallucinogen trippers and common drunks alike. After taking a pair of red bennies for nostalgia's sake (much to my later chagrin), I cut a rug to an old favorite — Wonder Factory's anthemic "Baby Left Me No Kidney" — and demanded Nazir take me somewhere else.

"These cretins are dancing to the same damn 16-beats I've heard since I was born," I spat at him. "Take me somewhere I can hear some *modern* music, you son of a dingo."

In the cab, my head exploded. My bennies, which I had thought were measured in milligrams of potency, were actually measured in centigrams. The "nickels" I took made up more than a "dollar" worth of dosage. After we found enough pieces of my head to rudely fashion a replacement, we moved on to Groove Yard, a bar specializing in terr'r.

Terr'r music (pronounced "tear") grew, I think, out of the 20th century's nihilistic hyper-affected "gothic" (*sic*) genre. From seeds originally sown by urban industrial and goth music, terr'r takes the experience one step beyond. Using special subsonic frequencies, terr'r music stimulates the fear centers of the human (and nova) brain. These subtle sounds "create" fear in listeners.

Of course, any postgoth worth his salt is going to appreciate the irony of this, and while the vast majority of terr'r bands (like the Crypt Roses and Valhallan Reavers) turn out some truly overwrought spooky tunes, cerebral bands like Lacefisher focus on crafting what would be entertaining, amusing pop and la-la songs if they didn't creep the hell out of you whenever you heard them.

As for the bar's patron's, you've seen them all before: alienated teens, alienated young adults and indulgently alienated Older People. Most of them seemed bored by the scene, but Nazir told me that ennui is part of the culture. "They want to be dead. Or vampires," he told me. I didn't get it. In yr. Corresp.'s opinion, for a group so alienated, these scenesters sure seemed to thrill at sniping at each other. If I had a dollar — excuse me, a euro — for every time one of them called another a poser, I'd be archduke of the Low Countries.

It is curious to note that the Dutch have severely limited the venues in which terr'r music may be played. Because of the psychological effects it creates, terr'r is forbidden in moving vehicles and in public houses of less than certain size. It makes a sort of vicious sense; terr'r scares normal people, on the level of mortal fright or amphetamine derangement. Sensible individuals flee from fear, though human society seems to have bred headcases who actually thrive on this sort of thing.

After flogging Nazir, I managed to persuade him to show me a novox bar. Out front, we met a woman who claimed to have a gun "with enough power to stop a nova dead in his tracks." It sounded like a good deal to me, and I looked over her wares. Indeed, the gun looked like it would stop a rampaging nova, primarily by exploding the shooter and everything within a few yards of his vicinity. Thanking her and refusing politely, we entered the bar. On our way out, we noted that her car was a flaming wreck and the woman was nowhere to be seen, but I refuse to render any judgment based on my incomplete observation of the situation.

Novox music (pronounced no-VEAU, sort of like nouveau) is defined not so much by its sound as it is by its creator. Performed by novas, novox may sound like literally anything. Most of it takes the form of enormously accelerated rhythm, but some songs involve a manipulation of soundwaves, distortion of

the audience's perceptions and the creation of effects previously impossible without the abilities of the performers.

Aficionados of the movement subscribe to some fairly extreme (though they call it "pure") distinctions. A given novox song, if performed by a non-nova, suddenly ceases to be a novox song. Likewise, a nova may choose to perform an "unplugged" version of a novox song, thus making it no longer novox by removing the "super" elements. Exactly what genre this leaves the song in is not exceedingly clear to me, and Nazir offered little insight on the matter, preoccupied as he was with a cute little Dutch girl with blue hair that had sporadic, visible waves of low-wattage electricity running though it.

"Damn it all," I whispered to the aging Marlene Dietrich clone across the table from me, "what's the word I'm looking for to describe this music?"

"Impossible," came the reply, which was wholly accurate. She punctuated her revelation by standing suddenly and flapping toward the bar amid her wintery leather wrap. With that, I looked around the bar and surmised one of the great, baffling and ultimately stupid truths about novox music: It is for genuine individuals. Because it lacks a genre and a definitive *sound*, novox appeals to those who subscribe to the cult of personality surrounding various performers, which may be anyone. Legions of unique conformists, the fans of novox are an unsettling breed, even more disturbing than the most morbid terr'r musician.

By following up with my batlike bar-muse, I learned that she had meant it was "impossible" to define novox, but my first impression seems more poetic and appropriate, so I'll continue to support that.

As the evening waned, Nazir and I left the novox bar. "For God's sake, you shirt-stealing Lowland

terrorist, hasn't this city got an aggressive side?" I bellowed, cuffing my guide on the ear and pulling the door off a passing taxi to make my point.

"What do you mean?" asked Nazir, wrapping his boxed ear with a bandage he liberated from a drunkard slumbering in the gutter. In tandem, we stomped the hobo and rifled his pockets for loose change, which seemed to come only in the form of French francs.

**VIOLENCE! Pent-up hostility UNLEASHED!**

Misplaced urban disillusionment diverted into aberrant musical social commentary!" I smashed a passing woman's head through a storefront window for added effect.

Nazir kicked a dog that had foolishly wandered over to him. "Why, certainly. You want iso."

Of course; iso. The bastard halfbreed of middle-class malaise and ignorance; the godless child of nihilism and social maladjustment; the sound of poor parenting and barely subjugated deviant whims.

Iso is the music of reaction. Left unemployed by technology and shifts in urban corporate influence, many cities' families have been left destitute, scrambling for whatever jobs unskilled assembly-line ratmen can turn up. It's no wonder, then, that their children are such hollow, monstrous brats. Robbed of a chance to grow up normally, these sons and daughters of the shafted proletariat instead mature into bitter, resentful creatures, blaming the rest of the world (or blaming small parts of it with greater vehemence) for taking away their chances. These kids don't want school — they want to be given a fair shake.

Of course, skipping school leaves them with even fewer chances, but don't tell them that or they'll shiv you and take your wallet. (If you don't believe that kind of thing still happens, go read Punch Nardello's *Detroit to Dresden*.) Undereducated, mean and angry, they turn to celebrity, which they can attain through catastrophic violence broadcast on local news and OpNet newsfaxes or by making undereducated, mean, angry music. Here, for example, are the lyrics to Blood Simple's under-ground hit, "Too Big World" (lyrics reprinted by ASCAP permission).

Hate

Hate

Hate

You

Aberrant

Spic

Red-dot

Jew

Charming stuff, to be sure. Upon making it to the iso bar, Nazir and I decided it would be safer to just hang out in the parking lot, where we could still hear the music, and drink malt liquor from the package store. Those clubs are every bit as ugly as the music they play, and they're probably none too receptive to an aging doctor of journalism and his not-white contact.

**ZINE**

Here we are again, with a brand new smattering of what's chic and what's plain weak. We editors here at *TechStep* take no small amount of effort to eyeball the current and coming trends, and we pick the most promising of them to relate to you, our loving readers. At the same time, we keep our fingers on the pulse of what's on its way out, because God forbid anyone should see you using outdated apps or last year's floor model. You'll thank us, we promise.

### Weak: Internet Diehards                                                                    Chic: OpNet Pioneers

Okay, call us biased, but as the aging US information network degrades beneath billions of daily Ponzi-scheme e-mails and "I Like Karnage Kombat XIV Gold Turbo" websites, the OpNet looks better and better with each new dawn. Faster data transmit times, hardwired fiberoptic routing, infinite POP subscriber capacity and, most important of all, *registered user licenses* (to filter out the dimwits and plebes) make the OpNet the wave of the digital future — which is here and now.

### Weak: Clunky Laptops and Palmtops                          Chic: Cellular Voice-Recognition Interface

Why carry your computer when you can talk to it from any phone? Typing takes too long and suffers the vagaries of low motor skills and sausage-fingers alike. That, and they always scan your laptop's hard drive at the airport, which is pretty invasive, from a personal privacy standpoint. Instead, adopt any of IBM's, ViaSoft's or Apple's vocal interfaces and telecommute at the speed of thought and speech. As long as your computer's OpNet-capable, processing power is only as far away as your pocket or glove box (or wherever you keep your digital phone).

### Weak: Bat-Swinging Vigilantes                                                              Chic: Nova Activism

Look, the novas are here to stay. Sure, a few of them are selfish bastards who crash local economies or wipe out city blocks, but most of them are fairly normal people underneath it all. Maybe it's a naïve optimism, but here at *TechStep*, we still believe in the fundamental goodness of all people, novas included. Rather than let a few bad apples spoil the bunch, we'd rather see another Fireman than another Bernard Goetz or Percy Andreesen (the New York fall riots of '03, anyone?).

### Weak: Internal Combustion                                                       Chic: Hypercombustion Engine

Okay, maybe the hypercombustion engine is still a bit sketchy, but we can hope, can't we? A *twenty-five thousand percent* reduction in global pollution from transportation and maintenance vehicles is a good thing and one that we're willing to risk a few isolated cases of brain cancer for.

### Weak: Grass-Roots Ecology Invigoration                                        Chic: The Zushima Macrobe

The editors here at *TechStep* are basically lazy people, but firmly devoted to better life through technology. Now that we have garbage-eating "good" bacteria courtesy of the boys and girls at Utopia, let's use it, dammit! The Zushima macrobe degrades waste material and converts it to carbon dioxide (which, granted, is a simplified statement, but even the post-macrobe undigestibles occupy less than one hundredth of their original mass), which our environment is prepared to handle. Doesn't the grass look particularly green today? Now that we no longer have to bury our trash or shuttle it around the oceans in toxic garbage scows, let's all take a brief moment of reverence to throw a discarded McDonald's cup into the street.

### Weak: Proprietary OSs                                                                   Chic: ViaSoft One World

Yeah, you Mac enthusiasts are going to raise a stink, but *come on*. Enough platform warfare — let's get back to computing. Word is the VS wants to have a remote-compatible version of One World (nicknamed Infra, according to our sources in the R&D labs) by early next year, which should be music to your ears if you're running DeskAway 1.03b. Don't get us wrong, Big Blue; we love using the phone, but that awkward keyword interface needs to go — and to have the Mac's floating-point coprocessor on its side.

**Weak: Neural Messaging**                                    **Chic: Good Ol' Digital Cellular**

Perhaps this seems Luddite of us, but does neural messaging offer anything that pocket or wet phones don't do better? Why read a message when we can talk directly to the person who wants our attention? Global long-distance — when you even need it — is cheaper than neural messaging hubs and backup nerve tapes* anyway. Here's a case of the "break-through" not living up to the hype. Sorry, PacBell; nice try.

*Yes, we know they're not tapes, but they may as well be. So sue us.

**Weak: Prague and New York City**                                    **Chic: Addis Ababa**

So long, global telecom. Goodbye, Madison Avenue brand doctors. Hello, entertainment, technology and hospitality. Since Utopia's "terraforming" of Ethiopia, hundreds of thousands have been flocking to A-A to take advantage of the city's boom in growth. Corporate and private citizens have made Addis Ababa a hugely important city, rivaling Tokyo and New York for finance, Bombay for entertainment and any of those crumbling old European cities for culture. Provided you like a warm (er, hot) climate and no humidity, you can live like a caliph in Africa, because it's still burgeoning, so rent can be found on the cheap.

**Weak: Endangering Species**                                    **Chic: Genetically Engineered Fauna**

Hey, we leave the office sometimes. We know that humans aren't the only animals that share the earth. We're happy, though, that new sciences and nova-assisted developments have made it easier for us to exist with those animals. The end of the last century saw over 200 individual species on the endangered list. Through cloning technologies, we've brought that down to a mere 12, and "adaptations" of existing animals (such as the Triton-backed "garbage pigeon") give us a more harmonious environment. Engineered cattle, chickens and fish provide more nutritional output per animal and in less time than Mother Nature's way. Even Utopia's Zushima macrobe is vectored by a specially bred rat. It may not be *Bambi*, but it sure beats eating species like popcorn.

**Weak: NBC and Infantry Actions**                                    **Chic: Nova Elites**

While it pains us to think that we can communicate with our friends nine thousand miles away at the speed of light but we're still fighting with each other over skin color and religion, at least there's a better way to do it. Gas? No thanks. Germ-bombs? Forget it. We'll just hire nova elites to do the necessary ass-kicking and watch it all on the *N! Report*. Why risk countless lives when the novas are willing to pound on each other for a few million bucks plus licensing options?

**Weak: Polymer**                                    **Chic: Eufiber**

Polymers are artificial, expensive, unstable and able to transmit less data per millimeter than the alternative. Eufiber, even the synthetic stuff, is biodegradable, cheap, universal and able to transmit enough data at a one-millimeter thickness to grant everyone in the UK access to every subscription-service OpNet porn site in the world at speeds in excess of a gig a second. And it makes a snazzy running suit. No contest.

**Weak: Big Five**                                    **Chic: N!**

For God's sake, people, how many more sitcoms and gritty UN-agent dramas do we need? The answer is none! Maybe we're just geeks (though the Nielsens suggest otherwise[o]), but we'd rather watch the Stone Badass duke it out with Electric William any day of the week. And ABC, here's a clue: Urkel is 40 years old. *Retire him!*

Few things frustrate customs officers more than smart-mouthed travelers, and, to their credit, that's probably fair. Spending all day behind a desk while supposedly weeding out international terrorists and the like isn't a very rewarding or fulfilling job, considering that most people who pass through their checkpoints are hopelessly boring. This has the unpleasant result of dulling the officials' senses, making them slothful and irritable. Their vigilance turns to ire, as days pass without a single terrorist or dissident upon whom to swarm and pummel, and their only solace is a half-sleep, which smarminess only serves to agitate.

But then, that's my job — to witness reaction and record it.

Needless to say, customs officials rarely have any degree of tolerance for people who state, "To observe the mating rituals of Mite-dealing ghetto barons in your decadent city, you tax-fattened hyenas," when all they really want to hear is "business" or "personal" after asking your reason for leaving your own country. I've had more hands inside me than OpNet interactive porn starlets. My bags have been seized and searched more often than I care to count, and I've had to sit in more national police stations — airport branch — than the most deserving of global felons. Indeed, I'm probably more familiar with evading their long-term scrutiny than the people they're there to protect the good people of the world against.

My wife says I bring it upon myself.

## United States

Surely, someone exists somewhere in Los Angeles who doesn't want to kill me, sell me drugs or convert me to some bizarre religion, but I haven't met him.

LA vices begin with the high society and trickle down to the most offensive levels of scum ever seen since the two-party system degraded. Why God hasn't stricken this city from the earth for the modern Gomorrah it has become is beyond me. Like France before its 18th-century revolution, Los Angeles' population consists of a few hyper-rich haves and a hellbroth of have-nots. The haves — crumbling relics from the days of Hollywood's prominence — still lead opulent, drug-addled lives, subsisting on money

earned before the entertainment shift to Bombay that they had the sense (then) to invest wisely. The have-nots do what they've always done, killing each other in decrepit housing projects as the tide of cretindom sweeps inexorably over a city that was once a pinnacle of American — even Western — civilization.

One modern development, particularly among the crime-ridden warrens of the inner city, seems to be a polarization of gang activity. Once renowned as the United States' breeding ground of low-grade organized crime, Los Angeles appears to have undergone a homogeneity with relation to gangland participation. Signs point to the city's ubiquitous clans of black and Hispanic hooligans rallying under a common anarcho-military banner, though precisely who the leader is remains unknown. Of course, rumors of this sort change little



on the surface, as the various warring urban tribes and *vatos locos* continue to gut each other over matters of drug distribution and who be sleepin' wit' who else's bitches, but police and media trends indicate a putting aside of these minor rivalries when something greater looms on the horizon. Of course, LA's police force has one of the greatest reputations for brutality in the free world, but such is the price of eternal vigilance. At least, that's what the nova rent-a-cop tells you when he's ratcheting your arm behind your back.[º]

New York has always been the rotten apple, but those deific novas have certainly done their part in excising the worm from the fruited ovary. By making New York the place to be for novas (as it

has been since time immemorial for us baselines), the elite superpeople have breathed new life into what would have certainly festered into another LA. American fashion moves through New York, as does any event of any national or international significance. More culturally diverse than perhaps any other city in the world, New York is a nexus of global civilization. Needless to say, this means you can't park anywhere.

## Canada

Yeah, yeah, you know how boring and big and cold Canada is. I've heard those statements of dubious comic value as much as the next person. Go ahead, mock Canada and tell us how Canadians all talk funny.

Dismiss Canada offhand, however, and you leave yourself out of what the United States could have done if they'd wanted to become better people instead of bigger, louder, richer people. Canada enjoys an appallingly *low* crime rate, which works if you like to retain ownership of your belongings but can make things difficult if you find yourself at the tail end of a bender.

"May I see your ID, sir?" the officer asked.

"Slertainly.

*Juss lemme fine It.*

"Are you intoxicated, sir?"

"That depenz. Whuss the BAC distincshin? I'm probly toxicainted by my mother's stannerds, but who calls the shots round here?"

"Come with me, sir."

Canada: well-adjusted, civil, respectful, clean and quiet. Probably the scariest place on Earth.

Obviously, none of this applies to Quebec. Once again, the French element has raised its hackles in its long-lived history of being a thorn in the rest of the countryside. Again clamoring for secession, radical elements of Quebecois society have even begun printing their own money, which is worth roughly two quick belly laughs, but little more. Stick

with the Canadian dollar, and embargo the hell out of Quebec if it finally does secede.

## Mexico

For a destitute nation only marginally above the status of the Third World, Mexico sure knows how to celebrate, though most of the festivities stem from religious events. That's no big deal if you're a heathen like yr. Corresp., but devout individuals of any faith had best acclimate or stay home.

Mexico celebrates the most morbid of affairs, including *Dia de los Muertes*, or the "Day of the Dead," which apparently involves massive amounts of drinking, massive amounts of other ingestions and setting things on fire, but my memory may be a bit fragmented from the festivities. Then again, I speak only enough Spanish to order beer and menace the *caballeros* with a sharpened screwdriver, so I'm not very well versed in the custom's greater meaning.

Other celebrations observed in high style include Cinco de Mayo — the fifth of May — which commemorates Mexican victory over a French invasion at Puebla, and the worldwide N-Day in March. At either of these celebrations (or *any* of the lesser Catholic festivals), Mexican citizens participate with reckless abandon. Beware of partaking of the *cerveza* too liberally, however, as the government has a bit to learn about fairness and honesty, and more than one *gringo* has ended up on the wrong side of a wrought-iron grate forever.

All of these celebrations, of course, involve the ubiquitous *mascaras* for which Mexico is duly famous. No, not the stuff the terr'r kidz put on their eyes, but actual full face masks, which the locals wear to party or hold up liquor stores with little discrimination. Once a localized phenomenon, masks spread to the scurrilous elite caste and, in true consumerist fashion, are now being bought worldwide by skinny white boys who want to play soldier for an evening.

Mexico City, home of T2M Americas, has turned itself around miraculously in the past 10 years. Once an overpopulated breeding pit of poverty and violence, Mexico City has benefited greatly from the presence and investment of the novas who dwell there. Now one of the cleanest cities in North America, Mexico City also intends to revive the national economy, starting locally. It is another multicultural hub, and all but the most daft of

visitors can find someone who speaks their language. In addition, the young economy-on-the-upswing has drawn a fair share of entrepreneurs who, if you can look past their awful suits and omnipresent cell-phone conversations, may turn Mexico City into a metropolis of global import. Perhaps in spite of themselves.º

## Central America

I can say little about Central America of timely value, as any given government has shifted hands in three coups in the last 15 minutes. Also, I fear to sit at my desk, as the risk of catching one of the 2,500 stray bullets that have made their way into my room. Racked by popular discontent, poisoned by money from the Medellín drug cartels, and home to what seems like every bushwhacker conflict in the Western Hemisphere, Central America is a danger-ous place to live and an ignominious place to die. At night, the fighting dies down in some of the cities, sometimes, and the stalwart or stupid can creep into town for delicious food or to strike up a dalliance with some of the most beautiful Latin people on the continent.

Nova Aníbal Buendia makes his home here, as well, in the relatively calm (meaning that only every *other* citizen carries a firearm openly on the streets) Costa Rica. Costa Rica, (un)fortunately, is one of the places God has created naturally occurring wells of rum, so my experience is limited to sandalwood bars that cool the fevered foreigner's flesh. Also, the "Jesus Christ lizard," which earns its name by running across the surface of still waters, may be seen here, but if one has overindulged, one may take the lizard's name too far. Posting bond in a San José jail costs an arm and a leg, given credit-card conver-sion rates, and you may not take the lizard with you.º

## The Caribbean

Once a mainstay of the cruise circuit, the Caribbean has become simultaneously more and less a leisure locale. An influx of wealthy novas who have purchased islands for themselves reduces the amount of public lands available for visit. Of course, the other side of the coin is that many novas have developed their private holdings as commercial resorts, catering to the most lofty and basest whims imaginable. For example, Alain Huur's Heaven resort is a literal garden of earthly delights, at which each visitor receives the services of a slave concu-bine. Um, or so I've heard. By way of contrast, nova Darryl Kingston's Splash resort sees almost exclu-sively family traffic, offering scuba tours, fishing

charters, coral-gathering expeditions and other fare less suited to the drunken, fornicating hordes of modern Sodom.

Politics have become a pressing issue in the Carib-bean recently, and more than one dark rumor has circulated about a secret Teragen stronghold among the region's islands. This is the kind of thing one overhears in dimly lit drinking establishments decorated with posters of Che Guevara and traffick-ing in knives and boats headed off-island, but those muttered misgivings eventually make it to the press, and certainly have some basis in reality. Again, so I've heard.

Cuba, as anyone with an eye for the decadent knows, has become the Sin Capital of the West. After Castro's death and the island's sudden (read: violent) shift to *laissez-faire* capitalism, money took precedence over morals and the once-poor Cubans established the closest thing to a true "free" market anywhere, at least as far as yr. Corresp. has seen. Like the classic movie *Casablanca*, Havana has become a crossroads of infidels, cretins, archfiends, radicals and other on-the-run sorts, who mix their company with Medellín associates and drug-crazed college students alike.º

## South America

Colombia (with an "O"; you spell it with a "U," you're talking about the capital of the equally godforsaken South Carolina) is perhaps the only country I have visited in which it is not impossible to order an ounce of cocaine from one's restaurant waiter. Sick with the venom of the resurgent Medellín *trafficantes*, Colombia's government remains weak thanks to drug money and a martial law imposed by the criminals who exist ostensibly on the wrong side of it.

Brazil, on the other hand, has taken a cue from former filth-spawning pit Mexico City and em-braced the novas' ameliorating ways. Much of the Amazon deforestation of the past 30 years has been reversed in a scant six, as Utopia-contributed genetic-engineering projects have yielded plants and wildlife that grow to maturity in as little as six months. Project Utopia's Environmental Division maintains a strict quota over what may legally be felled or mined in the area.

Sao Paolo and Rio de Janeiro have risen quickly as well, becoming the third and 12th-largest cities in the world, per capita, respectively. Crossroads of ancient culture and modern technology, these cities have been caught between the rival influences of the ubiquitous Medellín cartels and Utopia crusad-

ers, yet have had the will to remain largely independent for now. Sooner or later, though, something's got to give, and my money's on basic human greed, which may serve Brazil to the cartels readily.

A few rumors have leaked out of the region concerning a species of super-piranha genetically engineered to combat novas. I hear they're called "Jersey Devils," "chupacabras" and "boogeymen." Is there anything the press *won't* print°?

## Europe

The bullheaded, traditional English have largely resisted the efforts of Project Utopia (dragging Ireland and Scotland into the mire with them), and it shows. For a nation that started as a crossbreeding of Roman soldiers who didn't want to go home and Celtic barbarians who drank the blood of their dead, the UK is a needlessly stuffy place.

Such rejection of Utopia's aid is most visible in London, the bacteria-infested armpit of the Sceptered Isle. With London's (and accordingly, the rest of the nation's) refusal to support the euro, accompanied by the degrading value of the pound, the United Kingdom seems doomed in the long term. Largely unaided by the advancements offered by Project Utopia, England slips a little more each day. Violence continues to rise in London, and I'm not talking about the good kind, in which members of the now-extinct House of Lords punched each other and soccer hooligans trampled their own kind beneath their feet. Rather, London has set a tone of ethnic hatred and petty crime that the rest of the nation seems to slowly follow down the trail of general seediness.

On the newly (sort of) united continent, much has shifted within the past 10 years. Antwerp, the diamond capital of Europe, has also become the fashion capital of Europe, usurping that title from Paris and Milan. Perhaps the most unaffectedly and sincerely stylish people of Europe, the Belgians have set a cultural tone that the rest of the Continent would do wise to follow. As genial, hospitable people who value their culture and refuse to take sides in political conflict, Belgium is a model of what an economy should be, if a bit goody-goody for yr. Corresp.'s tastes.

Likewise, Amsterdam has practically mirrored Antwerp's development, with the added bonus of having virtually legalized drug rampages, which goes part and parcel with legalizing almost every pharmaceutical on God's green earth. Removing the "getting away with something" aspect of the drug bender does take part of the mystique away, but I believe that to be part of Amsterdam's intent.

Ibiza, off the coast of Spain, has made similar efforts, but has succeeded largely in only the drug liberalism. You're not going to find any culture in Ibiza, unless it's of the model-who-just-came-off-the-runway-on-the-Groenplatz-seeking-a-meth-binge-so-she-can-dance-all-night-and-not-eat-for-three-days variety. Granted, that's not much cultural significance, but I shall throw no stones from my glass house.

Venice, home to T2M Europe's headquarters, continues to sink into the swamp that seems to want to claim Italy physically as the general chaos of the nation wants to claim it metaphorically. Italy continues the tradition of alternating governmental power between psychotic communists and crazed fascists every other week with the end result of not a damn thing. As it has always been, as it ever shall be, unless nova Giancarlo Vocaccio's eye turns more seriously toward political influence in the boot of the Mediterranean.

War, skirmish, hostility and other bad craziness continue to plague the Balkans, which, true to form, have broken into no fewer than seven million independent nations, some no larger than one street surrounded by other sovereign countries. Likewise, the Balkans continue to be a place where an enterprising journalist — or anyone, really, I suppose — can lose the more dubious threads of his past. The nightclubs have gun checks, the beer contains what passes for antifreeze in civilized nations and low-manufacturer-end technology rules the day in lower Eastern Europe.

Russia, the self-devouring serpent, finally seems to have vomited its own tail and turned its eyes on the rest of the world. Supposedly the seat of the shady "Directive," Russia has once again united after years of Balkanization. Under the charismatic leadership of card-carrying lunatic Vladimir Sierka, the Russian Confederation has made advancements that rival other countries' contributions, including discovering the M–R node at roughly the same time as, well, M and R and engineering the first reliable strain of non-seasonal fruit genomes. Not a bad cop for a nation formerly known mainly for fermented potato juice, but the Confederation's role in both Utopia and global politics remains one of itchy munificence. Of course, Sierka doesn't "officially" lead the Russian Confederation, but yr. Corresp. has experienced enough puppet regimes and banana republics to call them as he sees them.°

## Africa

Speaking of banana republics, half of Africa's under the open influence of nova elites and the other half remains under the control of maniacal dictators who want to be nova elites. Small-scale wars, either remnants of the Equatorial mess or ● copycat genocide elsewhere, consume valuable resources from the rest of the world, but anyone who can pull a trigger can pretty much write his own paycheck as a mercenary here. A few notable exceptions, like Addis Ababa and most of Egypt, exist as oases in an otherwise tumultuous continent, but for the most part, Africa is a dumping ground for every experimental explosive, lowest-bidder-produced weaponry and black-market commodity in the world. Any sane person should be at once frightened and titillated by this, but the rational among us should settle somewhere back into fear after the initial response wears off.

The most notorious example of the Africa Syndrome is perhaps the state of affairs in Nigeria. Powermad dictator-thug Alafin Sango, hated by some African factions (particularly Nigeria's neighbors), beloved by many more, put one over on the Utopians by accepting military and developmental aid and then backing out of the deal. Seems for all their brain trust with the quadruple-digit IQs, the Project couldn't cope with basic baseline no-frills scumbag cheatery. Refreshing, really. Anyhow, Lagos resembles a prewar Berlin of 1935, and bubbles under the surface with weak but fervent internal dissidents and apprehensive neighbors. Unlike some of the region's leaders, Sango is not a nova, and relies on sheer caginess to run his operation. Rumors of Teragen affiliation abound, however, and how exactly Sango has managed to avoid crushing Utopia retaliation is unknown.

Addis Ababa, on the other hand, has become an earthly paradise. As the home of T2M Africa-Mideast, A-A rose from the ashes of the desert like a phoenix as a result of nova terraforming efforts that yielded even more arable land than that surrounding Mexico City. Of course, once you get inside Addis Ababa, all of the glitz, glamour and goodness seems just a bit too°structured. Is this the result of all Utopia management? Does a "for your own good" ethic pervade the Utopian MO just below the surface? I don't know, but if Addis Ababa is a model, perhaps I'll settle for a bit of shepherding. It makes you appreciate breaking the rules all the more.°
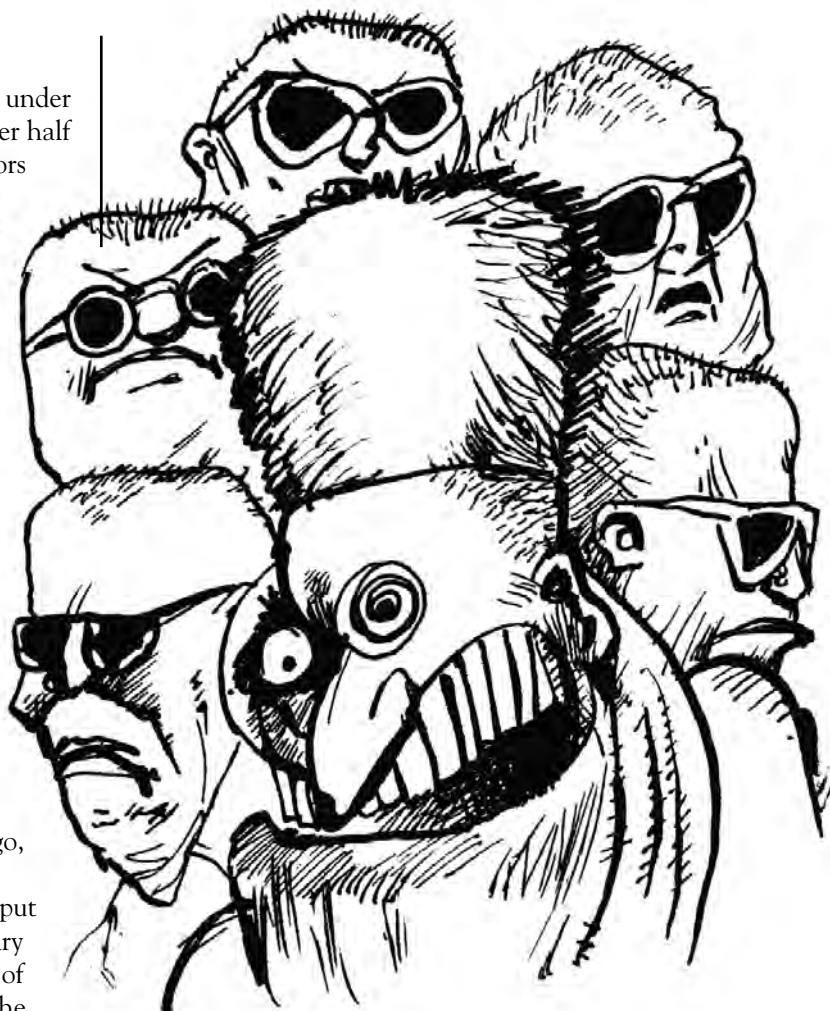
## Asia

As fragmented as it has been all throughout history, Asia remains the ultimate place to become lost, both accidentally and electively. The region claims almost as many religions as it does citizens, and any relationship one manages to forge in one country may become null and void in the country 100 yards away.

In the Middle East, for example, religious conservatism yields a grim outlook regarding novas, which reflects in the quality of life established there. As nominal-at-best participants in Project Utopia, the Middle East is split down the middle by a growing faction of moderate Sunnis who regard novas as Allah's chosen. Low-profile military skirmishes involve almost as many nova freebooters as the Central American conflicts, as the strife over matters religious drives neighbors to take up arms. Give peace a chance, though: Long-suffering Palestine has established a national identity for itself under the guidance of Utopia intervention. Historical archnemesis Israel is, of course, only polite about this for the cameras. Film at 11, undoubtedly, again....

Bombay has become a global entertainment center, taking over the role of schlock- and arthouse film and television producer to the world. Many novas have flocked to the city and taken an active hand in the entertainment industry. Films and television shows featuring nova actors have seen a marked boom in popularity, which has drawn a good deal of advertising and production revenue into the city, making it a new Babylon.

The endless conflict in Kashmir has actually had some positive effect, as ever-swingin' Karachi, Pakistan, has evolved into an industrial power in the region. Enormously populous, Karachi has become the Detroit of the Middle East, but has yet to become as much of a fetid den of violence and decrepitude as its Western cousin. Give it a couple of years.

China, ever the troublemaker, maintains a governmentally mandated distrust of the nova situation, meaning that they abstain from most of Utopia's efforts. Chinese novas either find themselves acquired by the People's Liberation Army (which is, of course, one of the world's largest corporate enterprises), or else they flee to Hong Kong. Hong

Kong, of course, has become a super-capitalist den of money-grubbing swine. After it reverted back to Chinese control in the late 1990s, it retained a strong sense of itself, and breaking those old habits engendered by the British Empire was too much for the city to take. Amanda Wu and her nova-employing Novelty consulting firm keeps a steady influx of money into the city, which is truly remarkable: In one of the largest, most business-oriented cities in the world, for a sole company to wield over one percent of the city's private resources is unheard of, and here it has been done. Desire to maintain its affluence also keeps Hong Kong on the fast-and-loose side of trade policy, and literally *anything* can be purchased amid the fabled "midnight markets" or behind closed doors in the highest corporate towers.

For true innovations, however, one must trade in Japan. Following the nation's Saisho revolution, Japan shifted into technological high gear. As they regard Utopia's guidelines on technological development with lip service at best, Japanese manufacturers have rocketed ahead of the industry curve by 20 years or more. In their private lives, however, they still hold a soft spot in their hearts for those little sailor suits the girls wear to school. Bizarre personal
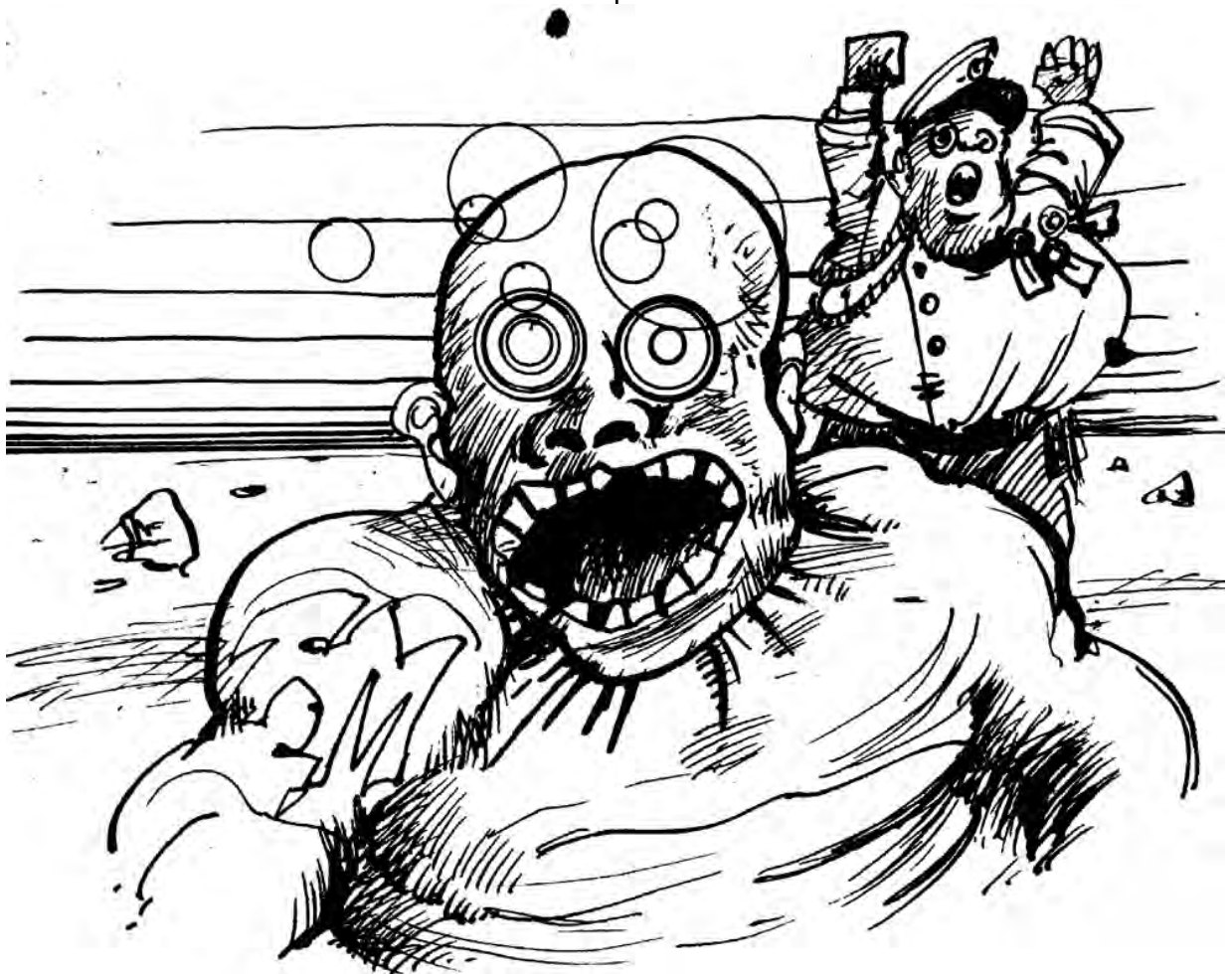
penchants notwithstanding, Japanese big business has a curious, shadowy relationship with the nation's Yakuza. Governmental interdict on certain technology — imposed by Utopia pressure, of course — forbids open sale of key items. The criminal organizations, by dint of their lawlessness, elect not to heed these restrictions and move the product for big profit. Part of that profit obviously returns to the manufacturer, who then uses it to pay his taxes and scrub the other money that comes in via various other illicit venues. Obviously, not all Japanese commerce is illegal, but the acceptance of the criminal in the relationship between business and government makes for questionable ethics. Didn't you always suspect as much? The government only differs from the criminals in that they tell you it's okay. At least when you deal with criminals, you *know* you're bad.º

## Australia/The Pacific

Perpetually part of its self-maintained "Outback," Australia is a national and cultural backwater. It always has been, and it always will be. This isn't necessarily a bad thing (see the efforts of fellow journalist Mim Udovitch in her column for *Forbes*), as sometimes the world just seems too small. Maybe one requires the relative rusticism of eating beetles and drinking beer with no additives to regain a sense of his place in the cosmos.

Nevertheless, the creeping tentacle of technology has not left Talaud Island untouched. Here, Utopia maintains T2M Asia, as well as a facility designed to study the viability of alternative food sources, such as kelp, plankton and lesser fish. All those OpNet rumors about the *enormous* blip on the Talaud facility's sonar have been officially denied by both Japanese and Australian governments, as well as Utopia/ Talaud staff. This of course means that either nothing actually happened at all, or something we should fear with all our beings showed its head then promptly vanished. The best way to psyche oneself up to a good, Neptunian dread, of course, is an open-tabbed trip to the nearest pub or tankard.

ZINE

## T O P   S E C R E T

**Excerpt from encoded message; dated May 11, 2008**

Look, the first thing you need to know is that it's absolutely vital you don't let anyone catch you reading this. I went to a lot of trouble to micronize this print to where it'd be all but invisible to anyone but someone with your powers. Please, if you value my life, don't let on that you got this message. It's that important.

You know how we kept getting that gut feeling that something was going on, something that they wouldn't show us? We were right. I saw it.

It was that espionage mission I took last week; I did a lot better than I thought I would. I wound up tracing back one of the Novelty middlemen through about six miles of false trails, back to the jackpot. He had "orders to cooperate" with at least three elites, including Pursuer. So I started hopping along his contact trails to find out who was paying these three, and why. I almost wish I hadn't.

There isn't space to go into all the details here without making this message look bigger than a pixel. The short of it is — Rourke, Utopia was paying these guys off. Not directly, of course. But I recognized some of the names at the end of the paper trail, and they work in the offices down the hall. These people were authorizing lacing adrenocilin with chemicals that I know are sterility-inducing, in doses that could only be tailored for people like us. There was a coded message concerning the Bahrain facility: something about "detention and treatment" and "Mazarin–Rashoud disorder." There were funds going to pro-Kashmir groups, the groups they send us over there to check. It was like watching a conspiracy-theory movie at three in the morning, only it's all real. Every bit.

Come and talk to me. You wouldn't have gotten this message if I didn't think you would care. But I know you do. We have to figure out what to do.

Jennifer

FROM PROJECT UTOPIA SECURITY ARCHIVES, DATED MAY 2008

**From Project Proteus Audio Files, Delivered to an Operative in Second Week of May, 2008**

Clearance Beta.

All field agents' priority.

Concerning nova Jennifer Landers, a.k.a. "Slider."

Nova Slider poses a threat to Utopia and Proteus longevity.

Field observations indicate Slider has made contact with no fewer than 16 novas and no more than 19 novas in a sympathy bid against the objectives of Projects Proteus and Utopia. Known sympathizers include novas Corbin, Meztiszo, Holm, Greer, Yannik, Cherpa and Fong.

Proteus secrecy has not been compromised, but it is of paramount importance to maintain such.

All sympathetic and suspected-sympathetic novas have been assigned to monitored areas for evaluation and damage control. Agents of Proteus are encouraged to assess proximate novas' performance and attitudes, and make necessary adjustments.

Nova Rousseau has not been associated with this group of anti-Utopia novas to date, though records have been incomplete. She's a canny bitch, though, so keep an eye on them and be prepared.

Jennifer Landers, a.k.a. "Slider," presents liability to Projects Utopia and Proteus to such a degree that her continued performance exists more as threat than mere agitation. Act per Code Omega directives, under normal Proteus visibility guidelines.

## A Handwritten Note From Slider to Corbin

C—

Forgive me for the Bombay cliché, but they're on to me.

I went to five different people — big mistake — with the story, and they're either part of the cover-up (maybe out of ignorance) or hostile. Obviously, the guy I talked to as my Utopia liaison (Albert Petalan) is part of it, but so are the Calcutta police, the AP reporter and my representative with Amanda Wu's company. I don't know about Rourke anymore.

The bottom line is, we can't go to anyone. Get everyone together and let them know the scale of this thing, but keep it hush-hush. Obviously, if you're not part of Utopia's "solution," you're part of the problem. And Utopia's got almost everyone involved as part of the solution on some level.

Anyway, gotta run. I've left my "resignation" from Utopia here in C. We'll talk later.

Be careful,

S—

P.S. Heard of something called "Proteus"? Let me know.

**M E M O**

**AP Wire Dated Wednesday, May 14, 2008**

**Calcutta, India** — Team Tomorrow nova Jennifer "Slider" Landers, under temporary contract to Novelty Consultation, was reported DOA at UN Franklin Moran field hospital this morning at 4:02 a.m. Paraphysicians worked tirelessly for eight hours to reinvigorate Slider's failed biological processes, only to declare her dead after unsuccessful attempts.

Slider had been retained by Novelty Consultation to safeguard against Teragen corporate espionage, and agents of that organization are suspected to have some relation to her death.

Details are few and far-between in this event, but the act seems to be one of assassination, possibly linked to Teragen radicalism. Slider's injuries appear to have been caused in conflict with another nova, though no more information is forthcoming at this time.

[BROADCAST JOINED IN MEDIA RES]
...GIVES ME GREAT SADNESS, AS NOVAS AND
BASELINES ALIKE HAVE LOST A
STRONG HERO NEEDLESSLY.

JENNIFER WAS A CREDIT TO THE CAUSE, BOTH AS A
NOVA AND AS AN INDIVIDUAL, AND HER PASSING
SHALL LEAVE OUR EARTH A SADDER PLACE FOR A BRIEF
TIME, ALTHOUGH I KNOW SHE WOULD WANT US TO
MOVE PAST THIS TRAGIC EVENT, HOPEFULLY FINDING
IT WITHIN OURSELVES TO—
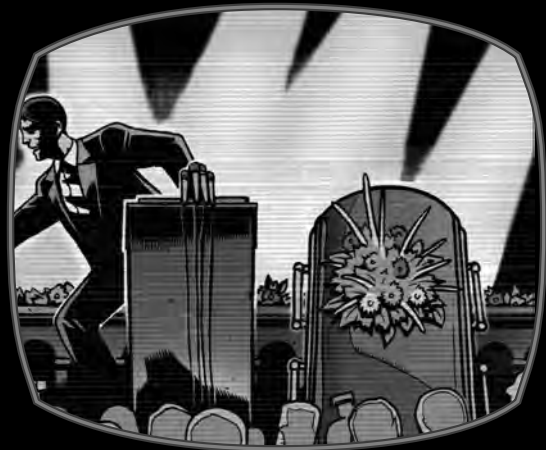
DAMMIT, SHUKI, WHERE'D HE GO? SARAH, PUT SOME-
ONE ON IT — THIS IS LIVE, FOR GOD'S SAKE. JESUS
CHRIST, SOMEONE GET IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA.
SWITCH TO THREE ON THREE, TWO, ONE°.

ER, THIS IS N! CORRESPONDENT SANJI RAMANATHAN
REPORTING LIVE FROM CALCUTTA, WHEN ONLY MO-
MENTS AGO, CONTROVERSIAL EX-TEAM TOMORROW
MEMBER ANDRÉ CORBIN FLED THE PREMISES, BREAKING
OFF HIS EULOGY FOR JENNIFER LANDERS IN
MIDSENTENCE.

DETAILS ARE UTTERLY ABSENT AT THIS TIME, AND I'M
PROBABLY GOING TO GET FIRED, BUT, UM, THAT'S HOW
THIS BUSINESS WORKS. SARAH, I QUIT.

## M E M O

**5/31/2008**

Director Ozaki:

I'm sure I don't have to tell you that we have a problem. However, what you need to know is that you've just been designated a troubleshooter. The information leak on classified material extended beyond Landers and her immediate circle of friends. Although our plants minimized the damage control among Team Tomorrow members, she somehow managed to transmit some of her findings to other Utopians, who have subsequently gone rogue. In all likelihood, Park was the one responsible for their evacuation; naturally, he is among the missing. At least 10 have fled [files for each are attached]; we're awaiting for confirmation from all cells, but we believe that number could rise to 15 or 20.

The good news is that the renegades have very few options. Landers's findings were too comprehensive, and we suspect that she put a somewhat histrionic, possibly Teragen-inspired, spin on the data; that may work in our favor. The renegades can be presumed to be aware that Proteus has contacts among global authorities, and they have little reason to trust any particular agency there. Similarly, although our tense relations with the United States government might seem more promising to them, they would be fools to try that route openly. The Teragen, though quite possibly behind this whole Landers situation, is hardly an option; these renegades are theoretically smart enough to realize that they can't count on that nest of vipers. And although some media backlash is inevitable, we are instituting controls to make certain that the damage is minimal. T2M is already being withdrawn, and we won't be making any press conferences until we're certain we know exactly what needs to be said.

Your role in all this is simple. You are to use whatever resources you can mobilize covertly to track down the rogue novas, silence them however possible, and leave counter-evidence to draw attention away from Utopia. We would prefer that you reason with them, convince them of Landers's compromised status, and bring them back into the fold; if that option fails, you are free to escalate damage control options as you see fit. We cannot afford to be exposed; subtlety is of paramount importance here, so don't let any of your agents get too enthusiastic. Especially not Chiraben.

Whatever else, be certain that Æon doesn't find out about this. They have enough to worry about already, and the world needs them focused on other tasks. It's much better for all of us if Æon, like the rest of the world, believes these renegades to be just a fringe group of conspiracy theorists.

Director Thetis

## F Y I

**From USA Today, 05/21/08**

**Do you think the allegations of a conspiracy within Project Utopia are true?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | 14% |
| No | 58% |
| Not sure | 28% |

**Who do you think murdered Slider?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Teragen | 34% |
| Corbin | 21% |
| Government agency | 18% |
| Project Utopia | 11% |
| Criminal cartels | 4% |
| Unknown | 12% |

## THE ABERRANTS AND RECENT HISTORY

### T O P   S E C R E T

**Excerpt, phone conversation between public terminals, May 30, 2008**

> **Voice 1 [male, estimated age 25]:** Hello?
> **Voice 2 [female, indeterminate age]:** Thank you for picking up.
> **Voice 1:** Look, who is this?
> **Voice 2:** Someone who's well aware of who you are and what you're running from.
> **Voice 1:** I dinnae have time for games.
> **Voice 2:** Can you guarantee that this phone line is completely secure? Can you guarantee that it'll remain so?
> **Voice 1:** ...
> **Voice 2:** I thought not. Listen to me. I can offer you and your friends shelter. I have resources enough to keep you hidden — but I also have resources enough to back you on a more aggressive course of action, one that stands to help you correct some of your current problems.
> **Voice 1:** Can ye prove this isn't a trap?
> **Voice 2:** You have a telepath among your number, yes? He will be the proof. Now hang up and start walking south. I'll call you again in five minutes.
> **[Transmission ends.]**

### T O P   S E C R E T

**From a Telecom Virus Message Distributed by Sophia Rousseau, Directed Toward Friends and Acquaintances**

Greetings, friends. Please listen fully to this message and pass it on via forwarding to someone close to you.

Utopia wants novas under its thumb. Looking at recent evidence (the obtaining of which I relate below), I am forced to conclude that, if not the entire organization, at least key elements within Utopia seek to subjugate or regulate, possibly even eliminate systematically, novas as a whole. How many of us have died in meaningless skirmishes? How many have accepted a corporate-, city- or Utopia-sponsored lifestyle, trading ourselves for money? As we are not the enemies of humankind, nor are we its servants.

The recent death of Jennifer "Slider" Landers is a pivotal point in nova history. Her close associate, André Corbin, has assembled a collection of her notes on the matter, and the aggregate compilation, especially in light of her mysterious death, pleads a very strong case.

However, we need more than a strong case. Utopia has insinuated itself in every aspect of normal life. The majority of its members may well believe in its altruistic tenets, but it is certain that others follow a different agenda. Unfortunately, even our powers cannot confirm the loyalties and motivations of every Utopia member. Neither do we have a government or police force we can turn to. At the same time, we cannot become terrorists for fear of losing sympathy for our cause. As well, Utopia has become so entrenched in the geopolitical structure that to overturn public confidence in it could lead to catastrophic panic worldwide.

All this is made more complicated since we know so little regarding the extent of the conspiracy in Utopia — whether the entire Project is compromised or only a select cabal within its administration.

Nonetheless, we cannot remain passive against a clear and present threat. Novas interested in defending their rights as individuals are encouraged to gather on June 1 of 2008 at the Amp Room, where a private room has been secured. Matters critical to the future of our role in Earth's history shall be discussed, and your participation is vital to our success.

Thank you for your time.

## A Page from Slider's Notes, Presented Before the Assembled Aberrants

— Contraceptive compounds mixed into food/ adrenocilin (maintains impotency of novas so no more can be born)?

— Utopia registration allows constant checkup on status of individual novas (privacy?)?

— Nova influence in global governments establishes "watcher" network?

— Proteus?

— Skirmish — levels of violence to kill off novas/ control nova population?

— Television ratings peak with internova violence — broadcast "Death of Titan Palmyra" highest rating recorded in history.

— Mandatory sterilizations/ applications for childhood in high population density cities

— *Galatea*?

# N! the news



HUDDLESTON

…In other news, General Thomas Eddicott was interred today in Arlington National Cemetery with full honors. A long line of Washington's dignitaries turned out to pay their final respects, including Captain Donald R. Baldwin, popularly known as "The Shooter." He is survived by his wife, three children and four grandchildren.

[SCENE: Captain Baldwin's eulogy. On saying Goodbye, Baldwin looks skyward and salutes.]

• **Baldwin:** "No finer soldier ever drew breath than General Thomas Dwayne Eddicott. I had the honor of serving under him for 15 years, and in that I count myself fortunate. I know many of us are gathered here today to mourn the soldier and patriot who always served his country with pride. However, many more of us — including myself — are here to mourn the man who loved his family and his country. He was a good man, first and foremost. And as he looks down from Heaven on us here today, I just want to say: 'Thank you, General…' — and thank you, Thomas. We'll miss you."

**N!tertainment**

**N!terview**

**N! the news**

**N!sight**

**N!tre nous**

**N!ternet**

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## P R O J E C T   P R O T E U S

### T O P   S E C R E T

**From a Department of Defense memo, classified Deep Black; 08/20/06**

Dr. Fielding:

General Endicott is very insistent that Project: Cornucopia be brought up to operating status within schedule. The American military is already over-reliant on nova personnel — we need these exoskeletons up and running, Utopian scientific sanctions be damned. Perfecting the power grids is your only concern — we'll handle the security. General Endicott has told me to reassure you that he is privy to information that will keep the Utopians off our backs, even if they should uncover our research. We can be certain that they won't want to take this to a public arena.

Cpt. Charles Moring

### S T R U C T U R E

**Communiqué double-encrypted with Navajo Daedalus 3; dated 10/12/07**

Director:

I've uncovered quite a bit (see attached), but no direct access to the Babel Dossier yet.

The reason for this is simple: Æon has a network unconnected to the OpNet (or anything else that I can see). It's in Special Projects, of course. I did get a glimpse; the terminal looks like a prop from a vintage sci fi movie, but I scanned a *lot* of processing power.

I'm supposed to avoid Maggie Mercer, but that puts me at a dead end. Only a unanimous vote from the Æon Council can override her approvals. I don't mean to speak out of turn, but I thought you had connections on the council. Can't you get me access?

Please advise,

Talpa

### T O P   S E C R E T

**Communiqué double-encrypted with Navajo Daedalus 3; dated 06/03/08**

I'll presume everything is going well on your end, Director. Nonetheless, my best wishes.

Dr. Enrikssen is showing some signs of restlessness, as I'd projected; all that intellect can hardly be finding sufficient challenge in engineering and architecture. His ability to process and design seems to be speeding up, at least when he's not being currently faced with a direct problem to solve; he's progressed to completing roughly three designs per hour, complete with architectural sketches. He's currently delegating the computerized reproductions to assistants — apparently there isn't enough stimulus to finishing a 3-D model of a design that he's already mentally completed.

I'm thinking of testing the new games of chance from Hattori's pet projects on the doctor. With any luck, the advanced probability configurations, when set to cycle through shifting odds in a non-repeating series of patterns, will provide enough stimulation to occupy his mind during non-peak hours. Psych tells me that he has just enough of a gambling bug to take interest, with a minimal chance of overattachment.

In the meantime, all seems to be going quite well with Cocharin. She's continuing to adjust well to life in Engineering, and the department heads worked out a schedule that allows her to use her matter-transmutation abilities on a regular basis without any real quantum-bleeding or signs of stress. I've managed to bond fairly closely to her, and from what she's sharing, she seems to be taking the whole "Slider" incident as she should. There aren't any apparent signs of her having been part of Slider's network, and she's in fact expressed worry as to what the "rogues" might indeed try. I intend to be at confidant-level status within two weeks; she seems glad of the regular non-nova company, as it seems to break down any self-imposed feelings of "being different."

Advise further as you see fit, of course.

Ruiz

**Communiqué double-encrypted with Navajo Daedalus 3; dated 06/05/08**

Nyeung:

Good job on your recent efforts. Your next bit of business is to prep Ishida and Fashoud and have them ready to support T2MAs in the closing of the Sop Moei plant; they'll be wetworking among the local government and military in order to make certain that the closedown is permanent. A full dossier of their role is enclosed. Business as usual for T2MCe, Eu and Am.

Also, I want an updated full report on the Æon Council — they've taken a few steps I hadn't expected of late, and I very much dislike surprises. Use a second-tier agent; I want a purer information feed to minimize the chance of discrepancies.

Director Thetis

## G O A L S

**Unmarked communiqué, dated 06/09/08**

Chiraben:

I would very politely like to remind you to keep in fucking line. We are not an organization of sadists and bullies. We are not in this for kicks. We have been entrusted with the task of doing what needs to be done in order to better the whole goddamn planet. If that means somebody dies now and again, that's what it means. Our operating principles are here in order to prevent us from paralyzing ourselves with every last ethical question; they were instituted by necessity so that we can achieve actual, regular progress on the betterment of human society as a whole. They do *not* give you *carte blanche* to do whatever the hell you like to somebody that has been designated a liability. We are Project Proteus. We are the oil that keeps the gears turning. We are the screen that keeps the baselines from outright panic. And we are the only thing standing between the status quo and war or genocide, between the rest of the world and lunatics like Mal or those other THINGS. In other words, Chiraben, we do *not* fuck around.

You work alone not because we want you to do whatever the hell you want. You work alone because that is the way we do things. If word comes to me again of you misusing your power to get your own sadistic kicks, then I swear to God that you will be the next designated liability. And don't even fucking think of trying to blow our cover to save your own skin. That didn't save Slider — who was one of the sweetest girls I've ever known — and it by God will not save you. I know where you live, and I know where you sleep. Don't even think of doing a damn thing that might possibly compromise us ever again, or what you did to your last "assignment" will look like a picnic with your grandmother compared to what we will do to you.

Ozaki

**Communiqué double-encrypted with Navajo Daedalus 3; dated 07/02/08**

Nyeung:

You're certain you do not mean the granddaughter? Mercer *himself* conference called on a meeting? He has been incommunicado since the early '50s; the man must be over a hundred years old!

At least that explains the decisions the Æon Council has made of late. Even at his age, Mercer is bound to be a problem. Track him down and observe, but do not engage. Confirm his degree of involvement and his mental state. We must know his degree of lucidity, what he has planned for Æon and how it will affect our efforts.

Director Thetis

# THE TERAGEN

· **MONICA GASPAR:** OUR TOP STORY TONIGHT: TAMPA'S MAYOR FREDERICK RUPERT WAS MURDERED TODAY, IN A BRUTAL RESPONSE TO HIS CONTROVERSIAL ANTI-NOVA SPEECHES AND PROPOSED LEGISLATION. THE TERAGEN MEMBER KNOWN AS "GERYON" APPEARED AT THE MAYOR'S OFFICES AT 2:10 PM, AND FORCED HIS WAY THROUGH THE BUILDING'S SECURITY UNTIL HE REACHED MAYOR RUPERT.



THE ROGUE NOVA SNAPPED RUPERT'S NECK WITH ONE HAND, AND PROMPTLY LEFT THE WAY HE CAME. TWELVE SECURITY GUARDS AND POLICEMEN WERE SLAIN TRYING TO APPREHEND GERYON, AND 25 MORE — BOTH POLICE AND CIVILIANS — WERE ADMITTED TO ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL WITH VARYING DEGREES OF INJURY.



COUNT RAOUL ORZAIZ, LONG NOTED AS THE MOST PUBLICLY OUTSPOKEN ADVOCATE OF THE TERAGEN'S BELIEFS, OFFERED SYMPATHY FOR THE VICTIMS' FAMILIES, BUT REFUSED TO APOLOGIZE FOR HIS COLLEAGUE'S ACTIONS.



· **ORZAIZ:** REALLY, IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT THIS INCIDENT HAD TO HAPPEN AT ALL — BUT IN ALL FAIRNESS, WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT? YOU CANNOT LET A RABID DOG RUN LOOSE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD. THIS PERSON WAS NO LESS RABID, AND MIGHT WELL HAVE BITTEN SOMEONE RATHER MORE USEFUL THAN HIMSELF. GERYON'S METHODS ARE BRUTISH, BUT HE DID NOT ACT IN THE WRONG. RUPERT SHOULD HAVE REALIZED THAT HIS SENTIMENTS ARE MOST INAPPROPRIATE FOR THE NEW ERA — TO BE FRANK, THE LOSS OF AN ATAVISM SUCH AS HIMSELF IS NO REAL BLIGHT ON YOUR SPECIES.



· **GASPAR:** HOWEVER, OTHER MEMBERS OF THE NOVA COMMUNITY WERE FAR LESS FORGIVING. PROJECT UTOPIA IN PARTICULAR HAS CONDEMNED GERYON'S ACTIONS, AND THAT ORGANIZATION HAS PROMISED TO MAKE THE TERAGEN MEMBER ACCOUNTABLE FOR HIS ACTIONS.



· **CAESTUS PAX:** THE NULL MANIFESTO IS NOTHING MORE THAN A TRUMPED-UP EXCUSE FOR TERAGEN MEMBERS TO INDULGE IN WHATEVER CRIMINAL ACTIVITY THEY CHOOSE WITHOUT A PANG OF CONSCIENCE. IT IS FLATLY INTOLERABLE. PROJECT UTOPIA IS ASSISTING IN THE AUTHORITIES' MANHUNT FOR GERYON AND WILL BE KEEPING AN ESPECIALLY CLOSE EYE ON OTHER KNOWN OR SUSPECTED TERAGEN MEMBERS. SHOULD THEY COMMIT CRIMES SIMILAR TO THIS ACT OF TERRORISM, THEY *WILL* BE CAPTURED AND PROSECUTED UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW. WE ARE ALL HUMAN TOGETHER — AND THIS DIVIS MAL AND HIS RADICALS NEED TO REALIZE THAT QUICKLY. IF THEY DON'T, THEY WILL FACE THE CONSEQUENCES.

Director Harris:

Enclosed is my preliminary report on the known personnel and resources of the "Teragen" movement [file PA—2]. Operative "Turn-coat" continues with his infiltration, and will update the file as opportunity permits. The evidence supports our theory that this organization seems to be more popular movement and charisma cult than anything else — the key difference being that only aberrants are involved.

Director, the more I learn about this Teragen, the more grave my apprehensions become. I'll leave it to you to pore over the files and piece together the possible extent of this threat, but even a casual scan proves that these people have influence across the continents, possibly even worldwide. I can only presume by the incredibly extensive variety of their contacts and "customers" that they must have a highly cellular setup; there doesn't seem to be much of a regimented central structure at all. Thankfully, we should be able to close in on, say, one of the Zukhov contacts without worrying about the Teragen's contacts in the Vatican.

I highly recommend isolating several of these contact points and moving through them to the Teragen members involved. Of course, we'll need to build up our reserve of reliable aberrant personnel first; of the three aberrants in the Directive I trust, one's in deep cover, the second is a bit unsubtle, and bringing in the third should definitely be a last result if we want to avoid a media fiasco.

I repeat: I'm worried. I think you will be, too, once you go over the file. Although the Teragen has yet to fully blossom into the worst-case scenarios we were projecting back in '98, I have a nagging fear that it's only going to be a matter of time.

Carson

**Excerpt: "Null Manifesto"**

…The members of *Homo sapiens novus* (also referred to as "novas") are a species separate from *Homo sapiens*. Regulations and laws enacted for the good of *Homo sapiens* are too easily subverted and misinterpreted to abuse the rights of novas, who are required by destiny to attain their full potential — a goal impossible while abiding by strictures set by beings who are not one's peers and who cannot accurately judge what is "ethical" or "moral" for anything other than their own species. As such, the laws and governing bodies established for the purpose of governing *Homo sapiens* must be considered inapplicable to *Homo sapiens novus*.

Until a common governing body, composed entirely of novas qualified to hold authority, is recognized by the majority of the nova population, then it is the duty of every *Homo sapiens novus* to govern himself or herself as he or she sees fit. Just as it is preposterous to ask humans to abide by the strictures of chimpanzee society, any attempt to force a nova to abide by the laws of human society must be seen as an attack on the rights of the individual nova….

## Private journal entry: Leland Cornwall; April 23, 2007

Just how I like to begin my days: A telepathic probe just after breakfast. I wish I didn't have to wander into people's minds like this, particularly criminals — and particularly now. I swear to God, walking inside some people's minds is like going into a sewer — it's a hell of a lot different than sexplay with an open partner, that's for sure.

That's how it was with Sluice. To be honest, I was expecting some sort of monstrous asylum dream sequence, like they run on *Telepaths* every now and again. After all, the Teragen are supposed to be brainwashed monsters, full of programmed sadism, right? Not Sluice.

He knew I was coming in, even though we had "Psi-Dancer" in the room as a distraction. He didn't bother with her at all — he was expecting *me*. Don't ask me how; even Pax can't tell her M–R emissions are faked when I don't want him to, so it wasn't a problem with that. He played the gracious host, walking me through the mansion of his cortex and kindly opening doors for me. It was like some drawing-room play.

Worst part is, he kept me out of some of his memories. How the hell?!? He said it had something to do with "meditative exercises" and "funneling potential." Right.

Anyway, I managed to pull out answers to most of the Directors' questions. They weren't happy when he said that the Teragen had no chain of command, no superiors. The only flash of authority-respect that I could glean was when Mal's name came up. The best analogy I could come up with was that the Teragen was like a bunch of graduated college friends who keep in touch and help each other out now and again — and the Directors didn't like that much, either.

Sluice sure seemed to be happy with the arrangement. Even in captivity, facing life in a solitary dark cube, he wasn't bothered by things at all. "You'll come around." That's what he said as he was escorted out. "I can wait, and you'll come around. Then we can talk about this like reasonable novas, without all these monkeys screeching at us."

I didn't like his tone one little bit. Particularly because it seemed so genuine. What does he expect, that I'm going to have some epiphany and spring him, then we can go waltz off to Mal together and make the world a happy place for novas? Where do the people fit in this arrangement?

I've been stewing over this all day, and I can't think of anything else. I'm going out tonight, no matter what Paxton says. It's going to take a good long evening of sex — sensory sharing and all — to get me to properly unwind. With at *least* three women.

Thank God I'm a nova.

---

**T O P   S E C R E T**

**TOP PRIORITY: FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION TO ALL AGENTS**

**To:** All agents

**Re:** Teragen File PA–3; Operative Jesse Hooks

Immediately cease and desist all operations reliant on data supplied in Teragen File PA–3. PA–3 must be treated as falsified information, deliberately leaked to the agency. In addition, operative Jesse Hooks, codenamed Turncoat, is to be considered a rogue agent with access to classified information. Agents are ordered to immediately report even the least substantiated sighting of Hooks to their superiors. If Hooks is located, do *not* engage him without heavy backup; Hooks possesses quantum powers of at least "B"-class, and should in every way be considered a Titan-class threat. The possibility of brainwashing or mind control is not an issue; it is utmost priority that Hooks be treated as a defector under his own free will, and dealt with accordingly.

## Transcript from a Formative Directive Meeting

Apparently, the meeting from which this transcript originates was held shortly after the St. Petersburg "nova crisis" of 2001. Russian [sic] physiologists made breakthroughs similar to those of Drs. Mazarin and Rashoud, but with far less publicity, prompting government officials to look into the matter. From the spotty records and primary sources we can assemble, the early Directive discussions occurred after some draft of the apocryphal "Sterynch Missive" circulated among carefully selected members of superpower governments (though a few seem to have been selected without regard for their lack of superpower status).

At risk of lending undue editorial to my notes, I find it odd that a loose confederation of EuroSlav states could muster the wherewithal to parallel the M–R discoveries or unite other nations to form one of the most powerful police/ paramilitary organizations in the world when they can't manage to manufacture a decent gas oven. The pre-Sierka problems Russia faced should have been enough to cripple their research, but maybe the triumph of the human spirit is worth more than Hallmark sentiment. Yet, I digress. To get to the point, I suspect guidance or support behind the Russians.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy this. I lost six people to get it. The Ministry of Information is a bit tight-fisted regarding national secrets, even when it comes to public documents. I've taken the liberty of translating, additionally.

— B.F.

• **Ilyanovich (Russian Confederation):** So then, we're agreed? The presence of these "novas" is a concern for all our governments?

• **Stinson (US):** I would imagine so.

• **Nakamura (Japan):** Agreed.

• **I:** Perfect. Now that our semantics coincide, perhaps we should outline exactly how they would best serve us, in the sense that they would be working for their government, of course. If you'll look through my proposal, gentlemen and lady, you'll see we opine that a military structure works best. Although our prior experiment [*I think he's talking about Interpol, but I'm not sure — B.F.*] failed, limiting the structure to fewer participants better able to enforce the Directive code — see the third and fourth attachments — should be far more effective.

• **N:** And the membership is limited to these novas?

• **Lathrop (UK):** No, we've budgeted for a...um, *normal* support team, as well as a joint staff of policy leaders. Leaving the organization solely in the hands of these novas and relying on their sense of patriotism wouldn't work.

• **S:** Pardon me if I'm being a bit slow, but what exactly is the point of this [*sound of papers shuffling*] er, Directive? I'll tell you right now, my military project expenditures are stretched fairly thin with domestic armed forces spending being cut, 60 "police actions" taking place and UN subsidies on top of it all. I don't know that I can afford another "police force of the world" sort of action, and I'm not sure our people want it.

• **N:** If I may be Devil's Advocate, I'm not sure a nation can afford *not* to be a part of this. We've already seen the power novas possess. Any state without a direct hand in the governance of their, ah, superpowered citizenry is going to have difficulty maintaining its administration without open revolt.

• **S:** And then what are your feelings on China, Miss Nakamura?

• **I:** A vast population, best watched by those sharing our common interests.

• **S:** Well, I didn't ask you, Petr, but I guess that'll do.

[Transcript continues, delving into budget allocations and membership charters.]

## From the *Sherman Report,* presented before Congress in late 2006

Spending to support the Directive must continue, even if additional support from private corporations must be obtained to secure the United States' ongoing membership. Currently, the Directive represents the only viable recourse against placing nearly all faith in nova matters in the hands of Project Utopia.

Directive records show the following countries' contributions and memberships. (All figures shown are in US dollars)

| United States | $3.5 billion per annum | 30 active members |
|---|---|---|
| Russian Confederacy | $3.2 billion per annum | 31 active members |
| Japan | $2.85 billion per annum | 13 active members |
| Germany | $2.1 billion per annum | 11 active members |
| United Kingdom | $1.2 billion per annum | 10 active members |

Directive presence and continued American involvement serves military and intelligence ends, as well as allowing American participation in global policy direction. Withdrawal from the organization places too much power in the collective hands of countries with which the United States has had a history of conflict and enmity.

By maintaining a strong financial and personal presence in Directive affairs, America keeps the strongest weapons in its own hands, or at least under its sway.

**From a *CBS Evening News* Broadcast, January 13, 2004**

*Transmission starts* in media res, *owing to storage medium damage.*

...Is why we're here. Federally sponsored nova contractors Karma and Tombstone are with me, describing the presence of these unknown novas as "territorial and cryptofascist."

The cadre of novas, all wearing similar blue-and-white uniforms, appeared on the scene shortly after Karma and Tombstone, and asked the two independents to leave. When Karma and Tombstone refused, the apparent leader of the group displayed an official-looking badge and informed the two interlopers that failure to allow "the Directive" to handle the hostage situation would result in a federal charge of treason.

Onlookers describe the group members as "daunting" and of "a variety of ethnicities."

More on this situation as it develops. Back to you, Dan.

## Graffiti from a Subway Train in Japan (Translated)

Super-soldiers or secret police?
The Directive has its eye on you.

## From the Transcript of *Klein v. United States*

In 2005, Eugene Klein was arrested by a Russian Directive agent while attempting to burn down a Moscow warehouse stocked with over 4,000 cases of duty-free alcohol, which supposedly belonged to a smuggling ring. The warehouse and attendant property insurance was found to be registered in Klein's name in a Russian court of law. Extradited to America, his land of birth, Klein expected the charges to be dropped, which they were not. After being declared guilty in an American criminal court, Klein sued the American government, claiming financial, physical and emotional damages in excess of three billion dollars.

• **Prosecutor Danvers:** And what precisely is the nature of this Directive, captain?

• **Captain Petrograd:** The Directive maintains global law enforcement. Mr. Klein's actions were criminal, as your own court proved. As a member of the Directive, it was my duty to prevent such illegalities from taking place.

• **PD:** And who, exactly, maintains the Directive?

• **CP:** A joint commission of American, Russian, Japanese and United Kingdom governmental officials. Germany has recently become a member as well.

• **PD:** A global conspiracy, then? No further questions.

• **CP:** No, a check against Utopia's ambitio—

• **PD:** No further questions, witness.

• **CP:** The Directive exists as an alternative to the single-mindedness of Uto—

• **PD:** Your Honor!

With little deliberation, the Supreme Court found in favor of the United States.

## From "The Triton Foundation: Curing the World", *Time* Magazine, February 2008

In the decade following the discovery and emergence of *Homo sapiens novus*, the worlds of science and medicine have undergone drastic advancements. Many of the cancers plaguing mankind from the dawn of time now have cures. AIDS, once feared to be the next great plague, is all but eradicated. Doctors even possess cures for spinal injuries that only years ago would have condemned the victim to a life of paralysis.

The Triton Foundation deserves much of the credit for these remarkable advances in medicine. The Triton Foundation is a large medical, pharmaceutical and research conglomerate corporation with ties to the Æon Society, the philanthropic organization that founded Project Utopia.
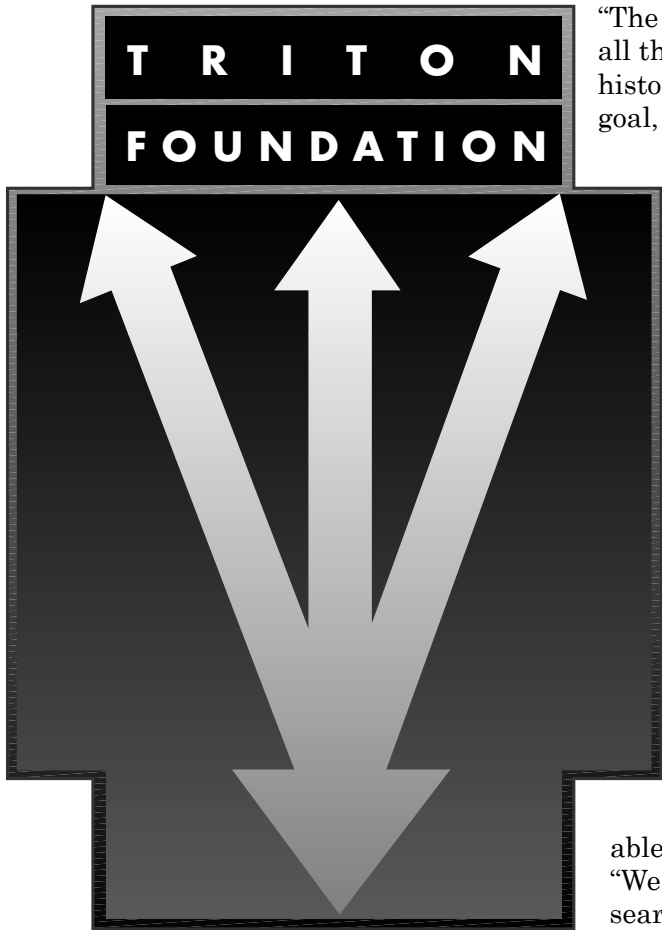
"The staff at the Triton Foundation seeks to cure mankind of all the illnesses and injuries that have plagued it throughout history," said Ryan Gill, Triton Foundation CEO. "In that lofty goal, we are no different from any other portion of the medical community."

What makes the Triton Foundation different is its unrelenting success rate. In fewer than 10 years, it has found cures that eluded scientists for centuries. Gill claims, "we have simply taken advantage of the vast research that came before us." All this from a company that has been in existence for only 14 years.

In light of the advances made by the Triton Foundation, no one seems too ready to look the proverbial gift horse in the mouth. Of particular note is that the Triton Foundation has funded much of the scientific research into novas. The Nobel Prize-winning Drs. Mazarin and Rashoud have both worked as paid consultants to the Triton Foundation. The company also funded the recent study that discovered a genetic basis for the Mazarin–Rashoud node.

"We have spent a good deal of our research budget on nova physiology because the research has given remarkable insight into the workings of the human body," said Gill. "We have simply followed the cutting edge of scientific research."

The Triton Foundation has no intention of resting on its laurels. Even now the Foundation is striking new ground in various areas of medical science. Current research projects include complete prenatal genetic screening and prenatal gene therapy, which promise to cure, in the womb, many diseases a person could potentially acquire. Serums for viral agents such as anthrax, hepatitis and rhinovirus (the common cold) are also being developed. Possibly the most promising research currently underway involves the cloning of replacement organs and limbs from patients' own DNA. This process promises to make transplantation waiting lists and organ rejection a thing of the past, allowing for virtually any part of the human body to be replaced.

"We see a very bright future for medical research," said Gill. "I can only hope that we can continue to make great strides."

## Timeline

**1994:** Triton Foundation created by the merging of several pharmaceutical and biomedical research companies under the auspices of the Æon Society.

**2000:** Breast cancer cure developed

**2001:** Prostate cancer cure developed

**2003:** AIDS vaccine developed

**2004:** Generic anticancer gene therapy perfected, cures most known forms of cancer; ebola vaccine developed

**2006:** First prenatal cancer screening for breast cancer; first prenatal gene therapy treatment

**2007:** Triton-funded research into genetic origins of novas released

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## Raoul Orzat z

**Birth Name:** Raoul Cristóbal Orzaiz
**Date of Birth:** Unknown
**Place of Origin:** Valencia, Spain
**Occupation:** Socialite; Teragen spokesman
**Powers:** Count Orzaiz refers to himself as "an accomplished athlete of my species." He has distinctively superhuman levels of stamina, speed and strength, although he refrains from publicly demonstrating his prowess. Secondhand rumor (usually attributed to one of his many ladyfriends) cites him as able to lift a dump truck, run as quickly as a cheetah and survive small-arms fire without a scratch.

**Background:** They don't come any more controversial than the celebrated Count Orzaiz. This European playboy is an unapologetic and public member of the infamous Teragen Ñ and likely the movement's most telegenic spokesman. Although his philosophy is far from popular, the count doesn't lack for popularity of his own.

Count Orzaiz hails from one of the oldest noble families in Europe, a Basque dynasty that stretches back for many centuries. His eruption, which occurred shortly after his graduation from university, was widely publicized throughout Europe. His nova powers didn't seem to affect his jetsetting lifestyle much; if anything, they only encouraged it. Orzaiz is fond of photo safaris, and his work has been featured prominently in National Geographic Magazine Ñ his ability to run with the cheetahs and wander with the lions without fear of harm has served his photography talents well.

Orzaiz announced his adherence to the Teragen's creed almost immediately after the release of the Null Manifesto. However, his behavior is a far cry from his more casually sociopathic colleagues such as Geryon Ñ the count is unfailingly polite, and he notably enjoys the company of baselines. Although Project Utopia has stated that they intend to keep a close eye on him, the count has yet to do anything more subversive than lose a few hundred thousand francs in Monaco's casinos.

**Estimated Power Levels:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Strength: | 6 |
| Intellect: | 5 |
| Speed: | 6 |
| Offense: | 7 |
| Defense: | 7 |
| Versatility: | 8 |

## MEMO

**From internal Directive memo, January 2008**

It has come to our attention that several new and illicit drugs now popular on the street are being supplied by well-known pharmaceutical companies. Undercover operatives have traced the supply chain of street-level dealers back, not to the underground laboratories we expected, but rather to seemingly respectable pharmaceutical companies. The material includes several derivatives of steroids, synthetic methamphetamine derivatives and synthetic psychotropic drugs.

As most of the manufacturing plants are located in North America and Asia, we are waiting for clearance to begin investigating on the manufacturing plants. Currently the distribution seems to come into a country through normal import means, but is then slowly siphoned off and filtered down to the street-level dealer. The logistics in place for this trade are quite impressive, and they definitely count as highly organized crime.

Worse yet, all of the pharmaceutical companies involved in supplying these illicit substances are Triton Foundation subsidiaries. Some of them remain seemingly autonomous, but they are merely the property of holding companies that, in turn, are property of the Triton Foundation.

## Script excerpt from documentary program *Cutting Edge,* episode #41

The state of organized crime at the turn of the century was nothing less than all-out war. The already volatile relations between rival gangs, families and cartels broke down into even more heavy infighting, which was exacerbated when certain organizations (most notably among the Chinese tongs and South American cocaine cartels) began employing nova enforcers. This trend was to get worse when the UN granted Utopia authority to move against international organized crime.

Suddenly the criminal cartels and syndicates of the world found themselves in deep trouble. Not only were they killing each other off at a record rate, but the sudden intervention of Team Tomorrow made the situation much worse for them. By 2004, only a very few cartels were left standing....

## Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate

**Excerpt from a phone conversation; 03/21/00**

• **Voice 1:** I cannot believe you had the audacity to call me. I have nothing to say to you.

• **Voice 2:** If that's so, why are you still on the phone?

• **Voice 1:** Be very careful how you put your words.

• **Voice 2:** I'm not trying to insult you, Zukhov. Get that through your head.

• **Voice 1:** Oh? And what are you trying to do?

• **Voice 2:** Look, this war's been hitting you as bad as me. But you and me, we're both survivors, right? I wanna talk terms.

• **Voice 1:** Of surrender?

• **Voice 2:** Now I should be the one getting insulted. But I'm gonna let that slide. See, I know well as you that we'll be lucky to get out of this alive, much less free and still in business. We've both got contacts in good places, but when it comes down to just the two of us, this Utopia bunch is going to pick off one — then the other. Just like that. We don't have the muscle, and we don't have the freaks to resist them. Not separately. That's why I've got an offer for you.

• **Voice 1:** Is this the same offer you made Serizy and his Frenchmen?

• **Voice 2:** No. No, it isn't. They were wounded a lot worse than you are; they had no choice but to come under my banner. You... You I respect, Zukhov. You have talents like nobody else in this business; comes of being a damned KGB special talent, huh? I wasn't talking about you working for me. I was talking about us working together.

• **Voice 1:** Hm. And I am to trust your goodwill?

• **Voice 2:** You don't have to. That's the beautiful part. I know you've already been checking up on me and mine. I know you know that we're the last Family standing, and that we've dragged a number of the survivors under our wings. Just like I know you've managed to pick off all your Organizatsiya rivals, and done some recruitment of your own among the Europeans while you were at it. Run your numbers. I'm guessing you'd come out with the same figures I would — that if we tried to do each other dirty, we'd wipe each other out, but if we cooperated...

• **Voice 1:** Yes. That way we stand a chance of survival, and of confounding one another's enemies by pooling resources.

• **Voice 2:** You're quick on the draw, Russkie.

• **Voice 1:** I have done my homework. I will presume that my men will be training yours in proper enforcement techniques, yes? You will abandon your protection operations, of course; there is little need for those when we can make a much greater profit on transporting goods, bookmaking and, of course, "vice." We are both very good at the vice.

• **Voice 2:** Son of a bitch. You were expecting me to call, weren't you?

• **Voice 1:** Is that a problem?

**[END PHONE CONVERSATION]**

**From a DeVries briefing letter, dated 03/24/08**

Jeffries:

If you've looked over the contract, you've probably already noticed that you're looking at a hell of a lot of money for a simple extraction. Well, don't be fooled — this is no simple extraction. Things are never simple where the Nakato are involved.

I expect you to spend some time doing research on the flight over. You'll need to know everything you can about these people to pull off this mission. I hope your chameleon skills are up to the task; Japan's still fairly xenophobic after all these years.

Of course, it doesn't help that you're up against one of the major organized crime forces in the world, and going after them in their own backyard — where half the *zaibatsu* in Osaka are likely in their pockets. I'm sure you've heard all the stories about the Nakato — amphetamines and spike dealing, vice crimes, money laundering — seems like pretty tame stuff when you compare it to some of the other jobs, right?

Wrong. The Nakato are bad, bad news. I'm serious about doing your research; you won't have a chance in Hell otherwise. For one, you know that smuggling of Utopia-banned technologies they do? Don't think for a minute that there aren't any gimmicks with military applications in their inventory. Some of those might even be capable of dropping Geryon.

For another, you'll have to watch out for the whole neighborhood; in Japan, the Nakato have popularity and approval ratings that are through the roof. The number three comic in Japan is a "true life" rag about a nova who serves his Yakuza masters, helping out the little guy and tweaking the noses of foreign authorities. They've made a damn cartoon out of it, too; and the thing's been exported around to American and European markets, where we can only presume it's stepping up their approval ratings as well.

Finally, you can bet that they've got a nova or two up their sleeves, and we have no idea what sort of powers they're packing. That comic shows somebody with superspeed, but there's no reason to believe it's based on real life; probably just bankrolled by some *kobun*. So be ready to expect anything.

Full dossier's on the chip. Good luck, and watch yourself. If you pull this off, I'll buy you the cognac of your choice, deal?

Khalif

## Nakato Gumi

### From "Gumi Nova Tragic" OAV, aired 07/13/07

• **Ryu:** I don't expect you to understand. You are right to hate me. My hands are soaked in blood — all shed by the order of my *oyabun*. I have killed a hundred men in the name of my gang. I have taken technologies forbidden by Project Utopia and sold them on the black market. I have defied the laws of the world and obeyed only the laws of my family.

• **Ichiko:** But... but you have a choice, Ryu! Everyone has a choice!

• **Ryu:** No, not everyone. I was given no choice to be born, and no choice to live. Now I have no choice how to live.

## Heaven Thunder Triad

### From WXLM-News broadcast, 11/30/06

Police continue to investigate the bizarre murder case of Herbert Wa, who was beheaded in the middle of the Thousand Miracle restaurant last Sunday. Although the restaurant was apparently at peak dining hours when the murder occurred, the police have yet to produce a cooperative eyewitness. As a further outlandish wrinkle, Mr. Wa's head has yet to be recovered; one source at the coroner's office admitted that "it was if his head was bitten off and swallowed."

### Excerpt from report filed by Yukiko Takemitsu; 08/09/07

Telepathic scans on the subject are difficult and still not fully conclusive. I have difficulty penetrating the layers of his mental defenses; to do so causes him great pain, and I experience some feedback. As such, I would like to request a prescription of adrenocilin before our next session.

The subject, Ma Yuo, is a lifetime resident of Hong Kong. He was recruited into the triad-sponsored Yellow Silks tong at the age of 13; he killed his first man at the age of 15. This much is easy to discern.

However, it is when I pry behind the door painted with the words "Heaven Thunder" that the defenses become very thick. Either he has been psychologically conditioned to resist telepathic inquiry, or he is holding me out with emotions even stronger than a survival instinct. The threat of something worse than death is very real to him.

The images I receive are fleeting. Ma was apparently only lightly involved in any heroin dealing or use, for it is not a primary motif at all. He does touch on images of fan-tan cards and paigow dominoes, lead-

ing me to believe that he is indeed a ranking soldier in the triad's gambling ring, as Investigations reports.

It is as I attempt to go deeper that the other imagery rises up. I catch the repeated chant of oaths of loyalty, many oaths of loyalty. In all, a gruesome fate is promised if he reveals the secrets. The chanting is accompanied by shadowy images — demons with the smiles of sharks, a man on fire, a gout of green smoke with the lips of a woman. At this point, the pain becomes too great, and I am forced to withdraw.

I can only conclude that these final images are how the subject chooses to acknowledge the nova enforcers that we know the Heaven Thunders keep on retainer. There is no evidence to confirm that their chairman is a nova himself. I will attempt to pry further tomorrow, if that is your wish, but I fear that the subject is in very real danger of death if I pry further. His emotional state is such that dying of fright is quite possible. I await your decision.

## M E D E L L Í N   C A R T E L

**From a Team Tomorrow Americas trainee briefing; date 01/10/07**

When it comes to organized crime, we have three real concerns in the Americas. The first is the trouble with various gangs, a few of whom now have nova leaders. You've probably heard enough about the rise of the Crips and the Spangler Posse, and how their leaders have turned them into something much deadlier; however, these are moderately localized threats, and not the subject of this lecture. Secondly, there's the stateside versions of the Nakato, Camparelli-Zukhov and Heaven Thunder — but these are largely United States-local, and small stuff in comparison to their hometown versions. The real lords of organized crime across two-thirds of our protectorate are the Medellín cartel.

The Medellín are virtually unchallenged for their position as kings of the cocaine market. Not long after the *Galatea* explosion, the other Colombian cartels began suffering crippling hits on their farms, processing plants, even households — you name it. To nobody's surprise, this swath of destruction had novas behind it. These novas — two of them at first, although we believe there are more now — turned out to be hired agents of the Medellín drug cartel. The Medellín slaughtered all their rivals and set up their own household as the unquestioned rulers of the South American cocaine and cocaine variants trade. Currently, we suspect that one of these novas is the head of the cartel, and the other serves as his lieutenant; files for both are available on the database.

Ultimately, there's good news and bad news about the Medellín. The good news is that they're pretty localized; they can be found where the cocaine market is, and not much of anywhere else. The bad news is that because they don't really compete with any of the other criminal cartels, there's not much chance of them going to war with, say, the Nakato. They stick to the cocaine business because it's hugely profitable for them, and they're in turn guarded by not only their own nova enforcers, but their layers of contacts. They make more money than they can easily spend; as a result, a lot of their funds are tied up in various Caribbean banks. This "investment" has given them a lot of allies among the appropriate nations, to say nothing of the various Central and South American governments they have in their pockets.

So as you can see, they're a real problem for us. We can't go in after them guns blazing, because they have too many allies that might get us in legal trouble. We can't easily set them against rival syndicates, because they're not in competition. That's why it's one of our primary objectives to continue our goodwill efforts in the Americas; every field we terraform or power plant we set up makes us look a little better to the governmental high-ups. If we can convince the various heads of state that Project Utopia is a better and more valuable friend to have than the Medellín, then maybe we'll get the sanctioning and help we need to remove these parasites once and for all.

Until then, it's going to be very tenuous going. So if you wind up crossing a Medellín in the course of your duties, hold back and play it safe. Let us know. We can still oppose them, but we have to be careful about it.

# ABERRANT

R U L E S

# CHAPTER ONE: CHARACTER

**Aberrant** is a game of superhuman power and the price paid both to gain and to keep it. This power knows no specific ethnic group or social stratum; it is not restricted to the First World or the Third World. Anyone has the potential to erupt, to become a modern god — to become a nova.

The following chapters take you through the steps of character creation and provide you with the game-mechanical details necessary to run or play in an **Aberrant** series.

Note that you do need the *Player's Handbook* to utilize the game content in this book. That core rulebook has the framework of character generation and level advancement, skills and feats, combat and other ground rules that Aberrant builds upon.

## The Trinity Universe

**Aberrant** is the second of three Trinity Universe games, speaking chronologically. The games occupy different eras of the same history, as well as different portions of a thematic trilogy.

**Adventure!** is a game of pulp action and heroism set in the mid 1920's. Characters in **Adventure!** are drawn from three distinct templates: two-fisted *daring* characters, masters of mental arts known as *mesmerists*, and potent superhumans called *stalwarts*. **Aberrant** is a superpowers game set in the present time, focusing on powerful individuals called *novas* — a new incarnation of **Adventure!**'s stalwarts. **Trinity** is a science-fiction game, a far-future setting featuring evolved humans known as *psions* — the genetic descendents of **Adventure!**'s own mesmerists (called *psychs* in the **Aberrant** era).

Players and Game Masters (GMs) familiar with either **Adventure!** or **Trinity** are free to include as much — or as little — of the "official" Trinity Universe metaplot as they like, but it isn't necessary to enjoy **Aberrant**. It's all up to you how you want to play it.

### d20 System Design Principles

GMs who wish to use material from **Aberrant** in other d20 System games should be aware of some core design ideas that went into its construction.

There is no magic in the **Aberrant** setting; novas gain their powers from the pseudo-scientific premise of quantum energy. This absence influences characters' talents across the board, but the main impact is this: A character's Armor Class, abilities, saving throws and the average damage she inflicts are figured differently than you might be used to in other d20 System games.

The bonuses granted by class features and background feats have been left uncategorized to allow them to stack with the bonuses granted by other feats and powers. If class feature bonuses should not stack, that information is included in the description of the features.

# Character Genesis

**Aberrant** is a game of superheroic action and intrigue on a grand scale. The characters who engage in these exciting exploits are all human originally, but each has manifested a unique brain structure called the Mazarin–Rashoud (M–R) node. This structure served as the focal point for a catalyst that transformed each individual into a being of tremendous power. This process is referred to as "eruption," and these powerful beings are called "novas."

The genesis of your **Aberrant** character involves two things: his origin and his eruption.

## Origin

Your character's origin describes him in a word or a short phrase, a vague shorthand that gives you an idea of where he came from. What sort of life did he lead before erupting? Was it dominated by mundane chores, leaving him no time to look to the horizon? Did he live on the edge, spending each day as if it might be his last?

Consider your character not as a ready-made hero, but as someone who has the seeds of greatness within him. Your character gains exceptional abilities later on. Right now, focus on making a *person* first, and let the nova grow naturally from that.

The concept could center on a skill ("I'm the world's greatest long-distance runner!"). It could come from the character's back story ("He was raised in poverty until a chance encounter with a sympathetic billionaire."). Or you might focus on a personality trait ("He's obsessed with fathoming the criminal mind."). If you're more visual than verbal, you might develop a mental picture and go from there ("He's a blocky guy — stocky rather than muscular — with caramel-colored skin and shocking red hair.")

After that, you can work out in all directions — personality (Why did he *want* to become the world's greatest long-distance runner?), history (What circumstance could've possibly brought a poor urchin and a wealthy man together?), skills (What has he studied in order to understand criminals?), appearance (How does the stocky redhead dress?) and so forth.

You do not need to flesh out the character's life history nor choose his favorite book. Keep your concept in mind throughout, though. If a skill or background feat fits, take it. If there's a clash ("Why is the former urchin an excellent marksman?"), stick to the concept. Trying to make a character who's good at everything and has no flaws is counterproductive: Not only will you fail, you'll produce a boring character.

## Eruption

The defining moment of a nova's existence is his eruption — the moment at which his M–R node "turns itself on" in response to a stimulus. The circumstances surrounding eruption often dictate the basic parameters of the character's powers. Before continuing, decide on the general events surrounding your eruption: What triggered it, why, and what powers it prompted.

Quantum control often manifests itself according to the nova's conscious and subconscious desires, fantasies and needs. Think about how the abilities, character class, superhuman feats and powers best fit your concept. If your character was a pudgy wallflower up until the time of eruption, scholar is a more sensible class than warrior. If he was into geology, powers like *bodymorph (crystal)* and *density control* are more appropriate than *ESP* and *stun attack*.

Following is a list of possible triggers for a nova eruption. No two novas erupt in quite the same way, so feel free to create a circumstance that suits your concept, subject to the GM's approval.

• **Accident:** Your M–R node erupts while you're caught in a dangerous accident: a fire, a flood, whatever. Some novas have erupted after taking enough damage to kill a normal person, only to rise from clinical death possessing tremendous power.

• **Deliberate:** Though rare, this eruption can occur if you suspect yourself of harboring an M–R node and take steps to trigger it. Most who try a deliberate eruption end up injured, crippled or dead; but success has been noted in unusual cases.

• **Emotional Trauma:** You erupt after a traumatic experience, whether sudden (intense torture, watching a loved one in peril) or gradual (living on the streets for days, starving and cold).

• **Excitement:** You erupt during a sudden surge of passion — excitement over winning the lottery, a sexual encounter or a sudden discovery.

• **Exposure to Quantum Powers:** Direct exposure to quantum energy can cause a latent nova to erupt. Perhaps you were an innocent bystander in the midst of a nova-level conflict and the charged quantum energies activated your M–R node.

• **Revelation:** One day you realized that you could "do things." This type of eruption is usually accompanied by days or weeks of splitting headaches, as the node swells in your forebrain.

• **Threatening Situation:** Similar in some ways to an accident, a threatening situation involves you erupting during a mugging, war, animal attack or similar event.

# Starting Characters

In general, the superhero genre features experienced characters whose capabilities don't grow a significant amount over the course of their careers. In contrast, the standard d20 System game features characters who start out with little experience but who can rise in power to shake the girders of the world.

An **Aberrant** series assumes the typical d20 System approach, but it is nonetheless a game about near-godlike superhuman powers. It's tough to embody such fearsome potency with a mere 1st-level character, so characters in a standard **Aberrant** campaign start at 3rd level. The character's 1st level must be a class level, to which the superhuman template is applied. The character then selects two additional character levels — either two class levels, two superhuman levels, two aberrant levels (see Chapter Three: Quantum, "Aberrant Level"), or any combination thereof.

**Example:** *Seth's character idea is Deadbolt, a small-time thief who erupts as a nova. He selects scoundrel at 1st level, then applies the superhuman template. Seth now has two more character levels to take. He selects one additional level of scoundrel and decides on one level of aberrant (Deadbolt has a tough time controlling his quantum energies), creating a male human (superhuman) Sco2/Abr1 starting character.*

This still won't make the PCs as powerful as Superman or Magneto out of the gate — they must earn that kind of power and experience — but it does start them at a level superior to those everyday folks known as nonplayer characters (NPCs).

# Characteristics

The default character race in **Aberrant** is human; specific qualities are noted below. None of the other races listed in Chapter 2 of the *Player's Handbook* apply. (There are instances of non-human PCs, but this is rare indeed and is more common in **Trinity**.)

The PCs in **Aberrant** aren't ordinary people, however — they are superhuman. This means that they've been transformed physically by the eruption of their Mazarin–Rashoud nodes. To reflect this, each nova character uses a superhuman template that adds to his standard human racial characteristics (see below).

# Human

**Description:** The average everyday person. By far the vast majority of the world's sentient population in the Trinity Universe is human. Some scientists theorize that any human has the genetic potential to manifest a Mazarin–Rashoud node and erupt; others believe that only those with a particular genetic makeup can become novas. Regardless, the typical human has no superhuman abilities.

**Appearance:** Humans come in all shapes, sizes, colors, noises and smells. They are found in every corner of the world.

## Human Racial Traits

• **Medium:** As Medium creatures, humans have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.

• **Speed:** Human base land speed is 30 feet.

• **Bonus Feats:** Humans receive 1 bonus feat in addition to the single feat that all starting characters receive.

• **Skills:** Humans receive 4 extra skill points at 1st level and 1 extra skill point at each additional level.

• **Automatic Languages:** Humans gain full proficiency in their native languages and are considered literate unless their backgrounds dictate otherwise. Starting characters receive one bonus language

per point of Intelligence bonus. Characters whose backgrounds indicate that they are illiterate or that they would not be proficient in multiple languages may gain literacy or choose bonus languages during play at the GM's discretion. (For a sample list of available languages, see "Skills" later in this chapter).

• **Quantum:** Humans have neither Quantum scores nor power points; they cannot manipulate quantum energy consciously or unconsciously.

# Superhuman Template

**Description:** Otherwise called novas, individuals with this template gain fantastic physiological benefits upon their eruption. A nova may be stronger, faster or smarter than a normal human; he might be able to fly, fire bolts of energy from his hands or shape the weather by force of will. Such stupendous capabilities are channeled via a new ability: Quantum. As a nova gains experience with his newfound powers and his M–R node continues to develop, he may develop powers to rival the gods of ancient myth.

**Appearance:** Novas appear to be human, though in most cases they are impressive physical specimens. Whether large and strong or nimble and quick, novas tend to catch the eye — they aren't easily forgotten about or ignored.

## Creating a Superhuman Character

"Superhuman," also called "nova," is an acquired template that can be added to any humanoid character (hereafter referred to as the "base character"). The base character retains all its statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

**Size and Type:** Same as base character. Do not recalculate Hit Dice, base attack bonus, or saves.

**Special Qualities:** A nova retains all the special qualities of the base character and also gains the following.

*Quantum:* Determine the base character's starting Quantum score as the modifier derived from the average of his Strength, Constitution and Intelligence scores (round down). The base character must have at least a +1 modifier to take the superhuman template. Subsequent ability increases gained from level progression do not adjust this total any further.

**Example:** *Seth's character, Deadbolt, has Strength 14, Constitution 15, and Intelligence 12. These three scores average to 13.7, which rounds down to 13. An ability score of 13 confers a +1 modifier. Thus, Deadbolt's Quantum score starts at 1.*

A character adds +1 to his Quantum score for every 3 core, prestige and/or superhuman levels he attains after the template is acquired. A character also adds +1 to his Quantum score for every 2 aberrant levels he attains after the template is acquired (see Chapter Three, "Aberrant Level").

*Advanced and Innovative Super-Science:* The base character can create super-science advancements and innovations (see Chapter Four).

**Abilities:** Novas are steadfast, unalterable and unyielding. The base character receives a +2 bonus to Constitution (applied prior to determining his Quantum score).

**Skills:** Same as base character, modified for new ability scores.

**Quantum Powers:** The base character has access to 1st-level quantum powers. He has one open power slot and gains one additional power slot every other character level thereafter. (So a character who takes the superhuman template at 1st level has one power slot immediately and gets another one at 3rd level, 5th level and so on.)

To purchase a power, the base character must spend a number of slots equal to the power's level (see Table 4–1: Purchasing Quantum Powers). The power slot does not have to be spent immediately; the base character may save any number of slots during level progression, spending them later on any powers available to him. Refer to Chapter Four: Quantum Powers for details on purchasing and using powers.

The base character may spend 1 power slot on a superhuman feat or feat enhancement in place of a quantum power.

**Superhuman Feats or Power Extras:** The base character has access to superhuman feats. A feat gained through standard level progression can be spent upon a superhuman feat or feat enhancement, or upon a quantum extra (see "Power Extras" in Chapter Four).

Alternately, the base character may spend 1 power slot to take a feat or feat enhancement instead of taking a quantum power (see above).

**Superhuman Levels:** The base character can take one or two additional levels in "superhuman" as a class to further realize his inherent potential (see below).

**Level Adjustment:** 0.

## Superhuman Levels

A character with the superhuman template can take up to two additional levels in "superhuman" as a class at any time during level progression, after gaining at least one class level. This extra level indicates that the character has increased his incredible abilities even further. A superhuman level stacks with the character's class levels for the purposes of character level advancement and bestows the following abilities.

**Hit Die:** d10.

**Skill Points:** 2 + Int bonus.

**Class Skills:** Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Drive (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Move Silently (Dex), Pilot (Dex), Profession (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str).

**Background Feat:** At the 1st superhuman level, the character gains one additional background feat. He must meet all prerequisites for the chosen feat.

**Power Increase:** At the 1st superhuman level, the character gains access to 2nd-level quantum powers.

At the 2nd superhuman level, the character gains access to 3rd-level quantum powers.

# Class Descriptions

**Aberrant** does not use the core classes or prestige classes from other material. Most such classes are geared toward a fantasy milieu, which doesn't mesh easily with this game's genre. For instance, magic does not exist in the Trinity Universe, at least in a technical sense. Characters may pretend or truly believe that their abilities are arcane or divine in origin, but all superhuman powers derive from quantum energy.

The commoner and expert NPC classes from the *DMG* are suitable for **Aberrant**. They are recommended for NPCs only, though, since their benefits are weak in comparison to the classes listed below.

## Table 1–1: Superhuman Levels (Sup)

| Superhuman Level | Base Attack Bonus | AC Bonus | Fortitude Save | Reflex Save | Will Save | Special |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | +1 | +0 | +2 | +2 | +0 | 1 background feat, power increase 1 |
| 2 | +2 | +1 | +3 | +3 | +0 | Power increase 11 |
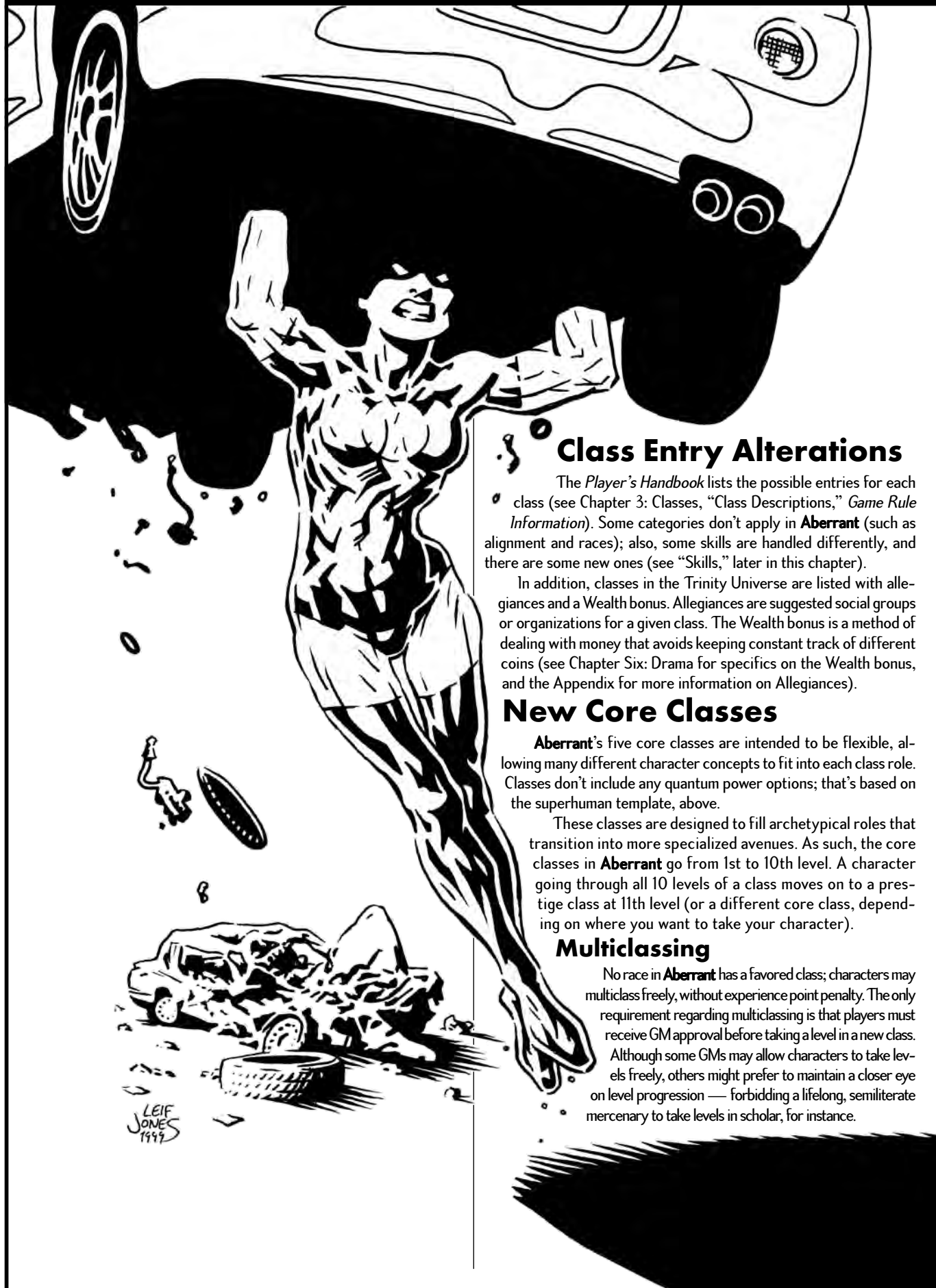
## Class Entry Alterations

The *Player's Handbook* lists the possible entries for each class (see Chapter 3: Classes, "Class Descriptions," *Game Rule Information*). Some categories don't apply in **Aberrant** (such as alignment and races); also, some skills are handled differently, and there are some new ones (see "Skills," later in this chapter).

In addition, classes in the Trinity Universe are listed with allegiances and a Wealth bonus. Allegiances are suggested social groups or organizations for a given class. The Wealth bonus is a method of dealing with money that avoids keeping constant track of different coins (see Chapter Six: Drama for specifics on the Wealth bonus, and the Appendix for more information on Allegiances).

## New Core Classes

**Aberrant**'s five core classes are intended to be flexible, allowing many different character concepts to fit into each class role. Classes don't include any quantum power options; that's based on the superhuman template, above.

These classes are designed to fill archetypical roles that transition into more specialized avenues. As such, the core classes in **Aberrant** go from 1st to 10th level. A character going through all 10 levels of a class moves on to a prestige class at 11th level (or a different core class, depending on where you want to take your character).

## Multiclassing

No race in **Aberrant** has a favored class; characters may multiclass freely, without experience point penalty. The only requirement regarding multiclassing is that players must receive GM approval before taking a level in a new class. Although some GMs may allow characters to take levels freely, others might prefer to maintain a closer eye on level progression — forbidding a lifelong, semiliterate mercenary to take levels in scholar, for instance.

# Entertainer

**Description:** The entertainer's life is the stage, whether it's a concert auditorium, a movie set or a TV soundstage. The entertainer must have the charisma to win the crowd over, and the talent to keep them coming back.

Entertainers find themselves adventuring more often than might be expected. This comes about in no small part because an entertainer travels often, going where there are shows to be held. This creates plenty of opportunities for adventure — both in the journey itself and in the destination, whether exotic or conventional. Even so, an entertainer who stays in one place — whether New York, London or Hong Kong — often rubs elbows with intrigue and excitement in the course of his regular activities.

Young (low-level) entertainers are known locally — whether in regional theater, a minor league sports team or on local television. Older (high-level) entertainers are the top stars of their fields — or any fields — and are often famous for being celebrities as much as for any actual accomplishments.

**Allegiance:** Many entertainers are "free agents," but some ally themselves with public service organizations such as Project Utopia. A few avant-garde entertainers have sided with the Aberrants, drawn by that group's contempt for conventional society.

**Abilities:** An entertainer's primary asset is his Charisma, but beyond that things vary. An athlete may need a decent amount of Strength and Constitution, while a singer may need a good Wisdom score to keep in tune with the audience's reactions.

**Hit Die:** d8.

**Class Skills:** The entertainer's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (art, current events, popular culture, streetwise) (Int), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Speak Language, Swim (Str).

**Skill Points at 1st Level:** (6 + Int bonus) x 4.

**Skill Points at Each Additional Level:** 6 + Int bonus.

**Wealth Bonus:** +3.

## Table 1–2: The Entertainer (Ent)

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | AC Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st | +0 | +0 | +0 | +2 | +2 | Bonus feat, stories from the road, inspire competence |
| 2nd | +1 | +1 | +0 | +3 | +3 | Background feat |
| 3rd | +2 | +1 | +1 | +3 | +3 | Inspire courage +2 |
| 4th | +3 | +1 | +1 | +4 | +4 | Background feat |
| 5th | +3 | +2 | +1 | +4 | +4 | Sway crowd |
| 6th | +4 | +2 | +2 | +5 | +5 | Background feat, inspire courage +3 |
| 7th | +5 | +2 | +2 | +5 | +5 | Fascinate |
| 8th | +6/+1 | +3 | +2 | +6 | +6 | Background feat |
| 9th | +6/+1 | +3 | +3 | +6 | +6 | Worldwide renown, inspire courage +4 |
| 10th | +7/+2 | +3 | +3 | +7 | +7 | Background feat |

## Class Features

**Bonus Feat:** An entertainer begins play with one of the following feats: Acrobatic, Agile, Deceitful, Deft Hands, Negotiator, Nimble Fingers or Persuasive.

**Stories from the Road:** The entertainer can pick up useful tidbits of information while traveling the world on promotional tours, location shoots, book signings or other circumstance appropriate to his area of accomplishment. He may make a special check with a bonus equal to his entertainer level + Intelligence modifier to know an ordinary fact that he might have learned. This may involve knowing that there's a network of underground fight clubs in a given city, or that the authorities in a particular place can be bought in return for favors of cash or drugs. The DC depends on the type of knowledge involved.

| DC | Type of Knowledge |
|---|---|
| 10 | Common, known by at least a substantial minority of an audience. |
| 20 | Uncommon but available, details known by a few. |
| 25 | Obscure, known by few, hard to come by. |

**Inspire Competence (Ex):** At 1st level, the entertainer can inspire his allies to excel at a task at hand. The entertainer must make a successful DC 10 Charisma check and spend one full round using encouraging words, snappy patter, or another means of encouragement. All allies within sight and/or earshot (as appropriate to the entertainment) gain a +2 bonus on attack rolls and skill checks for a number of rounds equal to the entertainer's Charisma modifier.

The entertainer can inspire a number of allies equal to one-half his entertainer level, rounded down (to a minimum of one ally). The entertainer can't inspire himself.

**Background Feats:** The entertainer gains a free background feat at 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th and 10th levels. He must meet all the usual criteria for the feat, and must choose from one of the following trees: Allies, Contacts, Mentor, Nemesis, Reputation or Resources.

**Inspire Courage (Ex):** At 3rd level, an entertainer can inspire allies to feats of great courage. By making a successful DC 10 Charisma check and performing, telling stories or showing off for a full round for those allies who listen to and observe him, the entertainer grants each a +2 bonus on attack rolls, damage rolls and saving throws against fear. The bonus increases to +3 at 6th level and to +4 at 9th level, and lasts a number of rounds equal to his Charisma modifier.

The entertainer can inspire a number of allies equal to one-half his entertainer level, rounded down. The entertainer can't inspire himself.

**Sway Crowd (Ex):** At 5th level, an entertainer with 8 or more ranks in Perform can sway an entire crowd to follow his urging — encourage people to disperse, stick together, remain calm, defend themselves, run for their lives, behave in an orderly fashion, and so on. The entertainer must spend at least one full round performing or otherwise showing off before the crowd and must make a successful Perform check. The DC depends on the crowd size, as indicated below.

| DC | Crowd Size |
|---|---|
| 15 | Small (10–20 people) |
| 20 | Medium (21–50 people) |
| 25 | Large (51–200 people) |
| 30 | Huge (200+ people) |

**Fascinate (Ex):** At 7th level, an entertainer with 8 or more ranks in Perform can use his talent to fascinate a number of targets equal to one-half his entertainer level, rounded down. Each creature must be within 90 feet, able to see and hear the entertainer, and able to pay attention to him. Likewise, the entertainer must be aware of each creature. This ability cannot be used with the distraction of nearby combat or other dangers.

The entertainer makes a Perform check; the result serves as the DC for a Will save that each target creature must make to avoid becoming fascinated. On a successful save, the entertainer cannot attempt to fascinate that creature again for 24 hours. On a failed save, the creature is enthralled with the performance, taking no other actions, for as long as the entertainer continues to concentrate and perform (for a maximum number of rounds equal to the entertainer's class level + Charisma modifier). Any attack breaks the effect automatically.

While fascinated, a target takes a −4 penalty on skill checks made as reactions, such as Listen and Spot checks. Any potential threat requires the entertainer to make another Perform check and allows the creature a new saving throw against the new result.

**Worldwide Renown:** By 9th level, the character achieves an accomplishment that thrusts him into the international limelight — a platinum record, a box-office-topping movie, an XWF title bout, a World Series championship or similar success. From this point onward, the GM should assume that almost anyone the entertainer meets anywhere in the civilized world has at least heard his name, and will respond to his tremendous fame accordingly (including being influenced by any feats or powers the entertainer may have).

This also bestows a free feat from the Reputation feat tree. The entertainer may take a different feat if he has all the Reputation feats already, although he must justify the new feat with his reputation or entertainment prowess.

# Investigator

**Description:** The investigator works to uncover the root causes of crimes and conflicts between individuals. She may be a private eye, a consulting detective, a police investigator, an intrepid reporter or even an attorney with an itch for sleuthing. The investigator has a keen eye for details that others miss and a flair for describing events (even better than those who were involved with the occurrence).

Young (low-level) investigators may be rookie cops or freelance photographers. Older (high-level) ones might be hard-bitten private eyes, cynical police detectives or investigative (or entertainment) journalists.

**Allegiance:** Project Utopia (and their rumored shadowy cousin, Proteus) and the Directive are known to make extensive use of investigators as they track nova eruptions worldwide.

**Abilities:** Wisdom — particularly because of its impact on perception — is critical to an investigator.

**Hit Die:** d8.

**Class Skills:** The investigator's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Bluff (Cha), Computer Use (Int), Disable Device (Int), Drive (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Investigate (Int), Knowledge (behavioral sciences, civics, current events, popular culture, streetwise, theology and philosophy) (Int), Listen (Wis), Profession (Wis), Research (Int), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language, Spot (Wis).

**Skill Points at 1st Level:** (8 + Int bonus) x 4.

**Skill Points at Each Additional Level:** 8 + Int bonus.

**Wealth Bonus:** +1.

## Class Features

**Bonus Feats:** An investigator begins play with Personal Firearms Proficiency and Persuasive.

**Sweep the Scene (Ex):** An investigator can size up an area at a glance, noting likely clues and getting a read on possible suspects. This sweep covers a 30-foot area around the investigator (except directly behind her). The character states at the beginning of an encounter if she's making a sweep, thereby gaining a +2 bonus on Spot checks and Sense Motive checks for the rest of the encounter in that area.

**Background Feats:** The investigator gains a free background feat at 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th and 10th levels. She must meet all the usual criteria for the feat, and must choose from one of the following trees: Backing, Contacts, Influence, Mentor, Nemesis or Reputation.

**Cluehound (Ex):** At 3rd level, the investigator can determine with certainty a particular clue's importance to an investigation. The character designates which potential clue she's considering and makes an Investigate check. The DC depends on how obvious the clue is in the context of the investigation (crime scene modifiers listed under the Investigate skill are halved for this check).

| DC | Clue Context | Example |
|----|--------------|---------|
| 10 | Obvious | Murder weapon dropped at scene; email confession |
| 15 | Unclear | Phone number on answering machine; wet overcoat in closet |
| 20 | Obscure | Name in address book with no identifiable alias; class ring |
| 25 | Cryptic | Lines of poetry; non sequitur uttered with dying breath |

On a successful check, the investigator confirms that clue's relative level of importance to the current investigation, categorized as follows.
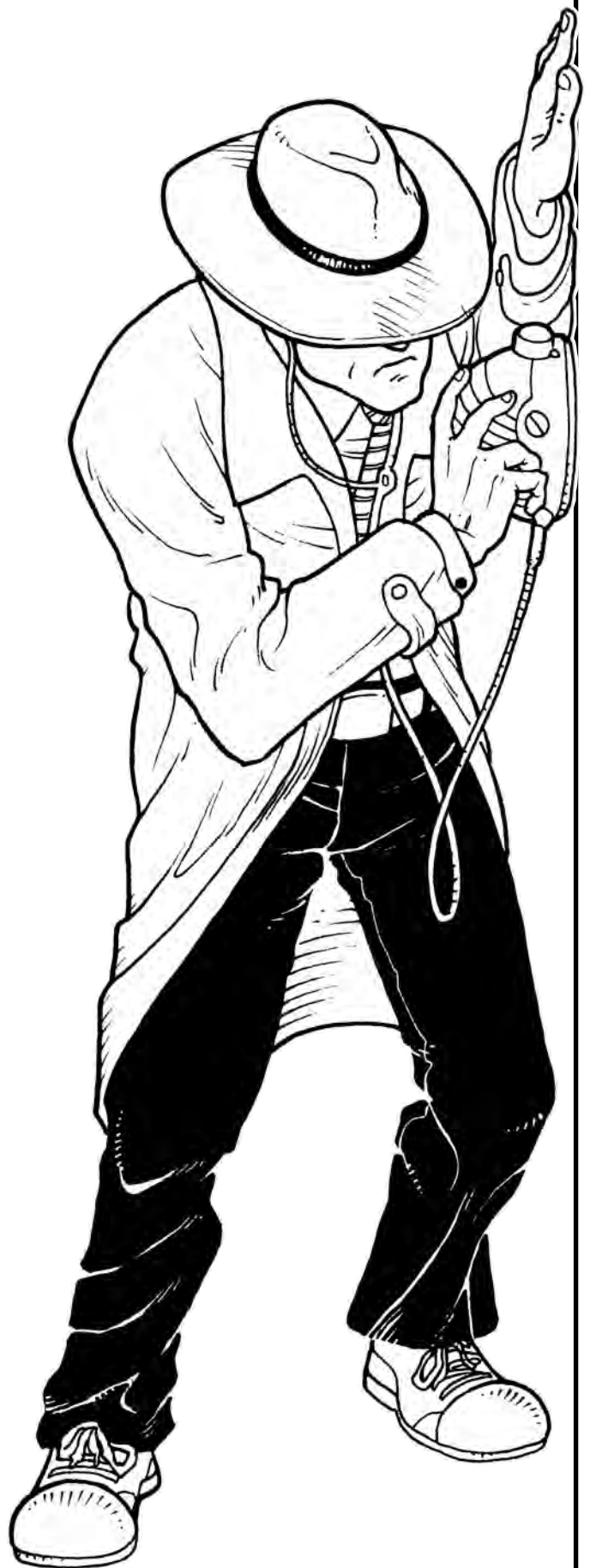
## Table 1–3: The Investigator (Inv)

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | AC Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st | +0 | +1 | +2 | +0 | +2 | Bonus feats, sweep the scene |
| 2nd | +1 | +1 | +3 | +0 | +3 | Background feat |
| 3rd | +2 | +2 | +3 | +1 | +3 | Cluehound |
| 4th | +3 | +2 | +4 | +1 | +4 | Background feat |
| 5th | +3 | +3 | +4 | +1 | +4 | Clever plan |
| 6th | +4 | +3 | +5 | +2 | +5 | Background feat |
| 7th | +5 | +4 | +5 | +2 | +5 | Discern secrets |
| 8th | +6/+1 | +4 | +6 | +2 | +6 | Background feat |
| 9th | +6/+1 | +5 | +6 | +3 | +6 | Tarnish reputation |
| 10th | +7/+2 | +5 | +7 | +3 | +7 | Background feat |

| Relevance | Description | Modifier |
|---|---|---|
| None | Not relevant to investigation | — |
| Minor | Little investigative value, but might help discover a moderate clue | +1 |
| Moderate | Indicative of means, motive, or opportunity, but not conclusive on its own | +2 |
| Critical | Clear indication of means, motive, and/or opportunity | +3 |

A relevant clue provides a modifier that the investigator may apply on subsequent Gather Information, Knowledge, Research, Search and Sense Motive checks she makes in the course of the investigation. The character can use this ability to look at multiple clues at the same scene, but multiple cluehound modifiers do not stack.

**Clever Plan (Ex):** As of 5th level, prior to either a combat- or skill-related dramatic situation, the investigator can develop a plan of action. This requires preparation; an investigator can't hatch a clever plan when surprised or otherwise unprepared for a particular situation.

The investigator makes a DC 10 Intelligence check with a bonus equal to her investigator levels (she cannot take 10 or 20). The result of the check provides the investigator and her allies with a bonus as indicated below.

| Check Result | Bonus |
|---|---|
| 9 or lower | +0 (check failed) |
| 10–14 | +1 |
| 15–24 | +2 |
| 25 or higher | +3 |

The investigator and her allies can apply the resulting bonus on all skill checks and attack rolls for a number of rounds equal to the investigator's Intelligence modifier. The bonus is then reduced by 1 point (to a minimum of +0) for every additional round the situation continues.

**Discern Secrets (Ex):** Once each day a 7th-level investigator can deduce a suspect's possible motive for committing a crime or being involved in some form of conspiracy. The investigator must spend at least 15 consecutive minutes in the target's presence before making a Sense Motive check (DC = 10 + the target's Will save). If successful, the investigator discerns any viable motive the suspect has relating to the crime or conspiracy. This gives the character a bonus equal to one-half her investigator level (round down) on any subsequent Gather Information, Knowledge, Research, Search and Sense Motive checks for investigating that subject's ties to the current investigation. Note that this does not divulge the subject's *actual* involvement; rather, it provides a solid working theory that may be used to gain a confession or to line up related evidence to make an airtight case. This ability can stack with modifiers gained from cluehound.

**Tarnish Reputation (Ex):** By 9th level, the investigator has earned enough respect from her exploits that she can tarnish another's reputation simply by suggesting that that individual is under investigation. Once per (game) month, the investigator may suggest to a reporter or other public figure that she is investigating a particular person. That person suffers an immediate reputation loss until the investigator makes a formal accusation or exonerates the subject, or a full month passes with no further news. The reputation loss incurs a −4 penalty on all of the subject's Charisma-based checks, and the loss of access to the target's highest level in the Reputation background feat tree (if the target's reputation is based on anything other than being a rogue and a criminal).

# Scholar

**Description:** Bookish, insular and perhaps even unschooled in social graces, the scholar may not seem the adventuring type. In fact, scholars are responsible for more trips to forbidding locales and hazardous research projects than nearly any other character class. While some may seem too focused on book-learning and a proper education, they all know the value of field work. Real scientists get their hands dirty — they explore, they discover, they talk to locals and natives about important mysteries that lie outside the everyday realm.

Scholars may be university professors, librarians, intrepid archaeologists, inventors, mechanics — anyone with a flair for advanced learning or high technology. In fact, given their natural brilliance and the interconnection of things scientific in the modern world, many scholars are polymaths — familiar with multiple proper fields of study.
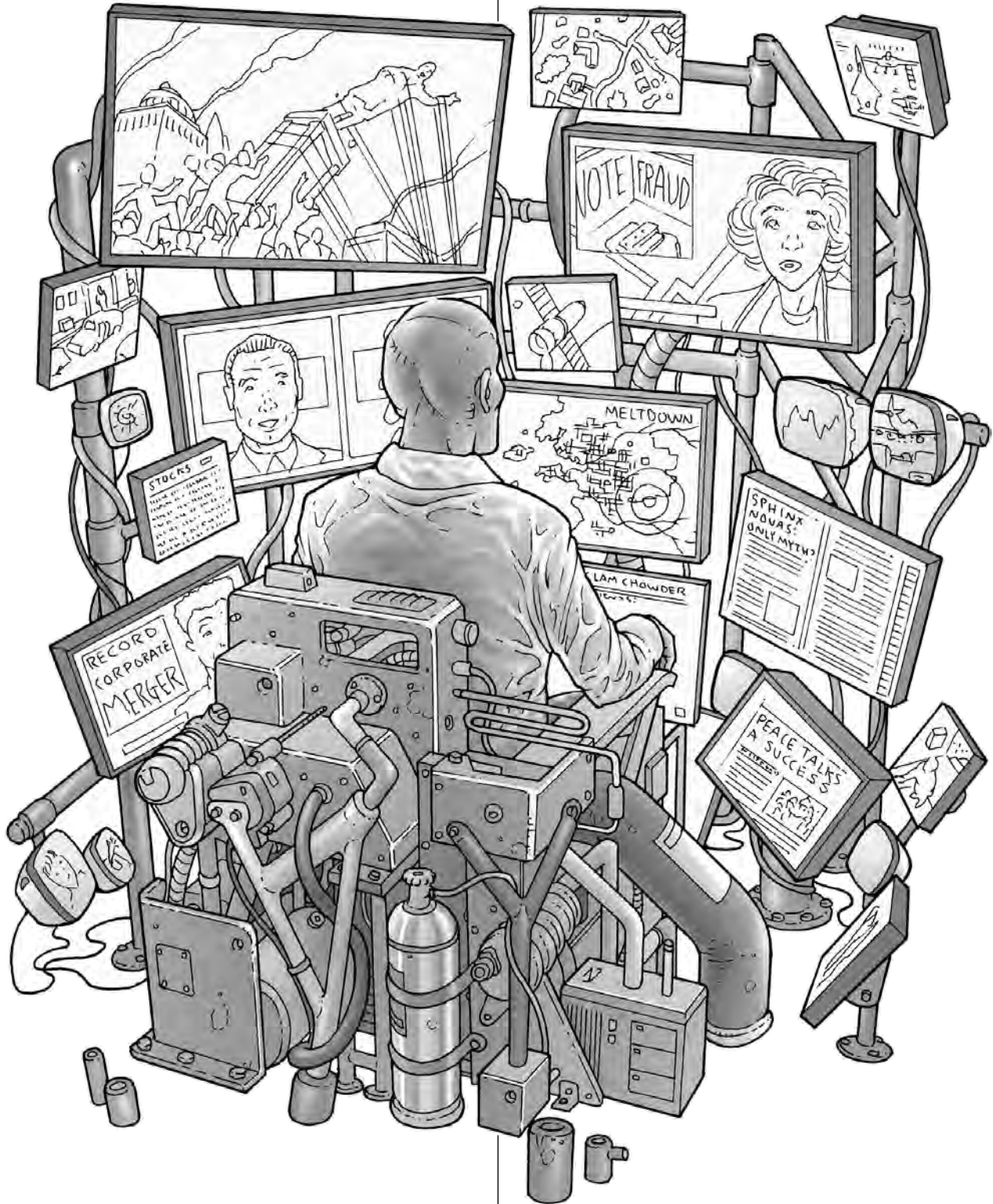
## Table 1–4: The Scholar (Sch)

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | AC Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st | +0 | +0 | +0 | +0 | +2 | Bonus feat, Knowledge specialty |
| 2nd | +1 | +1 | +0 | +0 | +3 | Background feat |
| 3rd | +1 | +1 | +1 | +1 | +3 | Bonus language |
| 4th | +2 | +1 | +1 | +1 | +4 | Background feat, Knowledge specialty |
| 5th | +2 | +2 | +1 | +1 | +4 | Improvise implements, bonus language |
| 6th | +3 | +2 | +2 | +2 | +5 | Background feat |
| 7th | +3 | +2 | +2 | +2 | +5 | Improvise invention, bonus language, Knowledge specialty |
| 8th | +4 | +3 | +2 | +2 | +6 | Background feat |
| 9th | +4 | +3 | +3 | +3 | +6 | Scholarly insight, bonus language |
| 10th | +5 | +3 | +3 | +3 | +7 | Background feat, Knowledge specialty |

Young (low-level) scholars are often intrepid and curious, trekking into the wilderness to test a theory or discover a hitherto unknown fact about an arcane jungle plant. Older (high-level) scholars tend to be less adventurous. Though they never lose the desire to learn, more seasoned scholars tend to keep to their libraries and studies until a *truly* important discovery pulls them back into the world.

**Allegiance:** Some of the world's foremost minds are found among the members of Project Utopia, the Triton Foundation and the Directive. Others seek lucrative employment in the corporate sector or choose to explore more radical theories under the auspices of the Teragen.

**Abilities:** Intelligence is primary. An adventurous scholar is well advised to keep a decent Constitution and Dexterity, but more bookish scholars lack those traits.

**Hit Die:** d6.

**Class Skills:** The scholar's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Computer Use (Int), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Demolitions (Int), Disable Device (Int), Heal (Wis), Investigate (Int), Knowledge (any) (Int), Profession (Wis), Repair (Int), Research (Int), Search (Int), Speak Language.

**Skill Points at 1st Level:** (6 + Int) x 4.

**Skill Points at Each Additional Level:** (6 + Int).

**Wealth Bonus:** +2.

## Class Features

**Bonus Feat:** A scholar begins play with one of the following feats: Diligent, Investigator or Negotiator.

**Knowledge Specialty:** A starting scholar selects a Knowledge category (art, behavioral sciences, business, civics, current events, Earth and life sciences, history, occult, physical sciences, popular culture, streetwise, tactics, technology, theology and philosophy) in which he has at least one rank. This is considered his specialty, bestowing a +2 bonus with that skill.

The scholar may take an additional +2 bonus at 4th, 7th and 10th level, either on the same Knowledge skill or on a new one in which he has skill ranks. If the scholar's specialty bonus exceeds +4, he gets the benefits of the Recognized feat within that field of study.

**Background Feats:** The scholar gains a free background feat at 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th and 10th levels. He must meet all the usual criteria

for the feat, and must choose from one of the following trees: Backing, Cipher, Contacts, Followers, Gadget, Menagerie, Mentor, Reputation or Sanctum.

**Bonus Language:** The scholar learns a bonus language at 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th level. These can be any languages the character has been exposed to, whether spoken or in writing (though the scholar's pronunciation may be a bit off if he has not heard the language spoken).

**Improvise Implements (Ex):** At 5th level, a scholar can make do without proper equipment in certain circumstances. By substituting found objects for tools, he suffers no penalty when making Climb, Disable Device, Heal or Repair checks that require tool use.

**Improvise Invention (Ex):** Upon reaching 7th level, the scholar can improvise solutions using common objects and scientific know-how to create inventions in a dramatic situation quickly and cheaply, but with a limited duration.

By combining common objects with a Craft check that corresponds to the function desired, the scholar can build a tool or device to deal with any mundane situation. The DC for the Craft check equals 5 + the purchase DC of the object that matches the desired function most closely. Electronic devices, special tools, weapons, mechanical devices and more can be built with scientific improvisation. It takes a full-round action for every full 5 points of the object's purchase DC to improvise an invention (so an object with purchase DC 13 takes 2 rounds to make).

Once used, the improvised item lasts a number of rounds equal to the scholar's class level (or until the end of the current encounter, at the GM's discretion). It then breaks down and cannot be repaired. Only objects that can normally be used more than once can be improvised, and they must be existing technology. This ability cannot be used to create actual inventions (see Chapter Five: Super-Science).

**Scholarly Insight (Ex):** By 9th level, the scholar has gleaned an impressive knowledge of the world. He may overcome a lack of hard facts by making comparisons in seemingly disparate areas to arrive at a sound conclusion for the matter at hand. A scholar can always try again once if he fails a Knowledge check for any of the following categories: art, behavioral sciences, business, civics, Earth and life sciences, history, physical sciences, technology, or theology and phi

# Scoundrel

**Description:** A scoundrel's abilities are well-suited to a hard life on the street; in all likelihood a character with levels in scoundrel got them the hard way. A scoundrel excels at making her way around the law — she may not burgle and thieve actively, but she knows how to sneak, break and enter, and cover her tracks. Police investigators and private detectives often pick up the skills of a scoundrel through exposure and experience, and more than one military scout has learned the same abilities (though perhaps in different proportions than a sneak-thief who grew up on the streets).

Young (low-level) scoundrels are typically thugs, con artists or simple vandals. Older (high-level) scoundrels are diamond-theft-caliber cat burglars, or criminal masterminds who oversee whole empires of crime.

**Allegiance:** Almost every organization can find a use for someone who knows her way around a security system. The Directive and Teragen make no secret of keeping such individuals on their payrolls, but even the high-minded Project Utopia sees the value of having such personnel on retainer.

**Abilities:**
Scoundrels rely on their Dexterity, Intelligence and Charisma to keep them out of scrapes.

**Hit Die:** d8.

**Class Skills:** The scoundrel's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disable Device (Int), Disguise (Cha), Drive (Dex), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (civics, current events, streetwise) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Rope Use (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spot (Wis), and Tumble (Dex).

**Skill Points at 1st Level:** (8 + Int bonus) x 4.
**Skill Points at Each Additional Level:** 8 + Int bonus.
**Wealth Bonus:** +1.

## Class Features

**Bonus Feat:** A scoundrel begins play with either Brawl or Personal Firearms Proficiency.

**Cool Customer (Ex):** The scoundrel works well even under pressure. Choose three skills; when making a check with any of them, the scoundrel can take 10 even when distracted or under duress. The character can add one additional skill every three scoundrel levels, to a total of six skills at 10th level.

**Trapfinding:** The scoundrel can use the Search skill to find traps when the task DC is greater than 20. This also applies to traps created through super-science or other Inspired technology.

**Background Feats:** The scoundrel gains a free background feat at 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th and 10th levels. She must meet all the usual criteria for the feat, and must choose from one of the following trees: Backing (in a criminal organization), Cipher, Contacts, Mentor, Reputation or Sanctum.

**Evasion (Ex):** By 3rd level, the scoundrel has well-developed self-preservation instincts. If she makes a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that deals half damage on a successful save, she instead takes no damage. Evasion can be used only if the scoundrel is wearing light armor or no armor. A helpless scoundrel does not gain the benefit of evasion.
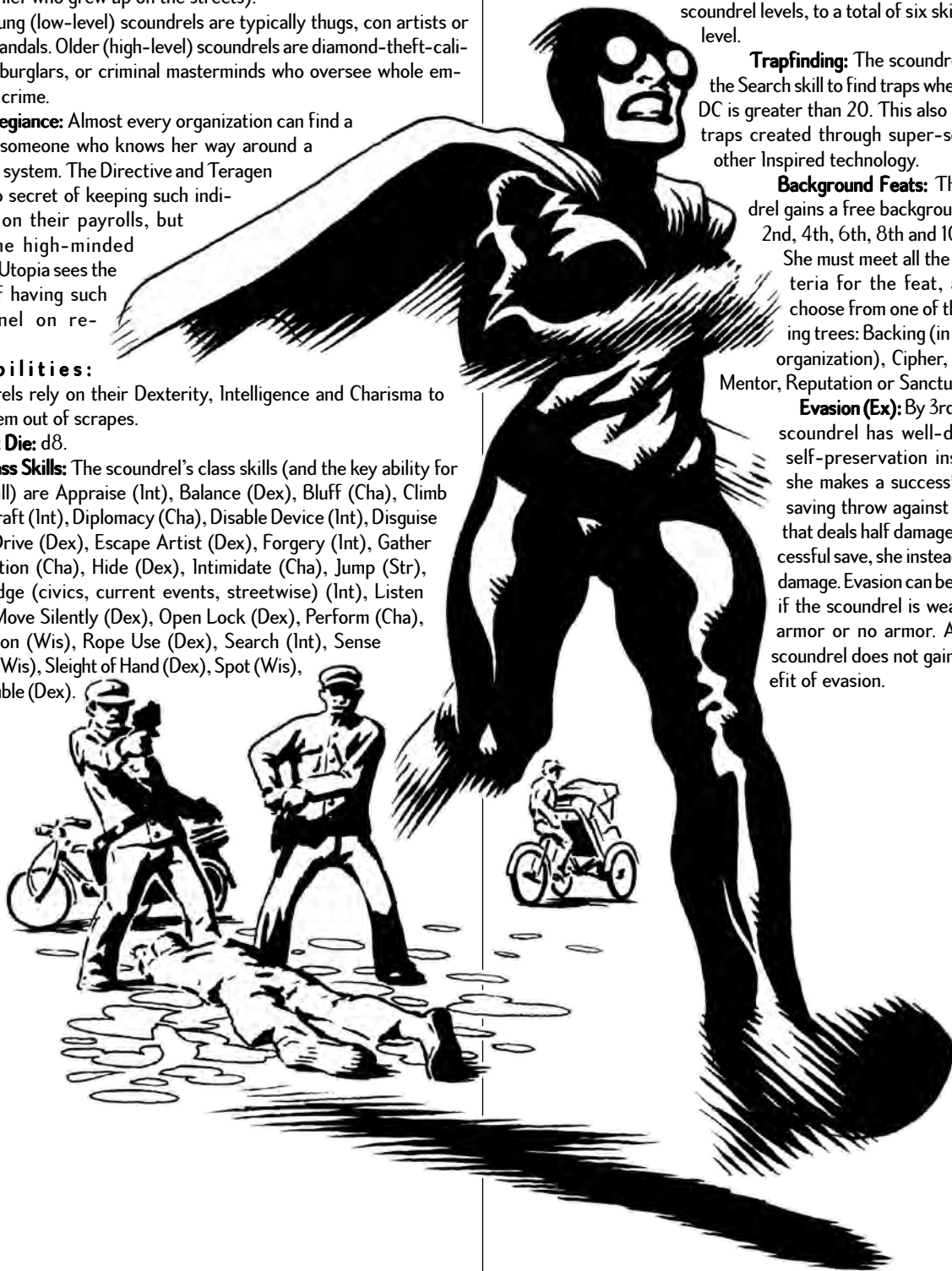
## Table 1–5: The Scoundrel (Sco)

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | AC Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st | +0 | +2 | +0 | +2 | +0 | Bonus feat, cool customer |
| 2nd | +1 | +2 | +0 | +3 | +0 | Background feat |
| 3rd | +2 | +3 | +1 | +3 | +1 | Evasion |
| 4th | +3 | +4 | +1 | +4 | +1 | Background feat, cool customer (+1) |
| 5th | +3 | +4 | +1 | +4 | +1 | Sneak attack +1d6 |
| 6th | +4 | +5 | +2 | +5 | +2 | Background feat |
| 7th | +5 | +6 | +2 | +5 | +2 | Uncanny dodge, sneak attack +2d6, cool customer (+1) |
| 8th | +6/+1 | +6 | +2 | +6 | +2 | Background feat |
| 9th | +6/+1 | +7 | +3 | +6 | +3 | Intuition, sneak attack +3d6 |
| 10th | +7/+2 | +8 | +3 | +7 | +3 | Background feat, cool customer (+1) |

**Sneak Attack:** At 5th level, the scoundrel can deal an extra 1d6 points of damage with her attack when she catches an opponent who is unable to defend himself effectively — in other words, whenever the target is denied his Dexterity bonus to AC or is flanked. The extra damage increases by 1d6 every two scoundrel levels thereafter, to a maximum of +3d6 at 9th level.

Should the scoundrel score a critical hit with a sneak attack, the extra damage is not multiplied. Ranged attacks can count as sneak attacks only if the target is within 30 feet. A scoundrel can make a sneak attack that deals nonlethal damage instead of lethal damage using a sap (blackjack) or an unarmed strike. She cannot use a weapon that deals lethal damage to deal nonlethal damage in a sneak attack, not even with the usual −4 penalty.

A scoundrel can sneak attack only living creatures with discernible anatomies. Any creature that is immune to critical hits is not vulnerable to sneak attacks. The scoundrel must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot and must be able to reach such a spot. A scoundrel cannot sneak attack while striking a creature with concealment or striking the limbs of a creature whose vitals are beyond reach.

**Uncanny Dodge (Ex):** Upon reaching 7th level, a scoundrel can react to danger before her senses would normally allow her to do so. She retains her Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) even if she is caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible or otherwise unseen attacker. However, she still loses her Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized.

**Intuition (Ex):** By 9th level, the scoundrel has an innate ability to sense trouble in the air. With a successful DC 15 Will saving throw, she gets a hunch whether everything is all right or not in a specific situation, based on the GM's best guess relating to the circumstances. The character can use her intuition a number of times per day equal to her scoundrel level.

# Warrior

**Description:** The warrior is at the forefront of battle — whether on the side of justice and heroism or in the service of selfishness, wickedness or mad schemes to rule the world. Warriors are skilled in the use of most modern weaponry, as well as basic hand-to-hand fighting techniques; over time they gain expertise in a wide variety of weapons and become truly terrifying on the battlefield.

Warriors range from primitive backwater thugs to Army sharpshooters, and nearly everything in between. Most warriors specialize in particular styles of fighting, though it is not uncommon for them to branch out as they gain experience.

Young (low-level) warriors are often enforcers or grunt soldiers, while older (high-level) warriors bear out the saying "there are old soldiers, and bold soldiers, but there are no old, bold soldiers." The more experienced a warrior gets, the greater sense he gains of the battlefield, and the better idea he has of how to direct others to accomplish his overall goals.

**Allegiance:** A great many warriors find themselves employed in mercenary conflicts the world over. Others find their way into the personal security field. Virtually every organization in the Nova Age employs warriors in one capacity or another, though the Directive makes the most extensive use of paramilitary troops.
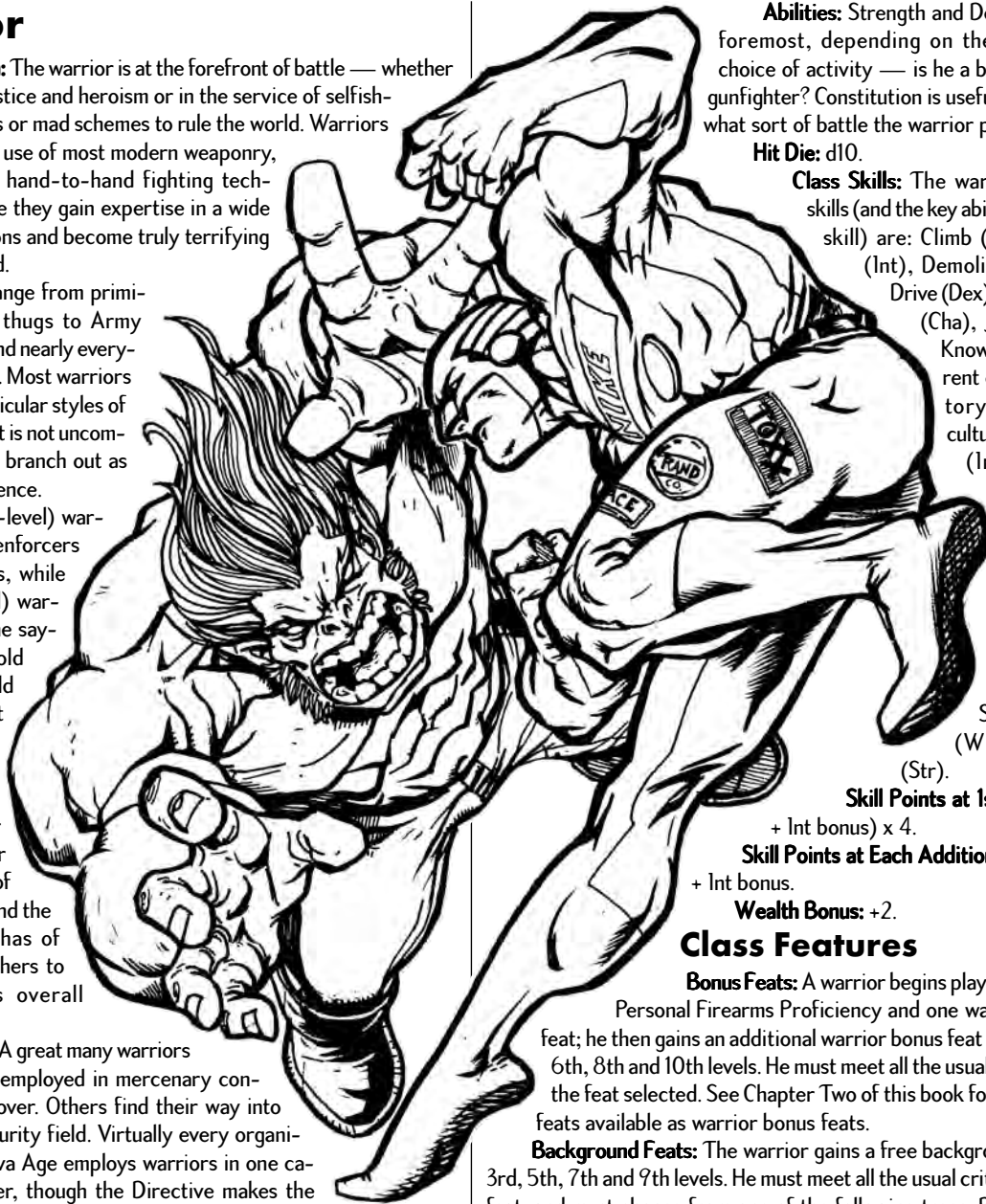
**Abilities:** Strength and Dexterity are foremost, depending on the warrior's choice of activity — is he a brawler, or a gunfighter? Constitution is useful no matter what sort of battle the warrior prefers.

**Hit Die:** d10.

**Class Skills:** The warrior's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Demolitions (Int), Drive (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (current events, history, popular culture, tactics) (Int), Listen (Wis), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Speak Language, Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str).

**Skill Points at 1st Level:** (4 + Int bonus) x 4.

**Skill Points at Each Additional Level:** 4 + Int bonus.

**Wealth Bonus:** +2.

## Class Features

**Bonus Feats:** A warrior begins play with Brawl, Personal Firearms Proficiency and one warrior bonus feat; he then gains an additional warrior bonus feat at 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th and 10th levels. He must meet all the usual criteria for the feat selected. See Chapter Two of this book for a listing of feats available as warrior bonus feats.

**Background Feats:** The warrior gains a free background feat at 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th levels. He must meet all the usual criteria for the feat, and must choose from one of the following trees: Backing, Cipher, Contacts, Mentor, Reputation or Sanctum.

## Table 1–6: The Warrior (War)

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | AC Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st | +1 | +1 | +2 | +0 | +0 | Bonus feats, warrior bonus feat |
| 2nd | +2 | +2 | +3 | +0 | +0 | Warrior bonus feat |
| 3rd | +3 | +2 | +3 | +1 | +1 | Background feat |
| 4th | +4 | +3 | +4 | +1 | +1 | Warrior bonus feat |
| 5th | +5 | +3 | +4 | +1 | +1 | Background feat |
| 6th | +6/+1 | +4 | +5 | +2 | +2 | Warrior bonus feat |
| 7th | +7/+2 | +4 | +5 | +2 | +2 | Background feat |
| 8th | +8/+3 | +5 | +6 | +2 | +2 | Warrior bonus feat |
| 9th | +9/+4 | +5 | +6 | +3 | +3 | Background feat |
| 10th | +10/+5 | +6 | +7 | +3 | +3 | Warrior bonus feat |

# Class Level Extension

Standard level progression in the d20 System runs from 1st to 20th level. The core classes in **Aberrant** stop at 10th level. At that point — or whenever your character meets the necessary prerequisites — you normally choose a prestige class or select a second core class. If your character's level progression tops out before reaching 20th level and you don't want to take on a different class, refer to Table 1–7: Class Level Extension and follow the guidelines below. Note: you cannot extend superhuman template class levels. If your character's last level was a superhuman level, you must choose to extend a core class (10 levels) or prestige class (5 levels) in which she has topped out.

**Ability Increases:** The character continues to gain ability score increases every fourth character level as normal.

**Attack and Save Bonus:** The character's base attack bonus and base save bonus increase as consistent with her extended class (see Table 1–7).

**Hit Dice and Skill Points:** The character calculates subsequent Hit Die and skill points based on the extended class.

**Feats:** The character continues to gain feats every third character level as normal.

**Background Feats:** The character gains a free background feat at every third level, selected from the background feat categories listed for the extended class.

• For multiclass characters, feats and ability increases are gained according to overall character level, not class level.

• A class feature for the topped-out class that uses the character's class level as part of a mathematical formula continues to increase using the appropriate extended character level in the formula.

• Any class features that increase or accumulate as part of a repeated pattern also continue to increase or accumulate at the same rate. An exception to this rule is any bonus feat progression granted as a class feature.

• A character gains no new class features after topping out.

# Prestige Classes

**Aberrant** assumes that all characters begin a more specialized field of study at some point in their adventuring careers. This is represented by prestige classes — although the player can instead choose a different core class if she wishes. The prestige classes from the *DMG* are not used in **Aberrant**; instead, select from the listings that follow.

## Table 1–7: Class Level Extension

| Level Ext. | Bab (good) | Bab (average) | Bab (poor) | ACb (good) | ACb (average) | ACb (poor) | Bsb (good) | Bsb (poor) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| +1 lvl | +1 | +1 | +0 | +1 | +1 | +1 | +2 | +0 |
| +2 lvl | +2 | +2 | +1 | +2 | +1 | +1 | +3 | +0 |
| +3 lvl | +3 | +2 | +1 | +2 | +2 | +1 | +3 | +1 |
| +4 lvl | +4 | +3 | +2 | +3 | +2 | +2 | +4 | +1 |
| +5 lvl | +5 | +4 | +2 | +4 | +3 | +2 | +4 | +1 |
| +6 lvl | +6/ +1 | +5 | +3 | +4 | +3 | +2 | +5 | +2 |
| +7 lvl | +7/ +2 | +5 | +3 | +5 | +4 | +3 | +5 | +2 |
| +8 lvl | +8/ +3 | +6/ +1 | +4 | +6 | +4 | +3 | +6 | +2 |
| +9 lvl | +9/ +4 | +7/ +2 | +4 | +6 | +5 | +3 | +6 | +3 |
| +10 lvl | +10/ +5 | +8/ +3 | +5 | +7 | +5 | +4 | +7 | +3 |

**Level Ext.:** The level extension is based on overall character level at the time of the character's level top-out. Characters who top out at different overall character level — for instance, 10th level (*entertainer 10*), 12th level (*superhuman 2/warrior 10*), 15th level (*scoundrel 10/vigilante 5*), 17th level (*superhuman 2/investigator 10/crusader 5*) — all start at +1 level extension.

**Bab:** The base attack bonus is calculated from the character's class upon topping out.
*Good:* crusader, disciple, mercenary, warrior
*Average:* entertainer, gladiator, investigator, scoundrel, spy, vigilante
*Poor:* inventor, scholar

**ACb:** The Armor Class bonus is calculated from the character's class upon topping out.
*Good:* crusader, disciple, mercenary, scoundrel
*Average:* gladiator, investigator, spy, vigilante, warrior
*Poor:* entertainer, inventor, scholar

**Bsb:** The base save bonus for each saving throw category is calculated from the character's class upon topping out.
*Fortitude (good):* crusader, gladiator, mercenary, warrior
*Fortitude (poor):* disciple, entertainer, inventor, investigator, scholar, scoundrel, spy, vigilante
*Reflex (good):* disciple, entertainer, gladiator, scoundrel, spy, vigilante
*Reflex (poor):* crusader, inventor, investigator, mercenary, scholar, warrior
*Will (good):* crusader, entertainer, inventor, investigator, scholar, vigilante
*Will (poor):* disciple, gladiator, mercenary, scoundrel, spy, warrior

# Crusader

**Description:** The crusader is a character who devotes himself to a higher ideal and uses all his talents to make his dream a reality. He strives to be a paragon of his beliefs, existing as a shining example in the hopes that he will inspire others of all walks of life and levels of ability to join his cause. The crusader is always at the forefront of any struggle, and is ready and willing to sacrifice what he must for the sake of his beliefs. His devotion can be a powerful source of good — or an implacable force for evil.

**Allegiance:** Crusaders are fixtures in the ranks of Project Utopia, but they also have equally-committed rivals in Teragen and even among the Aberrants. The strength of their beliefs and their fervent devotion to them is what makes crusaders what they are, rather than any shared vision for humanity.

**Prerequisites:** Base attack bonus +5; Charisma 17; Diplomacy 5 ranks.

**Hit Die:** d10.

**Class Skills:** The crusader's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (civics, current events, history, popular culture, tactics, theology and philosophy)(Int), Search (Wis) and Sense Motive (Wis).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 4 + Int modifier.

## Class Features

**Trademark Attack (Ex):** A crusader often becomes famous (or rightly feared) for a particular weapon or attack that he employs on his foes. The crusader gains a +1 bonus on attack and damage rolls for one specific weapon (not weapon type, but a single weapon); this may include a quantum power. This bonus increases by +1 per level, to a maximum of +5.

**Rallying Cry (Ex):** At 2nd level the crusader's zeal and courage is a source of inspiration to his companions. Once per day he can utter a rallying cry that affects himself and allies or companions within 10 feet/character level. Affected individuals are immune to fear-based attacks (making them immune to Intimidate attempts) and gain a +2 bonus that may be applied as the crusader chooses: on attack or damage rolls, or to AC. This bonus increases to +4 at 4th level. The effects of the rallying cry last for a number of rounds equal to the character's crusader level.

**Heroic Image (Ex):** At 3rd level the crusader's reputation has grown to the degree that he is a figure of considerable celebrity, inspiring excitement and awe wherever he goes. He gains the benefit of the Recognized feat from the Reputation feat tree. He gains the benefit of Celebrated if he has Recognized already; or, he gains the benefit of Renowned if he has Celebrated already.

**Righteous Fury (Ex):** At 4th level the crusader's passion and inner strength make him a force of nearly unstoppable power when confronting his foes. Once per encounter the crusader may choose a single opponent as the focus of his fury. The crusader adds his Charisma bonus on his attack rolls and deals 1 extra point of damage per character level against the selected foe; but this single-minded focus applies a −4 penalty to his Armor Class against attacks from other opponents. Righteous fury lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the crusader's Charisma modifier.

**Heroic Surge (Ex):** At 5th level the crusader's dedication (some would say fanaticism) knows few equals. He will fight for his beliefs well beyond the point of even superhuman endurance; he will battle to his last drop of blood rather than surrender to his enemies. If the crusader drops to 0 hit points or lower, he may make a DC 15 Will save; if successful he may continue to act without penalty. The crusader can make a new Will save each time he suffers additional damage while at 0 hp or lower, although each additional save beyond the first is at DC 15 + his new hit point total — so, a crusader who suffers damage that takes him to −3 hit points must make a DC 18 Will save to remain active.

There is no limit to how far below 0 hp the crusader may fall as long as he succeeds at his Will save. However, if he is at −10 hp or lower when he fails a Will save or when combat ends, he dies instantly.

## Table 1–8: The Crusader (Cru)

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | AC Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st | +1 | +1 | +0 | +0 | +2 | Trademark attack |
| 2nd | +2 | +2 | +0 | +0 | +3 | Rallying cry +2 |
| 3rd | +3 | +3 | +1 | +1 | +3 | Heroic image |
| 4th | +4 | +4 | +1 | +1 | +4 | Rallying cry +4, righteous fury |
| 5th | +5 | +5 | +1 | +1 | +4 | Heroic surge |

# Disciple

**Description:** The disciple strives for the perfection of physical action. This can take any number of forms — an acolyte who works to master kung fu; an assassin who studies the perfect killing method; a boxer who hopes to become the greatest pugilist in the world; a street tough who seeks to be the toughest bastard around. Their motives and styles of fighting may vary widely, but all disciples have one thing in common: Their bodies become weapons as dangerous as any blade or gun.

**Allegiance:** Disciples are defined by their concentration on martial arts. They do not share a particular philosophy or allegiance among themselves, so disciples are not attracted to one organization over another. Any group that provides the disciple with the opportunity to utilize her unique skills may attract her attention, from Utopia to the Directive to the Teragen. Many elites are disciples also.

**Prerequisites:** Base attack bonus +3; Jump 5 ranks; Combat Martial Arts, Defensive Martial Arts.

**Hit Die:** d8.

**Class Skills:** The disciple's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (current events, history, theology and philosophy) (Int), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 4 + Int modifier.

## Class Features

**Living Weapon (Ex):** The disciple attacks with either fist interchangeably, or even with elbows, knees and feet. This means that she may even make unarmed strikes when her hands are full, and there is no such thing as an off-hand attack for a disciple striking unarmed.
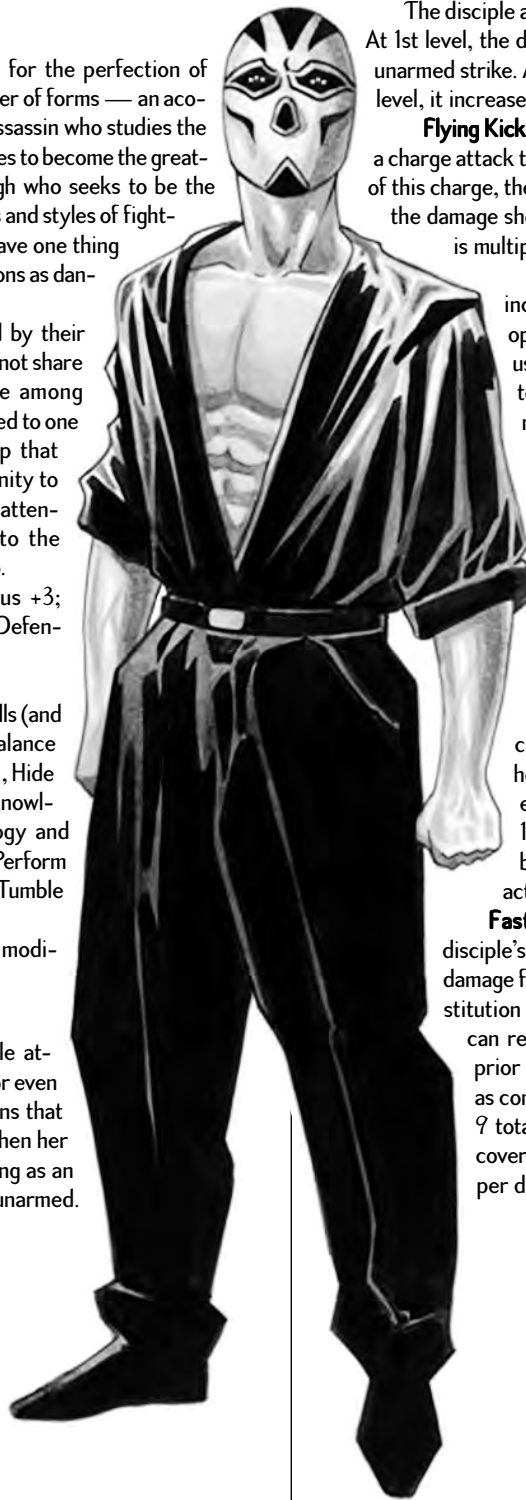
The disciple also deals more damage with unarmed strikes. At 1st level, the disciple inflicts 1d6 points of damage with an unarmed strike. At 3rd level, damage increases to 1d8. At 5th level, it increases to 1d10.

**Flying Kick (Ex):** Starting at 2nd level, a disciple can use a charge attack to deliver a devastating flying kick. At the end of this charge, the disciple adds her disciple level as a bonus to the damage she deals with an unarmed strike. This damage is multiplied on a critical hit.

**Iron Fist (Ex):** At 3rd level, a disciple can increase the damage that she deals to a single opponent with a single unarmed strike. She may use this ability a number of times per day equal to half her disciple level (round down), and must declare her intent prior to making an unarmed strike. On a successful strike, she adds her disciple level as a bonus to the damage applied for that attack. This damage is multiplied on a critical hit.

At 5th level, the bonus applies to all successful attacks made in a round; the disciple must declare her intent prior to beginning her actions for the round. Iron fist does not stack with flying kick.

**Flurry of Blows (Ex):** At 4th level, a disciple can make one extra attack in a round at her highest base attack bonus. This attack and each other attack made in the round take a −1 penalty. To use this ability, the disciple must be unarmored and must spend a full-round action using unarmed strikes.

**Fast Recovery (Ex):** Starting at 5th level, a disciple's body is so disciplined that she recovers from damage faster than normal. The disciple adds her Constitution bonus (if any) to the total hit points that she can recover per each day of rest. This is applied prior to any modifiers to hit point recovery (such as complete bed rest). For example, a disciple with 9 total character levels and Constitution of 15 recovers 11 hit points per day of rest, and 16 hit points per day of complete bed rest.

## Table 1–9: The Disciple (Dis)

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | AC Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st | +1 | +1 | +0 | +2 | +0 | Living weapon (1d6 damage) |
| 2nd | +2 | +2 | +0 | +3 | +0 | Flying kick |
| 3rd | +3 | +2 | +1 | +3 | +1 | Iron fist, living weapon (1d8 damage) |
| 4th | +4 | +3 | +1 | +4 | +1 | Flurry of blows |
| 5th | +5 | +3 | +1 | +4 | +1 | Fast recovery, living weapon (1d10 damage) |

# Gladiator

**Description:** The emergence of novas revitalized the moribund world of professional sports. Extreme versions of traditional games, from football to volleyball, created high-power spectacles that brought millions of jaded fans back to auditoriums and sports bars across the world. The Xtreme Wrestling Federation, or XWF, leases entire islands for championship title bouts, and endorsements for star performers can run into tens of *billions* of dollars.

Surprisingly, a significant number of baselines flocked to the pursuit of extreme sports as well. Not a few do so in hopes of triggering an eruption — though that's a rare event to say the least — but many are out to prove that one doesn't need quantum powers to accomplish incredible feats. The market for "extreme baseline" isn't huge yet, but there is a solid and growing fan base for it.

Regardless of whether a gladiator is nova or baseline, risks are high — injuries among extreme athletes are common and often devastating, and there have been high-profile deaths due to accidents or abuse of performance-enhancing drugs. But the superstar lifestyle of these modern gladiators is all too seductive to poor and disadvantaged kids who are looking for a road out of poverty and obscurity.

**Allegiance:** Most gladiators are aligned with extreme sports leagues — whether nova- or baseline-oriented. Star gladiators also share high-powered endorsements from major corporations that sell everything from sportswear to medicines.

**Prerequisites:** Base attack bonus +8; Strength 17, Dexterity 17, Constitution 18.

**Hit Die:** d8.

**Class Skills:** The gladiator's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str), Tumble (Dex).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 4 + Int modifier.
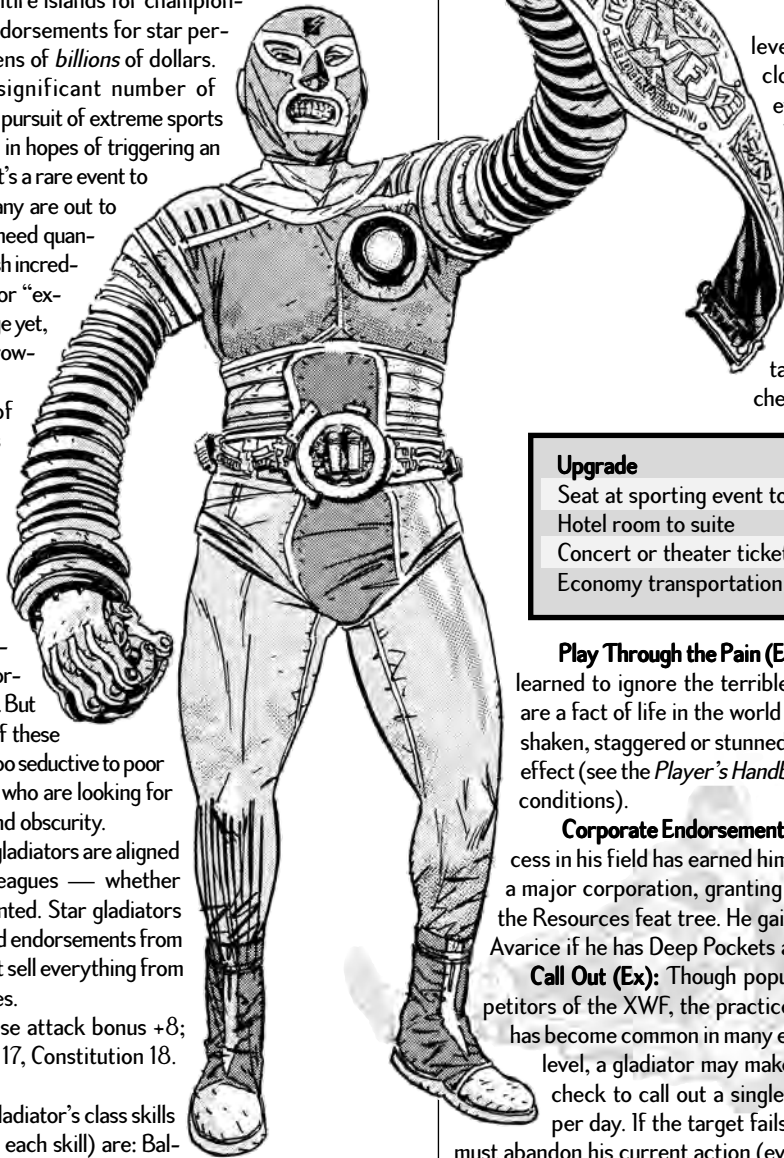
## Class Features

**Gifted Competitor (Ex):** Hours of training each day have honed the gladiator's physical prowess to an exceptional degree. The character receives a +2 bonus on all Strength-, Dexterity- and Constitution-related checks. He also receives a bonus on initiative checks equal to his gladiator level.

**Star Treatment (Ex):** By 2nd level, the gladiator enjoys enough clout that he can gain entry into even the most exclusive venues. When he makes a Diplomacy or Bluff check to smooth-talk or trick his way into a private party or invitation-only event, the character adds a bonus equal to his gladiator level.

Also, when a gladiator buys a ticket to a show or for transportation, he can make a Diplomacy check to get that ticket upgraded.

| Upgrade | DC |
|---|---|
| Seat at sporting event to field pass | 10 |
| Hotel room to suite | 15 |
| Concert or theater ticket to backstage pass | 20 |
| Economy transportation to first-class | 25 |

**Play Through the Pain (Ex):** At 3rd level, the gladiator has learned to ignore the terrible injuries and crippling pain that are a fact of life in the world of extreme sports. He cannot be shaken, staggered or stunned by any attack or quantum power effect (see the *Player's Handbook*, Glossary for details on these conditions).

**Corporate Endorsement:** At 4th level, the gladiator's success in his field has earned him a substantial endorsement from a major corporation, granting him the Deep Pockets feat from the Resources feat tree. He gains the benefit of Wealth Beyond Avarice if he has Deep Pockets already.

**Call Out (Ex):** Though popularized by the flamboyant competitors of the XWF, the practice of calling out rivals on the field has become common in many extreme sports worldwide. At 5th level, a gladiator may make an opposed Bluff or Intimidate check to call out a single opponent in an encounter once per day. If the target fails to defeat the gladiator's roll, he must abandon his current action (even if fleeing) and face the gladiator in a one-on-one competition until he or the gladiator is defeated. This competition is often combat, but may also include a race or other competitive effort.

## Table 1–10: The Gladiator (Gld)

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | AC Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st | +1 | +1 | +0 | +2 | +0 | Gifted competitor |
| 2nd | +2 | +2 | +0 | +3 | +0 | Star treatment |
| 3rd | +3 | +2 | +1 | +3 | +1 | Play through the pain |
| 4th | +4 | +3 | +1 | +4 | +1 | Corporate endorsement |
| 5th | +5 | +3 | +1 | +4 | +1 | Call out |

# Inventor

**Description:** The inventor is the personification of a genre stereotype — a Reed Richards or Henry Pym of the Nova Age. The inventor spends much of her time in the lab, but she certainly ventures out to give her creations a field test. She is not a scientist per se — she is not interested in pure knowledge. She tinkers, experiments and creates, driven to know how things work, and how to *make* things work. Theoretical limits on the possible and impossible do not matter to the inventor; she cares only for the practical.

**Allegiance:** An inventor does not pursue her craft out of any particular political philosophy; she is driven by the urge to create. Any organization that can help fund her inventions, or provide her with laboratory or engineering facilities, might attract her services. Project Utopia is the most obvious choice, but any number of private facilities and governments are eager to have a skilled inventor on the payroll.

**Prerequisites:** Intelligence 13; Craft 7 ranks (any three).

**Hit Die:** d6.

**Class Skills:** The inventor's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Computer Use (Int), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Demolitions (Int), Disable Device (Int), Knowledge (any) (Int), Profession (Wis), Research (Int), Search (Int), Speak Language.

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 6 + Int modifier.

## Class Features

**Invent Device:** The starting inventor receives the Invent Device super-science feat. If the inventor has the feat already, she adds her Intelligence modifier as a bonus on all super-science checks relating to the feat.

**Jury-Rig (Ex):** At 2nd level, an inventor gains a +2 bonus on Repair skill checks made to attempt temporary or jury-rigged repairs (see the Repair skill later in this chapter for details on jury-rigging). This increases to a +4 bonus at 4th level.

**Invent Compound:** At 3rd level, the inventor receives the Invent Compound super-science feat. If the inventor has the feat already, she adds her Intelligence modifier as a bonus on all super-science checks relating to the feat.

**Calm Under Fire (Ex):** At 4th level, once per day the inventor can take 10 on any roll that involves operating or building a mechanical device when circumstances would otherwise prevent it. This ability does not apply to attack rolls, so the inventor cannot take 10 while firing a rifle.

**Invent Organism:** At 5th level, the inventor receives the Invent Organism super-science feat. If the inventor has the feat already, she adds her Intelligence modifier as a bonus on all super-science checks relating to the feat.

## Table 1–11: The Inventor (Ivr)

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | AC Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st | +0 | +1 | +0 | +1 | +2 | Invent Device |
| 2nd | +0 | +2 | +0 | +1 | +3 | Jury-rig +2 |
| 3rd | +1 | +2 | +1 | +2 | +3 | Invent Compound |
| 4th | +1 | +3 | +1 | +2 | +4 | Calm under fire, jury-rig +4 |
| 5th | +1 | +3 | +2 | +3 | +4 | Invent Organism |

# Mercenary

**Description:** A mercenary is a warrior for hire; he owes his allegiance to no country and no man, but only to the wealth of his employer. Mercenaries are pragmatic; they will not fight to the death for a cause, but rather surrender where necessary — live today to fight again tomorrow. A mercenary prides himself on his professional attitude and his military abilities; an experienced mercenary cannot be matched on the battlefield.

**Allegiance:** Mercenaries — also called elites in the Nova Age — never ally themselves permanently with any employer or political organization, but they may become permanent members of a mercenary company. There are exceptions, but most mercenaries are defined by their loyalty to the dollar rather than their allegiance to a cause.

**Prerequisites:** Base attack bonus +5; Knowledge (tactics) 5 ranks.

**Hit Die:** d10.

**Class Skills:** The mercenary's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Demolitions (Int), Drive (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (current events, history, popular culture, tactics) (Int), Listen (Wis), Profession (Wis), Speak Language, Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 2 + Int modifier.

## Class Features

**Training Focus (Ex):** At 1st level, the mercenary chooses a specific weapon in which he is proficient (he may select unarmed strike or grapple); he adds a +1 bonus on all attack rolls made using the selected weapon.

**Training Specialization (Ex):** At 2nd level, a mercenary gains a +2 bonus on damage rolls with the weapon he chose for training focus.

**Tactical Aid (Ex):** Upon reaching 3rd level, the mercenary can provide tactical aid to one or more allies within sight and voice range of his position. With an attack action, he can provide tactical aid to any single ally (other than himself). With a full-round action, he can provide tactical aid to all of his allies (including himself).

This aid provides either a bonus on attack rolls or to Armor Class (mercenary's choice). This bonus is equal to the mercenary's Intelligence modifier (minimum +1), and lasts for a number of rounds equal to his levels in mercenary.

**Defensive Position (Ex):** Starting at 4th level, the mercenary gains an additional +2 cover bonus to Armor Class and an additional +2 cover bonus on Reflex saves whenever he takes cover (see *Player's Handbook,* Chapter 8: Combat, "Combat Modifiers").

**Critical Strike (Ex):** At 5th level, a mercenary can confirm a threat as a critical hit automatically when attacking with his training focus weapon, thereby eliminating the need to make a critical roll.

### Table 1–13: The Mercenary (Mrc)

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | AC Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st | +1 | +1 | +2 | +0 | +0 | Training focus |
| 2nd | +2 | +2 | +3 | +0 | +0 | Training specialization |
| 3rd | +3 | +3 | +3 | +1 | +1 | Tactical aid |
| 4th | +4 | +4 | +4 | +1 | +1 | Defensive position |
| 5th | +5 | +5 | +4 | +1 | +1 | Critical strike |

# Spy

**Description:** The spy is a manipulator, charmer and infiltrator who pursues a life of intrigue, politics and diplomacy throughout the world. The spy traffics in information; her keen senses and insight into human motivations allow her to notice facts and behaviors that most others miss. Most spies are master infiltrators, and can ease their way into any group. Good spies have connections across the globe, and maintain numerous cover identities. Along with those cover identities go contingency plans and escape routes — a spy is never entirely surprised when plans go to hell.

**Allegiance:** A spy's true allegiance is not always known — sometimes even to herself — but the typical spy shows an allegiance to one group while holding a true allegiance to another (often conveyed through the purchase of background feats). Most governments maintain extensive spy networks; additionally, organized crime has a propensity for spying on law enforcement and on itself. Virtually every group relating to novas — from Project Proteus to the Directive to the Aberrants — employs spies.

**Prerequisites:** Bluff 8 ranks, Sense Motive 8 ranks; Shadowy Past.

**Hit Die:** d6.

**Class Skills:** The spy's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Computer Use (Int), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Drive (Dex), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (art, behavioral sciences, business, civics, current events, popular culture, streetwise, tactics) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Perform (Cha), Pilot (Dex), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Speak Language, Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), and Tumble (Dex).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 6 + Int modifier.

## Class Features

**Conceal Motive (Ex):** A spy may add a bonus equal to her spy level whenever she opposes a Sense Motive check.

**Connections (Ex):** The spy has friends in high and low places. Starting at 1st level, once per day, in any inhabited environment — even one that she has never been to before — the spy can check to see if she has a connection in the area. Roll 1d20 + spy class level + Charisma bonus; the DC depends on the importance of the desired connection:

| DC | NPC Importance |
|----|----------------|
| 10 | Police officer, fence, shopkeeper |
| 15 | Police captain, mob lieutenant, merchant |
| 20 | Mayor, foreign attaché, mob boss |
| 25 | Senator/congressman, foreign ambassador, mob kingpin |

## Table 1–14: The Spy (Spy)

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | AC Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st | +0 | +1 | +0 | +2 | +0 | Conceal motive, connections |
| 2nd | +1 | +2 | +0 | +3 | +0 | React first |
| 3rd | +2 | +2 | +1 | +3 | +1 | Flawless disguise |
| 4th | +3 | +3 | +1 | +4 | +1 | Without a trace |
| 5th | +3 | +3 | +2 | +4 | +2 | Master spy |

Having 5 ranks or more in the appropriate Knowledge skill provides a +2 synergy bonus on this check, as appropriate: i.e., Knowledge (civics) will help if the spy is looking for a beat cop, but will do no good if she's looking for a local fence.

**React First (Ex):** By 2nd level, a spy is always ready to take action in case a mission goes bad. When a spy makes contact with and speaks to others prior to the start of combat, she gains a free readied action. This allows her to make either a move or attack action if either side in the conversation (other than the spy) decides to start hostilities. The spy gets to act before any initiative checks are made, in effect giving her the benefit of surprise.

**Flawless Disguise (Ex):** Starting at 3rd level, the spy adds a +4 bonus on all Disguise checks and can take 10 on Disguise checks no matter the circumstance.

**Without a Trace (Ex):** By 4th level, the spy leaves hardly a trace of her activities. Those who use Gather Information, Listen, Search or Spot take a −4 penalty on checks to detect the spy's use of Balance, Climb, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Hide, Move Silently and Sleight of Hand.

**Master Spy (Ex):** At 5th level, the spy gains the next Cipher background feat (e.g., a character with Secret Life gains Mystery Man). If the spy has Mystery Man already, she may bestow the benefits of Shadowy Past on a number of allies, contacts, companions or friends equal to her Charisma modifier (minimum 1). (This requires roleplaying out the steps taken to conceal or confuse the evidence trail between them and whatever secret the spy conceals.)

# Vigilante

**Description:** In a time where might seems increasingly to make right, there are those — nova and baseline alike — who feel motivated to take a stand outside the law. Some feel that they have a mandate to reshape the world, while others protect the people and places they know and love.

A vigilante stakes out a neighborhood, a section of a city or even an entire city that he accepts responsibility for and protects to the best of his ability. The vigilante fights a one-man war against those who would threaten that which he holds dear, doing whatever it takes to maintain peace. "Peace" can mean many things to many people; some vigilantes may find themselves cheered by the populace but facing the wrong side of the law, while others may be deemed oppressors and tyrants by those they claim to protect.

**Allegiance:** A vigilante is loyal in theory to the people and/or place he protects, but he offers trust only to himself. A vigilante often leads a solitary existence and keeps his true identity a secret — either out of fear that his loved ones may suffer retaliation otherwise, or to hide from the authorities who would bring him to justice for his actions. It is not unknown for a vigilante to profess nominal loyalty to one group or the other, but such relationships are seldom comfortable and rarely last.

**Prerequisites:** Strength or Dexterity 15, Intelligence 15; Knowledge (streetwise) 8 ranks; Shadowy Past.

**Hit Die:** d6.

**Class Skills:** The vigilante's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Computer Use (Int), Craft (Int), Disguise (Cha), Drive (Dex), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (behavioral sciences, civics, current events, streetwise, tactics) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex) and Spot (Wis).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 6 + Int modifier.

## Class Features

**Ear to the Ground (Ex):** The vigilante develops a network of contacts in the area he defends. He gains the next Contacts background feat available (e.g., a character without a Contacts feat gains Well-Connected). If the vigilante has Kingpin already, he may change one current contact into a Loyal Friend (see the Ally background feat).

**Trick (Ex):** At 2nd level, the vigilante can use ploys and deception to confuse a target temporarily. The target must have an Intelligence score of 3 or higher, must be within 30 feet of the vigilante, and must be able to hear and understand him.

The vigilante uses a full-round action and makes a Bluff check opposed by the target's modified level check (1d20 + character level or Hit Dice + target's Wisdom bonus [if any]). If the vigilante beats the target's result, the target becomes dazed (unable to act, but can defend normally) for a number of rounds equal to the vigilante's Intelligence
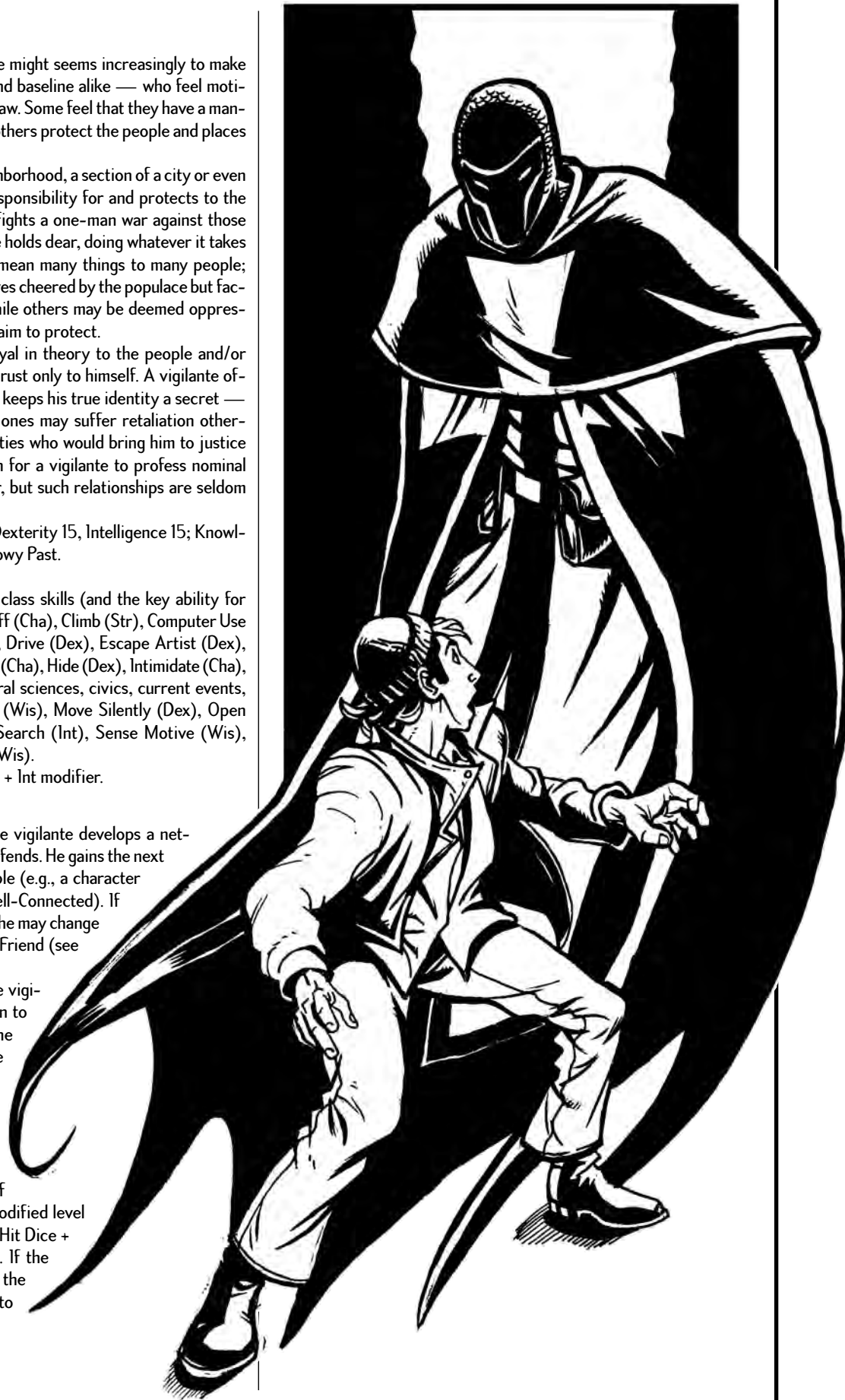
## Table 1–15: The Vigilante (Vig)

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | AC Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st | +0 | +1 | +0 | +2 | +0 | Ear to the ground |
| 2nd | +1 | +2 | +0 | +3 | +0 | Trick |
| 3rd | +2 | +2 | +1 | +3 | +1 | Black market connections |
| 4th | +3 | +3 | +1 | +4 | +1 | Exploit weakness |
| 5th | +3 | +3 | +2 | +4 | +2 | Fearsome reputation |

modifier (minimum 1 round). The target may make a DC 15 Will save each round after the first round of being dazed; if successful, she recovers from the trick and may act normally.

The vigilante may try to trick a specific target once per encounter, regardless of whether the attempt is successful or not. This is a mind-affecting ability.

**Black Market Connections (Ex):** At 3rd level the vigilante can use his web of contacts to obtain difficult-to-find or even restricted weapons and equipment to further his battle against crime (military-grade weapons and equipment, high-tech devices including stolen quantum devices, etc.). Once per week, the character can add his vigilante level to a Wealth check made through his black market connections.

**Exploit Weakness (Ex):** At 4th level, the vigilante can designate one opponent in combat to study for signs of weakness in fighting style — whether physical, intellectual or tactical. After one round of combat, the vigilante uses a move action and makes an opposed Sense Motive check against the chosen foe, who makes a Bluff check as if she were trying to feint in combat (see the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 4, "Bluff"). The vigilante adds a bonus on his Sense Motive check equal to his vigilante level. If successful, the vigilante adds his Intelligence bonus on any attack rolls against that specific opponent for the rest of the encounter.

**Fearsome Reputation (Ex):** At 5th level, the vigilante gains the Renowned Reputation background feat regardless of whether he meets the prerequisites. His reputation is infamous toward those who oppose the methods he employs (criminals, authorities, etc.).

# Skills

All the existing skills that follow function in the same way as described in Chapter 4 of the *Player's Handbook*. However, the categories they cover require adjustment for the modern time frame in which **Aberrant** is set. Following this section are seven new skills — Computer Use, Demolitions, Drive, Investigate, Pilot, Repair, Research — that likewise reflect the time in which the game is set. The Spellcraft and Use Magic Device skills are not used in **Aberrant**.

## Craft (Int)

**Aberrant** adds to the Craft skill options, as described below. Note that some Craft skills may require training. Also, there is no Craft (alchemy); for the creation of drugs, use Craft (pharmaceutical). A short list of drugs is in Chapter Six: Drama. Table 1–16: Craft Examples lists sample tasks and related DCs.

**Craft (chemical):** A character needs this skill to mix chemicals to create acids, bases, explosives and poisonous substances. (Trained use only.)

**Craft (electronic):** This allows a character to build or repair electronic equipment such as computers, radios or other communications equipment. (Trained use only.)

**Craft (mechanical):** With this skill, a character can build mechanical devices from scratch, including engines and engine parts, weapons, armor, and other gadgets. (Trained use only.)

**Craft (pharmaceutical):** A character must have this skill to compound medicinal drugs to aid in recovery from treatable illnesses. The proper medicinal drug gives a +2 circumstance bonus on Fortitude saves made to resist the effects of a disease. The DC to create a medicinal drug to combat a given illness is equal to the disease's Fortitude save DC + 5. (Diagnosis is made using the Heal skill.) (Trained use only.)

**Craft (structural):** This allows a character to build wooden, concrete or metal structures from scratch (including bookcases, desks, walls, houses and so forth), and includes such handyman skills as plumbing, house painting, drywall, laying cement and building cabinets.

**Craft (visual art):** With this skill, a character can create paintings, drawings or sculpture, take photographs, use a movie camera, or in some other way create a work of visual art.

**Craft (writing):** This allows a character to create short stories, novels, scripts and screenplays, newspaper articles and columns, and similar works of writing.

### Table 1–16: Craft Examples

| Task | Craft Skill | DC |
|---|---|---|
| Acid, potent (2d6 splash damage) | Chemical | 20 |
| Explosive, simple (2d6 damage within 5 ft.) | Chemical | 15 |
| Electronic timer | Electronic | 15 |
| Electronic detonator | Electronic | 20 |
| Tripwire trap | Mechanical | 15 |
| Engine component | Mechanical | 20 |
| False wall | Structural | 15 |
| Catapult | Structural | 20 |
| House | Structural | 30 |
| Talented amateur work | Visual Art or Writing | 10 |
| Professional work | Visual Art or Writing | 20 |
| Masterwork | Visual Art or Writing | 30+ |

## Knowledge

Knowledge skills function as written in the *Player's Handbook*, except that characters select from the following categories:

**Art:** Fine arts and graphic arts, including art history and artistic techniques. Antiques, modern art, photography, and performance art forms such as music and dance, among others.

**Behavioral Sciences:** Psychology, sociology and criminology.

**Business:** Business procedures, investment strategies and corporate structures. Bureaucratic procedures and how to navigate them.

**Civics:** Law, legislation, litigation, and legal rights and obligations. Political and governmental institutions and processes.

**Current Events:** Recent happenings in the news, sports, politics, entertainment and foreign affairs.

**Earth and Life Sciences:** Biology, botany, genetics, geology and paleontology. Medicine and forensics.

**History:** Events, personalities and cultures of the past. Archaeology and antiquities.

**Physical Sciences:** Astronomy, chemistry, mathematics, physics and engineering.

**Popular Culture:** Popular music and personalities, genre films and books, urban legends, and science fiction, among other topics.

**Streetwise:** Street and urban culture, local underworld personalities and events.

**Tactics:** Techniques and strategies for disposing and maneuvering forces in combat.

**Technology:** Current developments in cutting-edge devices, as well as the background necessary to identify various technological devices.

**Theology and Philosophy:** Liberal arts, ethics, philosophical concepts, and the study of religious faith, practice and experience.

## Perform

Characters select from the following categories for Perform.

**Act:** The character is a gifted actor, capable of performing drama, comedy or action-oriented roles with some level of skill.

**Dance:** The character is a gifted dancer, capable of performing rhythmic and patterned bodily movements to music.

**Keyboards:** The character is a musician gifted with a talent for playing keyboard musical instruments, such as piano and organ.

**Percussion Instruments:** The character is a musician gifted with a talent for playing percussion musical instruments, such as drums, cymbals, triangle, xylophone and tambourine.

**Sing:** The character is a musician gifted with a talent for producing musical tones with her voice.

**Stringed Instruments:** The character is a musician gifted with a talent for playing stringed musical instruments, such as banjo, guitar, harp, lute, sitar and violin.

**Wind Instruments:** The character is a musician gifted with a talent for playing wind musical instruments, such as flute, bugle, trumpet, tuba, bagpipes and trombone.

Also, since **Aberrant** uses a DC rating for wealth, Perform requires a different method for determining how much money a character can make from a single performance. (See Chapter Six: Drama for the Wealth system in action.)

A character with Wealth bonus of +0 gains a +1 bonus if she succeeds at a DC 15 Perform check for a single performance. A character with a Wealth bonus from +1 to +20 gains a +1 bonus if she succeeds at five consecutive DC 15 Perform checks (each indicating a single performance) or one DC 20 Perform check for a single performance. A character with Wealth bonus +21 or higher gains a +1 bonus if she succeeds at 10 consecutive DC 20 Perform checks (each indicating a single performance) or one DC 25 Perform check for a single performance.

A Perform check result of at least 10 but lower than the DC required indicates that the character simply isn't performing well enough to draw a significant crowd. The character earns enough to get by, but that's it.

## Speak Language

The languages listed in the *Player's Handbook* do not exist in the Trinity Universe. There are thousands of languages to choose from. A few are listed here, sorted into their general language groups. This list is not exhaustive, and languages in listed groups are shown for reference; a character gets a whole language group each time he buys a rank in Speak Language.

Languages noted with asterisks are ancient, spoken only by scholarly types or by small populations in isolated corners of the world. Speak Language otherwise functions as noted in the *Player's Handbook*.

**Algic:** Algonkin, Arapaho, Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Shawnee.

**Armenian:** Armenian.

**Athabascan:** Apache, Chipewyan, Navaho.

**Attic:** Ancient Greek*, Greek.

**Baltic:** Latvian, Lithuanian.

**Celtic:** Gaelic (Irish), Gaelic (Scots), Welsh.

**Chinese:** Cantonese, Mandarin.

**Finno-Lappic:** Estonian, Finnish, Lapp.

**Germanic:** Afrikaans, Danish, Dutch, English, Flemish, German, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish, Yiddish.

**Hamo-Semitic:** Coptic*, Middle Egyptian*.

**Indic:** Hindi, Punjabi, Sanskrit*, Urdu.

**Iranian:** Farsi, Pashto.

**Japanese:** Japanese.

**Korean:** Korean.

**Romance:** French, Italian, Latin*, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish.

**Semitic:** Akkadian (aka Babylonian)*, Ancient Hebrew*, Arabic, Aramaic*, Hebrew.

**Slavic:** Belorussian, Bulgarian, Czech, Polish, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovak, Ukrainian.

**Tibeto-Burman:** Burmese, Sherpa, Tibetan.

**Turkic:** Azerbaijani, Turkish, Uzbek.

**Ugric:** Hungarian (aka Magyar).

# New Skills

## Computer Use (Int)

Computer Use covers everything from a character working on his personal computer to hacking into a site. A site can range from a single computer to a corporate network connecting terminals and data archives all over the world. Some sites can be accessed via the OpNet; others are not connected to an outside network (the user must access one of the site's computer terminals physically).

A system administrator (sysadmin) oversees each site and maintains its security. A character is the system administrator of his personal computer. A larger site can have more than one system administrator, often with one on duty at all times. The sysadmin is often the only person with access to all of a site's functions and data.

Working on a computer system is called a session. The session ends when the character stops accessing the site; a new session begins if he goes back.

**Check:** No check is required for most computer operations (though a a Research check may be needed; see the Research skill description). Searching an unfamiliar network for a particular file, writing computer programs, altering existing programs to perform differently (better or worse), and breaking through computer security are difficult enough to require skill checks.

*Find File:* Search for files or data on an unfamiliar system. This covers finding files on private systems with which the character is not familiar (finding public information on OpNet instead requires a Research check). The size of the site and the time required determine the check DC.

| Size of Site | DC | Time |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Personal computer | 10 | 1 round |
| Small office network | 15 | 2 rounds |
| Large office network | 20 | 1 minute |
| Massive corporate network | 25 | 10 minutes |

*Defeat Security (trained only):* The DC to defeat computer security depends on the quality of the security program, as noted on the chart below. Failing the check by 5 or more causes the security system to alert its administrator to an unauthorized entry; the sysadmin may attempt to identify the intruder or cut off his access.

Succeeding at the check by 10 or more cancels the need for subsequent security checks at that site until the character's current session ends. Otherwise, a character may have to defeat security at more than one stage (see "Computer Hacking").

| Level of Security | DC |
| --- | --- |
| Minimum | 20 |
| Average | 25 |
| Exceptional | 35 |
| Maximum | 40 |

*Defend Security:* A site's sysadmin can defend it against intruders if alerted, either cutting off the intruder's access or identifying the intruder. Either effort requires succeeding at an opposed Computer Use check against the intruder.

Cutting off an intruder's access (thereby ending his session) takes a full round. The sysadmin can cut off access without fail by shutting the site down. (This can be difficult and time-consuming if dealing with a large site with many computers or with computers that control functions that can't be interrupted.)

Identifying the intruder supplies the site he is operating from (or the computer's owner if it's a single computer). This requires one minute, during which the intruder continues accessing the sysadmin's site. The sysadmin fails if the intruder's session ends before the check is finished.

*Degrade Programming:* A character can destroy or alter applications to make using the computer harder or impossible (see chart for DCs). Crashing a computer shuts it down; its user can restart it without making a skill check (a restart takes 1 minute). Destroying programming makes the computer unusable until the programming is repaired. Damaging programming imposes a −4 penalty on all Computer Use checks made with the computer (this can be preferable to destroying the programming, since the user might remain unaware that anything is wrong with her system).

Fixing degraded programming requires 1 hour and a Computer Use check against a DC equal to the DC for degrading it + 5.

| Scope of Alteration[1] | DC | Time |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Crash computer | 10 | 1 minute |
| Destroy programming | 15 | 10 minutes |
| Damage programming | 20 | 10 minutes |

[1] Degrading the programming of multiple computers at a single site adds +2 to the DC for each additional computer.

*Write Program (trained only):* A character can create a program to help with a specific task, defined as one type of operation (granting a +2 circumstance bonus when the program is used). Writing a program takes one hour and requires a successful check against DC 20.

*Operate Remote Device:* Many devices are computer-operated via remote links. A character with access to the computer that controls such systems can shut them off or change their operating parameters (see the chart below). Failing the check by 5 or more alerts the sysadmin to unauthorized use of the equipment.

| Type of Operation | DC | Time |
|---|---|---|
| Shut down passive remote (including cameras and door locks) | 20 | 1 round per remote |
| Shut down active remote (including motion detectors and alarms) | 25 | 1 round per remote |
| Reset parameters | 30 | 1 minute per remote |
| Change passcodes | 25 | 1 minute |
| Hide evidence of alteration | +10 | 1 minute |
| Minimum security | −5 | — |
| Exceptional security | +10 | — |
| Maximum security | +15 | — |

**Special:** A character can take 10 when using Computer Use or even take 20 in some cases (though not in those that involve a penalty for failure). A character cannot take 20 to defeat computer security or defend security.

A character with Invent Device gets a +2 bonus on all Computer Use checks.

**Time:** Computer Use requires at least a full-round action. The GM may determine that some tasks require several rounds, a few minutes, or longer, as described above.

## Computer Hacking

Breaking into a secure computer or network is often called hacking and involves several steps:

**Covering Tracks:** On a successful DC 20 Computer Use check, a character can alter his identifying information. This is an optional step that imposes a −5 penalty on any attempt made to identify the character if his activity is detected.

**Access the Site:** There are two ways to do this: over OpNet or physically.

*OpNet Access:* This requires two Computer Use checks. The first check (DC 10) is needed to find the site. The GM may increase the DC if the site is programmed in a foreign language or is located in an obscure or hard-to-reach OpNet route. The second check is needed to defeat computer security (see Computer Use). The character accesses the site once he succeeds at both checks.

*Physical Access:* This involves working at the computer physically or via a direct connection. If the site being hacked is not connected to the OpNet, physical access is about the only way to access it. Getting to the computer may require a variety of other skill checks.

**Locate What You're Looking For:** Use "find file" (under Computer Use) to locate the data (or application, or remote device) the character wants.

**Defeat File Security:** Many networks have additional file security. If that's the case, another check is required to defeat computer security.

**Do Your Stuff:** If the character just wants to look at records, no additional check is needed. (Downloading data is possible, although that often takes from several rounds to several minutes depending on the amount of information.) Altering or deleting records may require additional checks to defeat computer security. Other operations can be carried out according to the Computer Use skill description.

## Demolitions (Int; Trained Only)

The character is familiar with setting and disarming high explosives (including dynamite, plastique and simple gunpowder bombs), as well as improvised explosives.

**Check:** Setting a simple explosive to blow up at a certain spot doesn't require a check, but connecting and setting a detonator does. Also, placing an explosive for maximum effect against a structure calls for a check, as does disarming an explosive device.

*Set Detonator:* Most explosives require a detonator to go off. Connecting a detonator to an explosive requires a DC 10 Demolitions check. Failure means that the explosive fails to go off as planned. Failure by 10 or more means the explosive goes off as the detonator is being installed.

A character can make an explosive difficult to disarm. To do so, the character chooses the disarm DC before making her check to set the detonator (it must be higher than 10). The character's DC to set the detonator is equal to the disarm DC.

*Place Explosive Device:* Placing an explosive against a fixed structure (a stationary, unattended, inanimate object) can maximize the damage dealt by exploiting vulnerabilities in the structure's construction.

The GM makes the check (so that the character doesn't know how well she has done). On a result of 15 or higher, the explosive deals double damage to the structure against which it is placed. On a result of 25 or higher, it deals triple damage to the structure. In all cases, it deals normal damage to all other targets within its burst radius.

*Disarm Explosive Device:* Disarming an explosive that has been set to go off requires a Demolitions check. The DC is usually 10, unless the person who set the detonator chose a higher disarm DC. If the character fails the check, she does not disarm the explosive. If the character fails by more than 5, the explosive goes off.

**Special:** A character can take 10 when using the Demolitions skill, but can't take 20. A character with the Nimble Fingers feat and at least 1 rank in this skill gets a +2 bonus on all Demolitions checks.

Making an explosive requires the Craft (chemical) skill. Making an electronic detonator requires the Craft (electronic) skill. (See Table 1–16: Craft Examples, above.)

**Time:** Setting a detonator is usually a full-round action. Placing an explosive device takes 1 minute or more, depending on the scope of the job.

## Drive (Dex)

This skill allows a character to drive a surface vehicle (car, motorcycle, boat, truck).

**Check:** Routine tasks, such as ordinary driving, don't require a skill check. Make a check only when some unusual circumstance exists (such as inclement weather or an icy surface), or when the character is driving during a dramatic situation (being chased or attacked, or trying to reach a destination in a limited amount of time). When driving, the character can attempt simple maneuvers or stunts. (See Chapter Six: Drama, "Pursuit" for more details.)

**Try Again?:** Most driving checks have consequences for failure that make trying again impossible.

**Special:** A character can take 10 when driving, but can't take 20.

**Time:** A Drive check is a move action.

## Investigate (Int; Trained Only)

Investigate encompasses a number of crime analysis techniques, including DNA collection, ballistics and crime scene simulations. It also involves more than passing familiarity with the art of deduction.

**Check:** A character uses Search to discover clues and Investigate to analyze them. If the character has access to a crime lab, he uses the Investigate skill to collect samples for the lab. The result of the Investigate check provides bonuses or penalties to further analysis.

*Analyze Clue:* The character can make a DC 15 Investigate check to apply forensics knowledge to a clue. The check DC is modified by the time that has elapsed since the clue was left, and whether or not the scene was disturbed.

| DC Modifier | Circumstances |
|---|---|
| +2 | Every day since event (max modifier +10) |
| +5 | Scene is outdoors |
| +2 | Scene disturbed slightly |
| +4 | Scene disturbed moderately |
| +6 | Scene disturbed extremely |

*Collect Evidence:* The character can collect and prepare evidentiary material for a lab. On a successful DC 15 Investigate check, the character collects a usable piece of evidence. If the character fails the check by less than 5, a crime lab analysis can be done, but the analyst takes a −5 penalty on any necessary check. If the character fails by 5 or more, the analysis cannot be done. On the other hand, if the character succeeds by 10 or more, the analyst gains a +2 circumstance bonus on her checks.

**Try Again?:** Analyzing a clue again doesn't add new insight unless another clue is introduced. Evidence collected cannot be recollected, unless there is more of it to take.

**Special:** A character can take 10 when making an Investigate check, but cannot take 20. The Investigate skill does not provide the character with evidentiary items. It simply allows the character to collect items he has found in a manner that best aids in analysis later.

**Time:** Analyzing a clue is a full-round action. Collecting evidence generally takes 1d4 minutes per object.

## Pilot (Dex; Trained Only)

This skill allows a character to fly and land an aircar or airplane, or maneuver a submersible.

**Check:** Typical piloting tasks don't require checks. Checks are required during combat, for special maneuvers, in extreme circumstances, or when the pilot wants to attempt something outside the normal parameters of the vehicle. When piloting, the character can attempt simple maneuvers and stunts (actions in which the pilot attempts to do something complex very quickly or in a limited space).

Each vehicle's description includes a maneuver modifier that applies to Pilot checks made by the operator of the vehicle.

**Special:** A character can take 10 when making a Pilot check, but can't take 20.

**Time:** A Pilot check is a move action.

## Repair (Int; Trained Only)

This skill allows trained characters to repair complex electronic or mechanical devices ranging from toasters to factory conveyor belts or even microwave satellite uplinks.

**Check:** Most Repair checks are made to fix complex electronic or mechanical devices. The GM sets the DC. In general, simple repairs have a DC of 10 to 15 and require no more than a few minutes to accomplish. More complex repair work has a DC 20 or higher and can require an hour or more to complete. Making repairs also involves a monetary cost when spare parts or new components are needed, represented by a Wealth check. If the GM decides this isn't necessary for the type of repair the character is attempting, then no Wealth check is needed.

| Task (Example) | Purchase DC | Repair DC | Repair Time |
|---|---|---|---|
| Simple (tool, simple weapon) | 4 | 10 | 1 min. |
| Moderate (mechanical or electronic component) | 7 | 15 | 10 min. |
| Complex (mechanical or electronic device) | 10 | 20 | 1 hour |
| Advanced (cutting-edge mechanical or electronic device) | 13 | 25 | 10 hours |

*Jury-Rig:* A character can attempt jury-rigged, or temporary, repairs. This reduces the purchase DC by −3 and the Repair check DC by −5, and allows the character to make the checks in as little as a full-round action. However, a jury-rigged repair only fixes a single problem with each check, and the repair only lasts until the end of the current scene or encounter. The jury-rigged object must be repaired fully thereafter.

A character can also use jury-rig to hot-wire a car or jump-start an engine or electronic device. The DC for this is at least 15, and it can be higher depending on the presence of security devices. Jury-rigging can be used untrained.

**Try Again?:** Yes, though in some specific cases, the GM may decide that a failed Repair check has negative ramifications that prevent repeated checks.

**Special:** A character can take 10 or take 20 on a Repair check. When making a Repair check to accomplish a jury-rig repair, a character can't take 20.

Repair requires an electrical tool kit, a mechanical tool kit, or a multipurpose tool, depending on the task. If the character does not have the appropriate tools, she takes a −4 penalty on the check.

Craft (mechanical) or Craft (electronic) can provide a +2 synergy bonus on Repair checks made for mechanical or electronic devices.

**Time:** See the table for guidelines. A character can make a jury-rig repair as a full-round action, but the work only lasts until the end of the current encounter.

## Research (Int)

The Research skill allows a character to use libraries, university resources, newspaper archives or OpNet to learn obscure or forgotten information about a given topic. Research is often quite time-consuming; it is the specialty of scholars.

**Check:** Researching a topic takes time, skill and some luck. The GM determines how obscure a particular topic is (the more obscure, the higher the DC) and what kind of information might be available depending on where the character is conducting his research.

Information ranges from general to protected. Given enough time and a successful skill check, the character gets a general idea about a given topic. This assumes that no obvious reasons exist why such information would be unavailable, and that the character has a way to acquire restricted or protected information.

The higher the check result, the better and more complete the information. If the character wants to discover a specific fact, date, map or similar bit of information, add +5 to +15 to the DC.

**Try Again?:** Yes.

**Special:** A character can take 10 or take 20 on a Research check.

**Time:** A Research check takes 1d4 hours.

# CHAPTER TWO: FEATS

**Aberrant** is not a traditional fantasy setting, but most of the feats from the *Player's Handbook* work just fine in a modern age of superheroics. Table 2–1: Feats lists the general feats that characters may use from the *Player's Handbook* as well as new general feats described below. Two new categories are also covered in this chapter: background feats and superhuman feats.

You gain feats through level progression as normal (see the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter Five: Feats, "Acquiring Feats"). You may use regular feat slots to purchase additional background feats. If you have the superhuman template, you may use regular feat slots or quantum power slots to purchase superhuman feats or superhuman feat enhancements.

## General Feats

### Advanced Firearms Proficiency [General]

You are skilled in the operation of submachine guns like the Heckler and Koch MP-5 or the AKMR, and light machine guns such as the US military's M-249G.

**Prerequisite:** Personal Firearms Proficiency.

**Benefit:** You suffer no penalty when firing a personal firearm on autofire (the gun must have an autofire setting).

**Normal:** Characters without this feat take a −4 penalty on attack rolls made with personal firearms set on autofire.

**Special:** A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

### Archaic Weapons Proficiency [General]

Whether you're a practicing martial artist or took fencing classes in college, you are familiar with archaic weapons such as spears and swords.

**Benefit:** You take no penalty on attack rolls when using any kind of archaic weapon.

**Normal:** A character without this feat suffers a −4 penalty when making attacks with archaic weapons.

**Special:** A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

### Brawl [General]

You have a lot of experience in fistfights, whether from boxing experience or a hard life on the street.

**Benefit:** When making an unarmed attack, you receive a +1 competence bonus on attack rolls and inflict (1d6 + Strength modifier) points of nonlethal damage.

**Normal:** Unarmed attacks normally deal (1d3 + Strength modifier) points of nonlethal damage.

**Special:** A warrior receives this feat as a bonus when taking the class.

### Combat Martial Arts [General]

You've learned an established style of unarmed combat, whether it's the down-and-dirty close-combat training of the military or a formalized martial art like Kung Fu.

**Prerequisite:** Base attack bonus +1.

**Benefit:** With an unarmed strike, you inflict (1d4 + the character's Strength modifier) points of lethal or nonlethal damage (choose with each

strike). Your unarmed attacks count as armed — opponents do not get attacks of opportunity when you attack them unarmed. You may make attacks of opportunity against opponents who provoke such attacks.

You may substitute this feat where Improved Unarmed Strike is required as a prerequisite.

**Normal:** Without this feat, a character deals (1d3 + Strength modifier) points of nonlethal damage. Unarmed attacks provoke attacks of opportunity, and unarmed combatants cannot make attacks of opportunity.

**Special:** A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

### Defensive Martial Arts [General]

You prefer that others keep their hands to themselves.

**Benefit:** You gain a +1 dodge bonus to Armor Class against melee attacks.

**Special:** A condition that makes a character lose his Dexterity bonus to Armor Class also makes him lose dodge bonuses. Also, dodge bonuses stack, unlike most other types of bonuses. A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

### Double Tap [General]

You have a steady hand and a quick trigger finger, and have learned the method of placing two shots on your target in rapid succession, as favored by police and military organizations worldwide.

**Prerequisites:** Dexterity 13, Point Blank Shot.

**Benefit:** When using a semiautomatic firearm with at least two bullets loaded, you may fire two bullets as a single attack against a single target. You receive a −2 penalty on this attack, but inflict an additional die of damage appropriate to the weapon with a successful hit. Using this feat fires two bullets, and can only be used if the weapon has two bullets in it.

**Special:** A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

### Drive-By Attack [General]

From military or gang experience, you can adjust your shooting style to account for the motion of a car, boat or plane.

**Benefit:** You take no vehicle speed penalty when making an attack while in a moving vehicle. If you are the driver, you can take your attack action to make an attack at any point along the vehicle's movement. (See Chapter Six: Drama, "Pursuit" for more details.)

**Normal:** When attacking from a moving vehicle, a character takes a penalty based on the vehicle's speed. Passengers can ready an action to make an attack when the vehicle reaches a particular location, but the driver must make his attack action either before or after the vehicle's movement.

**Special:** A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

### Escapist [General]

You are almost impossible to keep locked up.

**Prerequisite:** Search 6 ranks.

**Benefit:** Once per session on a successful DC 20 Search check, you can find your way out of nearly any enclosed space — jail cell, dead end alley, meat locker, basement — via some mundane manner of escape — loose bars, an air shaft, a rusted grate, a previously

## Table 2–1: Feats

### General Feats

**Player's Handbook**

Acrobatic
Agile
Alertness
Animal Affinity
Armor Proficiency (light)[1]
Athletic
Blind-Fight[1]
Cleave[1]
Combat Expertise[1]
Combat Reflexes[1]
Deceitful
Deflect Arrows
Deft Hands
Diehard
Diligent
Dodge[1]
Endurance
Far Shot[1]
Great Cleave[1]
Great Fortitude
Greater Two-Weapon Fighting[1]
Greater Weapon Focus[1]
Greater Weapon Specialization[1]
Improved Bull Rush[1]
Improved Critical[1]
Improved Disarm[1]
Improved Feint[1]
Improved Grapple[1]
Improved Initiative[1]
Improved Overrun[1]
Improved Precise Shot[1]
Improved Sunder[1]
Improved Trip[1]
Improved Two-Weapon Fighting[1]

**Player's Handbook**

Investigator
Iron Will
Lightning Reflexes
Manyshot[1]
Mobility[1]
Mounted Archery[1]
Mounted Combat[1]
Negotiator
Nimble Fingers
Persuasive
Point Blank Shot[1]
Power Attack[1]
Precise Shot[1]
Quick Draw[1]
Rapid Shot[1]
Ride-By Attack[1]
Run[1]
Self-Sufficient
Shot on the Run[1]
Skill Focus
Snatch Arrows
Spirited Charge[1]
Spring Attack[1]
Stealthy
Stunning Fist
Toughness[1]
Track
Trample[1]
Two-Weapon Defense[1]
Two-Weapon Fighting[1]
Weapon Finesse[1]
Weapon Focus[1]
Weapon Specialization[1]
Whirlwind Attack[1]

**Aberrant**

Advanced Firearms Proficiency[1]
Archaic Weapon Proficiency[1,2]
Brawl
Combat Martial Arts[1]
Defensive Martial Arts[1]
Double Tap[1]
Drive-By Attack[1]
Escapist
Exotic Firearms Proficiency[1]
Exotic Melee Weapon Proficiency[1]
Force Stop
Improved Brawl[1]
Improved Knockout Punch[1]
Improved Combat Martial Arts[1]
Invent Compound
Invent Organism
Invent Device
Knockout Punch[1]
Personal Firearms Proficiency
Swiftness
Quick Reload[1]
Skip Shot[1]
Strafe[1]
Streetfighting[1]
Surgery
Unbalance Opponent[1]
Vehicle Dodge

### Background Feats

**Ally**
Loyal Friend
Boon Companion
Band of Heroes

**Attunement**
Personal Effects
Portable Gear
Large Objects

**Backing**
Company Man
Boss
In Charge

**Cipher**
Shadowy Past
Secret Life
Mystery Man

**Contacts**
Well-Connected
Information Broker
Kingpin

**Dormancy**
Low Profile
Hidden in Plain Sight
Nowhere Man

**Eufiber**
Young Colony
Mature Colony
Robust Colony

**Followers**
Retainers
Troops
Legions

**Quantum Device**
Minor Quantum Device
Major Quantum Device
Quantum Artifact

**Influence**
Celebrity
Luminary
Icon

**Sanctum**
Hideout
Private Palace
Sanctum Sanctorum

**Mentor**
Old Pro
Wise Counselor
The Mandarin

**Nemesis**
Thorn in the Side
Dedicated Foe
Archenemy

**Node**
Second-Stage Node
Third-Stage Node
N-Stage Node

**Reputation**
Recognized
Celebrated
Renowned

**Resources**
Well-Off
Deep Pockets
Wealth Beyond Avarice

### Superhuman Feats

**Strength**
Crush
Lifter
Quantum Leap
Shockwave
Thunderclap

**Intelligence**
Analyze Weakness
Eidetic Memory

Linguistic Genius

Mental Prodigy
Speed Reader

**Dexterity**
Accuracy
Cat-Footed
Enhanced Movement
Physical Prodigy
Rapid Strikes

**Wisdom**
Bloodhound
Electromagnetic
Vision
Hyperenhanced
Hearing
Lie Detector
Ultraperipheral Perception

**Constitution**
Adaptability
Durability
Hardbody
Regeneration
Resiliency

**Charisma**
Awe-Inspiring
Commanding
Presence
Dreadful Mien

Persuader

[1] This feat is available to a warrior as a warrior bonus feat. This does not restrict characters of other classes from selecting the feat, assuming that they meet any prerequisites.
[2] Since melee weapons are somewhat rare in the age of firearms, the Archaic Weapon Proficiency replaces the Simple and Martial Weapon Proficiencies.
At the GM's option, each existing feat that references ranged attacks, bows or crossbows can also be used with firearms.

unseen alleyway, etc. This feat does not work against a secure space designed by a superhuman character.

## Exotic Firearms Proficiency [General]

From military or other unusual experience, you have been exposed to heavy weaponry. Choose a weapon type from the following list: cannons, heavy machine guns, mortars.

**Prerequisites:** Personal Firearms Proficiency, Advanced Firearms Proficiency.

**Benefit:** You make attack rolls with the weapon normally.

**Normal:** A character who uses a weapon without being proficient with it takes a −4 penalty on attack rolls.
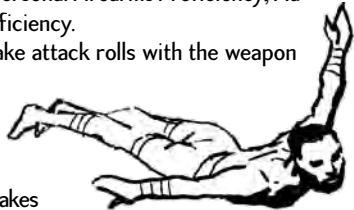
**Special:** A character can take this feat up to three times, each time selecting a different weapon group. A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

## Exotic Melee Weapon Proficiency [General]

You have been exposed to unusual weapons from distant lands.

**Prerequisite:** Base attack bonus +1.

**Benefit:** Choose one exotic melee weapon from the Exotic Weapons section of Table 7–5 in the *Player's Handbook*. You are proficient with that melee weapon in combat, making attack rolls with it normally.

**Normal:** A character who uses a weapon without being proficient with it takes a −4 penalty on attack rolls.

**Special:** For exotic weapons with fantasy race references, ignore the race name — so, waraxe, double axe and hooked hammer — and substitute "axe-spear" for "urgrosh." A character can take this feat multiple times, each time selecting a different exotic weapon. A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

## Force Stop [General]

When driving, you can exert some control over other vehicles by shoving them around with your vehicle.

**Prerequisites:** Drive 6 ranks.

**Benefit:** When you attempt a sideswipe stunt while you have movement remaining equal to your turn number, you can force the other vehicle to a stop by nudging it into a controlled sideways skid. (See Chapter Six: Drama, "Pursuit" for rules on vehicle maneuvers.)

After succeeding on the sideswipe check, make a Drive check opposed by the other driver. If you succeed, the other vehicle turns 90 degrees in front of your vehicle to form a "T", and the two move a distance equal to your turn number. The vehicles end their movement at that location, at stationary speed, and take normal sideswipe damage. If you fail the check, resolve the sideswipe normally.
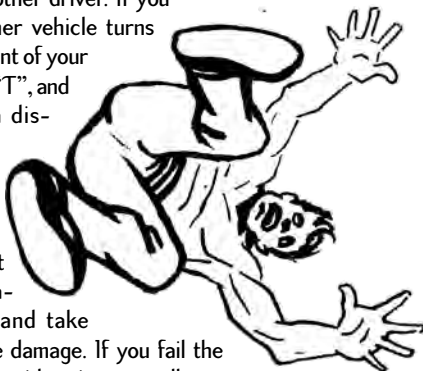
## Improved Brawl [General]

You're a very experienced fighter — you may have won some professional bouts, or you may be the guy in the back of the bar that everyone knows not to mess with.

**Prerequisites:** Brawl, base attack bonus +3.

**Benefit:** When making an unarmed attack, you receive a +2 competence bonus on attack rolls and inflict (1d8 + Strength modifier) points of nonlethal damage.

**Normal:** Unarmed attacks normally deal (1d3 + Strength modifier) points of nonlethal damage.

**Special:** A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

## Improved Knockout Punch [General]

You have quite a way with a sucker punch. When you decide to start a fight, you often finish it with that same blow.

**Prerequisites:** Brawl, Knockout Punch, base attack bonus +6.

**Benefit:** When you make your first unarmed attack against a flat-footed opponent, treat a successful attack as a critical hit that inflicts triple damage. The damage inflicted is nonlethal.
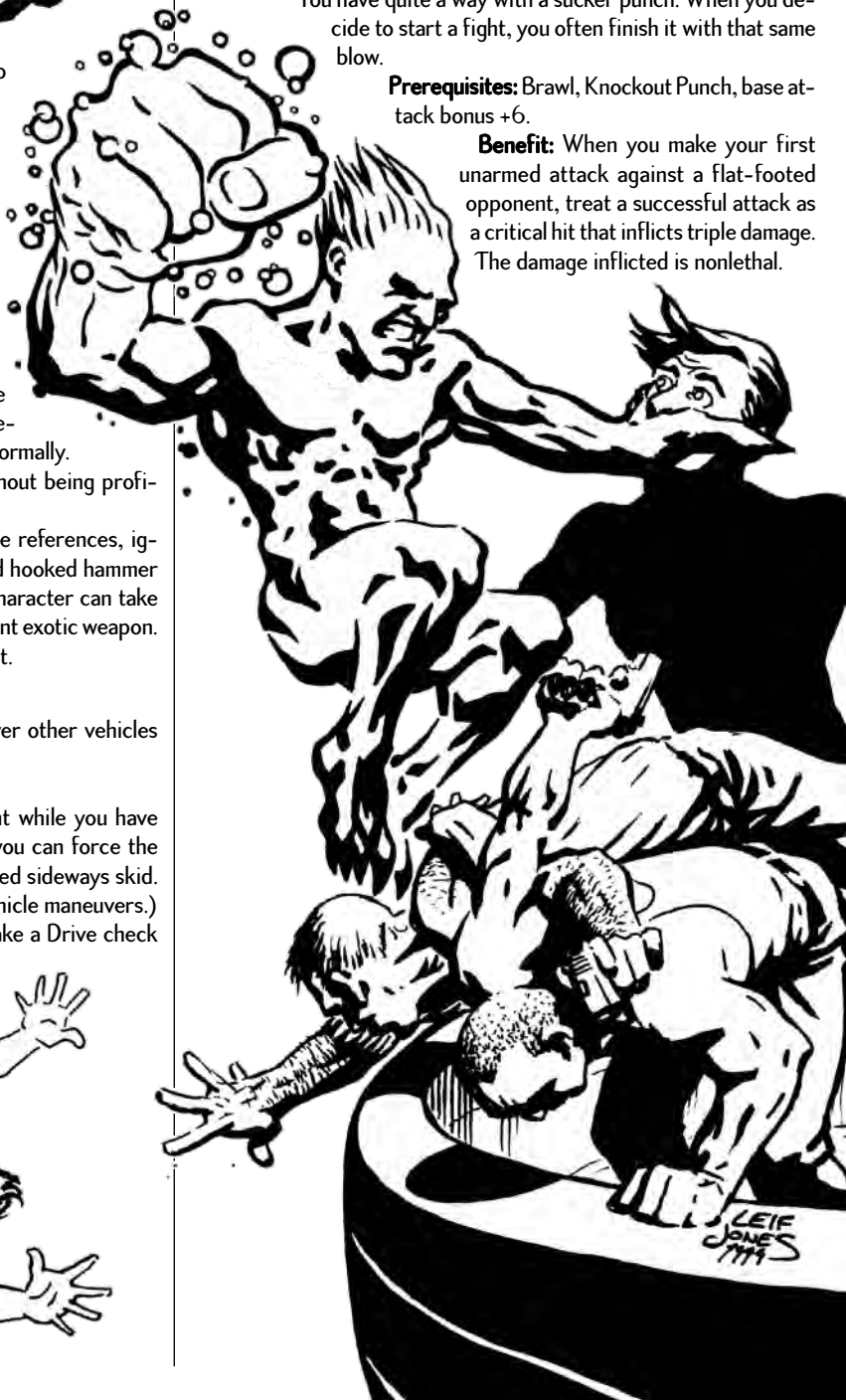
**Special:** Even if the character can inflict lethal damage with unarmed attacks, a knockout punch always inflicts nonlethal damage. A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

## Improved Combat Martial Arts [General]

You have extensive experience with hand to hand combat in the style of your choice, and know just where to strike a target to do the most damage.

**Prerequisites:** Combat Martial Arts, base attack bonus +4.

**Benefit:** Your threat range on an unarmed strike improves to 19–20.

**Normal:** A character without this feat threatens an unarmed strike critical hit on a 20 only.

**Special:** A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

## Invent Compound [Super-Science]

You have pushed the envelope of chemical science, venturing into entirely new realms of discovery.

**Prerequisites:** Superhuman; Intelligence 13; Knowledge (physical sciences) 6 ranks, Craft (chemical or pharmaceutical) 6 ranks.

**Benefit:** You can use super-science to create compounds, as described in Chapter Five: Super-Science.

## Invent Device [Super-Science]

You have unlocked the secrets of mechanical design.

**Prerequisites:** Superhuman; Intelligence 13; Craft (mechanical) 6 ranks, Knowledge (technology) 6 ranks.

**Benefit:** You can use super-science to create devices, as described in Chapter Five: Super-Science.

## Invent Organism [Super-Science]

You have laid bare the secrets of physiology.

**Prerequisites:** Superhuman; Intelligence 13; Heal 6 ranks, Knowledge (Earth and life sciences) 6 ranks; Surgery.

**Benefit:** You can use super-science to create organisms, as described in Chapter Five: Super-Science.

## Knockout Punch [General]

You know how to catch an opponent off-guard at the start of a fight.

**Prerequisites:** Brawl, base attack bonus +3.

**Benefit:** When you make your first unarmed attack against a flat-footed opponent, treat a successful attack as a critical hit. The damage inflicted is nonlethal.

**Special:** Even if the character can inflict lethal damage with unarmed attacks, a knockout punch always inflicts nonlethal damage. A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

## Personal Firearms Proficiency [General]

You are familiar with the operation of pistols, hunting rifles, shotguns and other standard personal sidearms.

**Benefit:** You can fire any personal firearm without penalty.

**Normal:** Characters without this feat take a −4 penalty on attack rolls made with personal firearms.

**Special:** A warrior receives this feat as a bonus when taking the class.
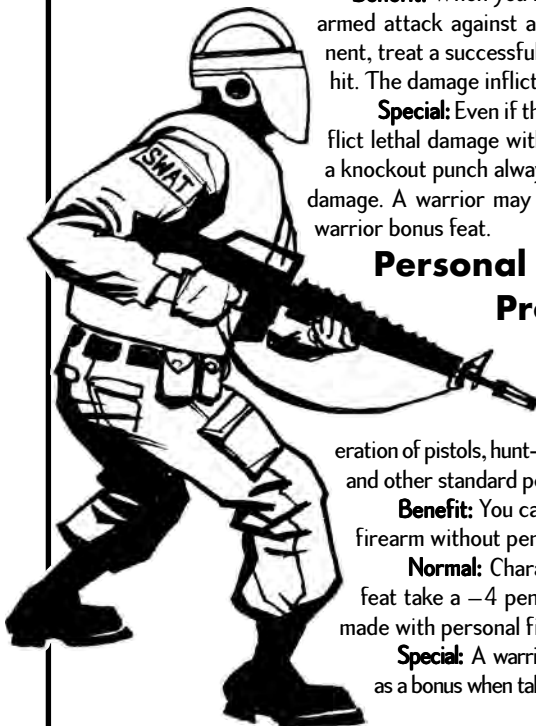
## Quick Reload [General]

You can get bullets into a gun even faster than you usually get them *out*.

**Prerequisite:** Base attack bonus +1.

**Benefit:** Using a filled box magazine or a speed loader to reload a firearm is a free action. Reloading a revolver without a speed loader, or reloading any firearm with an internal magazine, is a move action.

**Normal:** Using a filled box magazine or a speed loader to reload a firearm is a move action. Reloading a revolver without a speed loader, or reloading any firearm with an internal magazine, is a full-round action.

**Special:** A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

## Skip Shot [General]

You can ricochet a bullet off a hard surface and still threaten a target with that bullet.

**Prerequisites:** Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot.

**Benefit:** If a target is within 10 feet of a solid, relatively smooth surface on which to skip a bullet, you may ignore cover between yourself and the target. You receive a −2 penalty on your attack roll, and the attack deals −1 die of damage. The surface need not be perfectly smooth and level — a brick wall or an asphalt road will work. You can attempt a Skip Shot around up to double cover (see *Player's Handbook,* Chapter 8: Combat, "Combat Modifiers," *Cover*).

**Special:** A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

## Strafe [General]

You have superior control over a submachine gun or other fully automatic weapon when hosing an area down.

**Prerequisites:** Personal Firearms Proficiency, Advanced Firearms Proficiency.

**Benefit:** When using a firearm on autofire, you can affect an area four 5-foot squares long and one square wide (that is, any four squares in a straight line).

**Normal:** A firearm on autofire normally affects a 10-foot-by-10-foot area.

**Special:** A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

## Streetfighting [General]

You've picked up many dirty brawling techniques during your time on the streets, in jail or in a foreign land.

**Prerequisites:** Brawl, base attack bonus +2.

**Benefit:** Once per round, you inflict an extra 1d4 points of damage if you make a successful melee attack with an unarmed strike or a light weapon.

**Special:** A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

## Surgery [General]

You are trained in surgical techniques.

**Prerequisite:** Heal 4 ranks.

**Benefit:** You can use the Heal skill to perform surgery without penalty.

**Normal:** Characters without this feat take a −4 penalty on Heal checks made to perform surgery.

## Swiftness [General]

You are fast on your feet.

**Benefit:** Your movement rate increases by 5 feet per round so long as you are under no greater than a light or medium load.

**Special:** A character may gain this feat multiple times. Its effects stack.

## Unbalance Opponent [General]

Your skill in combat is such that you never present a suitable target for a foe to land an accurate blow.

**Prerequisites:** Defensive Martial Arts, base attack bonus +6.

**Benefit:** During your action, you choose an opponent no more than one size category larger or smaller than yourself. That opponent cannot add his Strength modifier to attack rolls when targeting you (an opponent with a Strength penalty still suffers that penalty). Your foe's Strength modifier applies to damage, as usual. You can select a new opponent each time you have an action.

**Special:** A warrior may take this feat as a warrior bonus feat.

## Vehicle Dodge [General]

Thanks to your driving skill, any vehicle you steer suffers comparatively little damage in combat.

**Prerequisites:** Dexterity 13, Drive or Pilot 6 ranks.

**Benefit:** During your action when driving a vehicle, designate an opposing vehicle or a single opponent. Your vehicle and each passenger aboard it receives a +1 dodge bonus to Armor Class against attacks from that vehicle or opponent. You can select a new vehicle or opponent each time you have an action.

# Background Feats

Background feats represent your social support structure and pre-adventuring life. You start with one free background feat, but you may use regular feat slots to purchase additional background feats. Some classes acquire additional background feat slots, which may be used to purchase a background feat only. These feats are organized in "trees;" the listings below include a general description of the background feat tree, followed by the feats within that tree. Unless stated otherwise, the bonus for a higher-ranking feat replaces that from a previous level (e.g., under Backing, the +4 bonus a Boss enjoys replaces the +2 bonus that a Company Man has).

Background feats are not required for you to have friends, a job, a nice car, a swank home and the like. Rather, these feats indicate parts of your life and associations that are unique and special — you may have plenty of friends, but those purchased through the Allies background feat are the only ones who'll stick around when the going gets tough; you may have a government job, but it's a mundane post of no consequence unless you get some Backing.

## Ally [Background]

*"Thanks for letting me crash here. Until I can get this memory chip to the Directive it's not safe for me to go home."*

Almost everyone has at least one close friend. Allies are people with whom your character has intimate ties: friends, loved ones or simply someone with similar interests to whom he can turn for assistance and support. Allies represent truly dedicated individuals with whom you have close bonds. Allies are not other members of the team; relationships with other PCs are roleplayed.

Allies are people in their own right, with lives as involved as yours. Friendship is a two-way street; if you take but don't give, your Allies are likely to desert you. Allies do what they can to help you, but they don't throw their lives away for nothing, nor are they on call to bail you out of trouble 24/7. They may also grow weary of repeated demands on their time and resources. By the same token, allies can also call on you for assistance when things get tough.

It's important to define the relationship you have with each ally. Were you members of the same college fraternity? Former roommates? Did you serve in the military together? Defining the connection gives the GM a better means to put your allies in the story the way you envisioned them.

An ally is most often a regular, non-erupted human. The details of an ally's abilities and resources are left to the GM's discretion, but she should keep the player's general intent and the characters' shared background in mind. The typical ally leads a quieter life than that of a PC, but he may still learn and grow with time — perhaps even becoming a nova if circumstances cause his M–R node to erupt! (Of course, such an event is subject to GM approval.)

The ally always supports you; he isn't the hero of the story — that's the PC's role. To clarify this supporting role, an ally does not gain experience points in the normal fashion (although he is always included when calculating the experience point awards if he takes an active role in an encounter). Instead, the ally is always two character levels lower than you are. The ally gains a level whenever you do, maintaining the two-level difference. (A starting character's ally is 1st level, and stays at 1st level until the PC reaches 3rd level.)

## Loyal Friend

**Benefit:** One non-erupted ally of any class (or combination of classes).

## Boon Companions

**Prerequisites:** Loyal Friend.

**Benefit:** Two allies, one of whom may be a nova (pending GM approval).

**Special:** These allies are in addition to those gained from Loyal Friend.

## Band of Heroes

**Prerequisites:** Loyal Friend, Boon Companions.

**Benefit:** Three allies, one of whom may be a nova (pending GM approval).

**Special:** These allies are in addition to those gained from Loyal Friend and Boon Companions.

# Attunement [Background]

*"El Diablo Verde takes the tag and steps into the ring, and whoa! Look at all those tentacles! Looks like his tights aren't any worse for wear this time — guess that FCC fine last week got the message across, huh, Bob?"*

Generally speaking, a nova's quantum powers affect only her own body. Novas with this Background have learned the trick of charging objects with their own quantum signatures, thereby permitting the objects to survive the rigors of the nova's powers so long as they remain in contact with the nova's body. Attunement is used most often to prevent a nova's clothing and small personal effects from being damaged or destroyed by her transformations. For example, a nova with Attunement 1 could "charge" her clothing, allowing it to remain undamaged even if she activates powers like *bodymorph* , *density control*, *immolate*, *shapeshift* or *sizemorph*.

Using Attunement costs 1 power point per encounter and confers no protection against other novas' quantum powers.

## Personal Effects

**Prerequisite:** Superhuman template.

**Benefit:** You can attune up to 10 pounds of matter (a set of clothes and a backpack or briefcase).

## Portable Gear

**Prerequisites:** Superhuman template; Personal Effects.

**Benefit:** You can attune up to 50 pounds of matter.

## Large Objects

**Prerequisites:** Superhuman template; Personal Effects, Portable Gear.

**Benefit:** You can attune up to 250 pounds of matter.

# Backing [Background]

*"Tell you what, officer. Call the number on that card. I'm sure we can get this sorted out."*

Backing represents your standing in an official (or unofficial) organization. This could be a lucrative endorsement deal with a major entertainment conglomerate, a position in an exclusive athletic league like the XWF, or membership in a shadowy government organization. With GM approval, you may take Backing multiple times to represent status in different organizations (perfect for double agents...).

This is more than an average job. Backing gives you special authority within the organization, as indicated by Charisma and Wealth check bonuses. The Wealth check bonus can be applied to temporary requisitions or outright purchases. To requisition equipment, apply the bonus to a standard Wealth check as normal, except that your Wealth bonus doesn't change regardless of the item's purchase DC. A successful roll indicates that you have "checked out" the item for a period of time. The exact duration may vary depending on the story, but should only ever be long enough for one short mission — trailing a subject through the city for the night, making a dawn raid on an enemy stronghold, etc. If you lose a requisitioned item or return it damaged beyond repair, your pay is docked to cover the loss — in other words, your Wealth bonus drops by −1 for an item up to purchase DC 15 and −2 for an item over purchase DC 15. (See Chapter Six: Drama, "Wealth" for more details.)

You can also apply the Backing feat's Wealth bonus to purchase items outright, as someone in the organization puts you in touch with those who have the object available. This is not a constant bonus; instead, you gain this benefit less often for more expensive items, as indicated on the chart below.

You aren't solely on the receiving end of the gravy train here. The group looks out for you, trusts you with its finances and equipment, gives you leadership over its personnel and so on because it expects you to further its goals. (Backing from an organization you don't believe in is ripe with dramatic potential, but don't be surprised if the group stops trusting you pretty quick.) If you abuse the benefits of your Backing, you will face the consequences, sooner or later.

| Purchase DC | Backing Applies... |
|---|---|
| 1–15 | once a week |
| 16–20 | once a month |
| 21–30 | once every 6 months |
| 31+ | once a year |

## Company Man

You have some weight you can throw around — just remember that you can catch it from on high if you make waves.

*Example:* An Army sergeant, division manager or senior field agent.

**Benefit:** Gain a +2 bonus on Charisma rolls and Charisma-based skill checks when dealing with someone of the same organization; to resist attempts by others in the organization to sway your attitude or activities; and on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks when dealing with other organizations familiar with the one you belong to.

Gain Wealth bonus +2; you can requisition equipment of up to purchase DC 20 once per session.

## Boss

You're a mover and a shaker, on a first-name basis with the uppermost powers within the organization.

*Example:* 33rd-Degree Freemason, vice president of operations or senior bureau chief.

**Prerequisites:** Company Man, character level 3rd.

**Benefit:** Gain a +4 bonus on Charisma rolls and Charisma-based skill checks when dealing with someone of the same organization; to resist attempts by others in the organization to sway your attitude or activities; and on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks when dealing with other organizations familiar with the one you belong to.

Gain Wealth bonus +4; you can requisition equipment of up to purchase DC 30 once per session.

## In Charge

**Prerequisites:** Company Man, Boss; character level 5th.

You don't just *have* authority in an organization — you *are* the authority. Becoming the Pope or head of the Joint Chiefs is stretch, but you could easily be the ruler of a small nation, the ultimate mastermind behind a global conspiracy or the leader of a fledgling religious cult.

**Benefit:** Gain a +6 bonus on Charisma rolls and Charisma-based skill checks when dealing with someone of the same organization; to resist attempts by others in the organization to sway your attitude or activities; and on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks when dealing with other organizations familiar with the one you belong to.

Gain Wealth bonus +8; you can requisition equipment of up to purchase DC 40 once per session.

You wield significant influence if you're in direct contact with underlings. More often, you are an impersonal figure who rules from a distance. Your orders are carried through proper channels and trickle down to the individual priests/soldiers/employees, who may choose to ignore or alter them. Note also that you are still subject to Wealth constraints. You're using the organization's funds, which are not your own. (Use Resources if you want to throw your own money around.)

# Cipher [Background]

*"Who was that guy?"*

The world of **Aberrant** is a realm of secrets, covert conflicts and double-agents. Such being the case, many novas wish to maintain private lives away from the bustle of fame. The Cipher background can represent a number of things — an aptitude for hiding secrets, lack of registration with governments or credit bureaus, possibly even one or more alternate identities. Cipher is particularly prized by the black ops of Project Proteus and the mask-wearing elite caste of novas, as both of these groups prefer to hide their true faces and names from public scrutiny.

Regardless of how you define your aura of secrecy, each Cipher feat reduces the chance of success for any investigation of your background or identity. Doing something stupid — having your face broadcast on international TV or bragging about your exploits to the press — will have a negative impact on your Cipher background feat: You lose the background benefit until the incident "blows over." Just when that occurs is subject to the GM's discretion.

## Shadowy Past

There is a certain amount of uncertainty about your past.

**Benefit:** A −4 penalty applies on any skill checks that involve digging up facts about you or your past.

## Secret Life

You are mystery wrapped in an enigma.

**Prerequisite:** Shadowy Past.

**Benefit:** A −8 penalty applies on any skill checks that involve digging up facts about you or your past. Additionally, you have one "cover identity," a set of falsified legal documents — passport, driver's license and bank account with a Wealth bonus half that of your main identity (round down to a minimum of 1).

## Mystery Man

You cover your tracks so well that you wonder who you really are sometimes.

**Prerequisites**: Shadowy Past, Secret Life.

**Benefit**: A −15 penalty applies on any skill checks that involve digging up facts about you or your past. The penalty applies as long as you take even simple precautions to protect your secrets. There's no hiding the fact that you're also the mysterious vigilante Jet Justice if you run around as Jet Justice with your face uncovered. However, a ruse as simple as wearing glasses in your secret identity baffles the most astute observers. You also gain two additional "cover identities" for a total of three; see Secret Life, above.

# Contacts [Background]

*"I know a guy downtown. Let me see what I can find out."*

You have associates who know things, can supply things or can get things done. Still, these people are not allies. An ally sticks with you out of a close sense of personal responsibility. Contacts are people who associate with you out of a sense of self-interest. The guy you pulled from a burning building during your eruption is an ally. The reporter you give "exclusive interviews" to in exchange for information is a contact.

Contacts are easy to reach, either directly or through an underling, and are available on short notice — though not always at your convenience. They are not guaranteed to help you in every situation, but they don't act against you willingly. (Using the *Influencing NPC Attitudes* sidebar in the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 4: Skills, "Skill Descriptions," a contact's attitude toward you is never worse than indifferent.) The only exception is if you take repeated action to offend the contact. Like an ally or a follower, a contact has a will of his own and won't long stand for being mistreated.

Each contact has an area of interest, a broad but defined field of inquiry involving a diverse network of experts and informants. The network's geographic size is limited depending on which Contacts background feat you have. You and the GM must agree upon the contact's area of interest; the GM then determines secretly the extent of the contact's expertise, knowledge and resources.

| Contact | Geographic Scale | Example |
|---------|------------------|---------|
| Local | Large metropolitan area or small country | Nova activities in New York |
| National | Large nation or small continent | Teragen activities in the U.S. |
| Global | The world community | Mite dealers worldwide |

## Well-Connected

**Benefit:** You receive a +2 bonus on general Gather Information checks. You also gain three local contacts or one national contact; each confers a +4 bonus on your Gather Information checks in a specific area of interest.

## Information Broker

**Prerequisite:** Well-Connected.

**Benefit:** You receive a +4 bonus on general Gather Information checks. You gain three national contacts or one global contact; each confers a +8 bonus on your Gather Information checks in a specific area of interest.

**Special:** The contacts gained with this feat are in addition to those from Well-Connected.

## Kingpin

You don't just curry favor with powerful individuals; you are the ultimate arbiter of favor. You have many capable folks convinced (per-haps fraudulently) that it is in their best interests to provide you with any favor, information or advantage they can.

**Prerequisites:** Well-Connected, Information Broker; character level 5th.

**Benefit:** You receive a +6 bonus on general Gather Information checks. On a successful DC 13 Charisma check, you know of a nearby contact anywhere in the known world who confers a +10 bonus on your Gather Information checks on a local area of interest of your choosing. You can also prevail upon this contact for free food and lodging for a number of weeks (if you're alone) or days (if you're with a group) equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1). The contact's receptiveness does not extend to floating you a million-dollar loan or committing felonies at your request.

**Special:** You retain the contacts gained from Well-Connected and Information Broker.

# Dormancy [Background]

*"Flame on!"*

Most novas are readily identifiable as such. Not only are their physiques too perfect — their bodies tailored to handle energies beyond human comprehension — but many "bleed" trace amounts of quantum energies into their surroundings. This effect is relatively harmless (except in the cases of novas with aberrant levels that cause radiation bleed, as described in Chapter Three), but it does make the nova stand out.

Novas with Dormancy can "power down" and avoid detection as novas. "Dorming down" is a full-round action; afterward, all the nova's quantum energies are internalized and shut down. She must take another full-round action to "power up" her nova powers.

In game terms, a dormant nova has no access to any of her nova-enhanced ability scores, superhuman feats or quantum powers. She likewise suppresses and conceals any physical aberrations she possesses while dormant. The nova's appetite is also reduced to something like a normal human level. The nova retains her basic nova characteristics (increased healing times, extended lifespan, etc.), and recovers power points at a rate of 1 point per day.

A nova with Dormancy can use Hide to avoid detection by novas with the Node background feat.

A nova with the Nowhere Man feat (see below) can choose to have a "human form" and a "nova form" to switch between, with the human form lacking any access to nova characteristics just like any other dormant nova.

## Low Profile

**Prerequisite:** Superhuman template.

**Benefit:** Gain a +2 bonus on Hide checks against quantum energy or M−R node detection (as with a nova using his Node background feat). While your Dormancy is active, you can suppress any minor physical aberrations you have.

## Hidden in Plain Sight

**Prerequisites:** Superhuman template; Low Profile.

**Benefit: Benefit:** Gain a +4 bonus on Hide checks against quantum energy or M−R node detection. While your Dormancy is active, you can suppress any major physical aberrations you have.

## Nowhere Man

**Prerequisites:** Superhuman template; Low Profile, Hidden in Plain Sight.

**Benefit: Benefit:** Gain a +8 bonus on Hide checks against quantum energy or M−R node detection. While your Dormancy is active, you can suppress any severe physical aberrations you have.

# Eufiber [Background]

*"This fight isn't over yet, Deadlock!"*

The coming of novas has ushered in many technological advances, but few so universal as the bizarre substance known as eufiber. This

organic polymer-esque substance was originally secreted from the epidermis of Costa Rican nova Aníbál Buendia; the synthetic version common now was created from living colonies of the fiber. Eufiber derivatives have proved to have many industrial uses, from OpNet cables to a considerable percentage of the world's clothing. True, living eufiber is even more prized by novas.

This background represents a colony of Buendia-secreted, living eufiber that is typically "woven" into a garment of some sort. Though baselines can wear it, the stuff offers greatest use to novas. If a nova spends 1 power point, the eufiber conforms its genetic and quantum pattern to the nova's own, conferring a variety of benefits. A eufiber colony knows no loyalty; if another nova dons the eufiber and spends a power point, the colony re-attunes to that nova's quantum signature after one round. A nova can wear only one eufiber colony at a time.

• **Customized Form:** The nova wearer can adapt the eufiber's shape, color and other parameters to his whim. This is accomplished through mental command (a free action), and takes a full-round action for each change. Eufiber fashion shows are often wondrous and freakish affairs, as nova "supermodels" parade down runways attired in gravity-defying, shimmering, translucent, bioluminescent, scintillating or otherwise eye-catching constructs.

• **Power Adaptation:** The eufiber adapts to the wearer's quantum powers, allowing it to remain intact and unharmed even while the nova uses body-altering powers like *bodymorph*, *growth* and *immolate*. This makes it perfect for the fashionable nova who doesn't want to run around naked every time he turns on the juice.

Eufiber does not ignore the effects of other novas' powers, however. It can be torn or burned or otherwise damaged. As long as a portion remains, however, it can re-grow itself whole again. The GM may determine how long this takes; one day is recommended for minor damage.

• **Quantum Storage:** A character can transfer power points to the eufiber for storage, drawing upon the points later just like from his own power point total. The maximum that the eufiber can store at once depends on the background level (see below).

• **Natural Armor:** Eufiber charged with quantum can use the stored points as an automatic defense for itself or its owner. This gives the wearer (and the eufiber) an enhancement bonus to natural armor equal to the number of power points stored at that moment.

## Young Colony
**Prerequisite:** Superhuman template.
**Benefit:** The eufiber can store up to 2 power points.

## Mature Colony
**Prerequisites:** Superhuman template; Young Colony.
**Benefit:** The eufiber can store up to 4 power points.

## Robust Colony
**Prerequisites:** Superhuman template; Young Colony, Mature Colony.
**Benefit:** The eufiber can store up to 6 power points.

# Followers [Background]

*"You don't honestly think I came here alone, do you?"*

Followers are ordinary people, NPCs who obey your orders. They may be loyal employees of your research institute, brothers-in-arms or members of your personal entourage. Whatever their origins, they follow you for a specific reason — loyalty to a cause, belief in a shared philosophy or even just a steady paycheck. Whatever the case, you must maintain that relationship — promoting the cause, espousing the philosophy, signing the checks — through the course of the se-

ries or your followers will become disillusioned and look for more rewarding pursuits. Likewise, followers are not blindly obedient and may leave if treated callously. Followers killed in the line of duty are not replaced automatically; you need to recruit them through roleplay.

A follower has one particular asset or talent, but otherwise does not enjoy tremendous breadth of ability (if he did, he wouldn't be following you). A follower lacks the accomplishment of an ally or a contact, and cannot be a nova.

## Retainers
You have a few loyal agents.
**Benefit:** Three 1st-level followers or one 2nd-level follower.

## Troops
You have a band of loyal followers.
**Prerequisite:** Retainers; character level 4th.
**Benefit:** Eight 1st-level followers or three 2nd-level followers.
**Special:** These followers add to those gained from Retainers.

## Legions
**Prerequisites:** Retainers, Troops; character level 8th.
**Benefit:** You have a great number of people willing to do what you say. Just how many depends on how loyal and how skilled they are. Conceptually, you could have anything from a dozen expert assassins to hundreds of normal people (or, perhaps, a little more gullible than the norm) who follow you as long as it doesn't get them in trouble. Practically, you determine your followers' loyalty and parameters of skill, as indicated in the chart below. Once that's set, roll as indicated determine how many members of your legions you can call upon in each game session.

| Follower Loyalty | Average[1] | Degree of Skill Competent[2] | Professional[3] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hired | d% + 3d8 | 5d10 | 2d8 |
| Loyal | d% + 3d6 | 4d8 | 2d6 |
| Fanatic | d% + 3d4 | 4d6 | 2d4 |

[1] 1st-level.
[2] 3rd-level, up to 25% may be novas.
[3] 5th-level, up to 50% may be novas.

*Hired* followers are just that — they don't put in any effort beyond what they get paid to do.

*Loyal* followers trust in your leadership, but won't sacrifice themselves for the cause — each gains a +2 bonus on saving throws and skill checks to resist betraying you knowingly.

*Fanatic* followers give themselves fully to the cause — each is immune to any superhuman feat or skill check that would cause her to abandon you or subject you to harm knowingly.

**Special:** These followers add to those gained from Retainers and Servants.

# Quantum Device [Background]

*"You think man can't turn lead into gold? Watch this."*

You possess an invention decades ahead of the current technological curve. A quantum device may also be an existing mechanism concealed or altered in some way — an autofire cell phone, a boat capable of short flights. These items are rare as hen's teeth, and you need a good explanation why you have something so esoteric, experimental and/or advanced.

A quantum device is likely to be the target of thieves and con artists. In the proper circles, the item (and your mastery of it) is nigh-

legendary, and your enemies will go to considerable lengths to separate you from it. A quantum device cannot be destroyed except in the most extreme circumstances, or by killing its owner.

The capabilities discussed below are covered in Chapter Five: Super-Science. An advanced quantum device cannot have more options than are allowed under the relevant super-science category. Assume an innovative quantum device has the following specifications.

The GM has the final say on any quantum device's capabilities.

**Effect:** Depends on feat level (see below).

**Skill Rank:** Equal to your starting Quantum.

**Options:** Depends on feat level (see below).

**Operation:** You.

**Durability:** Maximum hardness, hit points and break DC.

**Warranty:** Unlimited.

**Charges:** Equal to your starting Quantum +1.

## Minor Quantum Device

An impressive item with capabilities beyond the norm. It enjoys a strong reputation within a certain subculture or a vague, widespread reputation among the general populace.

**Prerequisite:** Superhuman template.

**Benefit:** In super-science terms, a Minor Quantum Device is an advancement with up to 5 options, or an innovation that duplicates a 1st-level power.

**Special:** You may take this feat multiple times, with each representing a different quantum device.

## Major Quantum Device

The quantum device is rare and powerful, with a reputation that overshadows that of its owner.

**Prerequisite:** Superhuman template; Minor Quantum Device.

**Benefit:** In super-science terms, a Major Quantum Device is an advancement with up to 10 options, or an innovation that duplicates one 2nd-level power or three 1st-level powers. Alternatively, it has some other unique and *very* significant capabilities (approved by the GM, of course).

**Special:** You may take this feat multiple times, with each representing a different quantum device.

## Quantum Artifact

The quantum device is a powerful super-science apparatus, something of truly stupendous proportions. Such an amazing item is sure to be sought after by any number of agencies; and its construction, deployment, maintenance and defense could well be the focus of an entire series. The possibilities are wide open, as long as you use common sense and respect the scope of the GM's campaign.

**Prerequisite:** Superhuman template; Minor Quantum Device, Major Quantum Device.

**Benefit:** A quantum device of this scale may provide up to 20 options or duplicate the effects of any quantum powers with a total of six levels — six 1st-level powers, three 2nd-level powers, two 3rd-level powers or any combination thereof.

You can combine options and power effects as long as the respective points don't exceed the total feat rating — so the Artifact might have one 3rd-level power effect and 10 options. You can create capabilities not described in this book with GM approval.

**Special:** You may take this feat multiple times, with each representing a different quantum device.

# Influence [Background]

*"Of course we can get into the Presidential debate. Let me call this producer I know."*

If nothing else, novas are certainly persons of importance; people worldwide watch, look up to, emulate or (in the worst cases) fear

them. The Influence background reflects your pull and status in society. This status may derive from political contacts, prominence in a particular organization like Project Utopia, being an entertainer or even being a religious figure. Whatever your specific credentials, people pay attention to your words and deeds.

Influence may be used to garner special favors from others, to promote a personal agenda in public or to simply get a good seat at the theater. Additionally, influence may be drawn on to network and to make important connections — or even to draw more people under your sway. Most novas eventually garner some degree of influence, if they don't start with it.

This background feat doesn't cover standing or sway in a private organization; that's handled by Backing.

## Celebrity

You are a regional celebrity of some note.

**Benefit:** Gain a +2 bonus on Diplomacy checks. Additionally, on a successful DC 15 Diplomacy check, you can get access for casual or professional conversation with a politician, media representative or celebrity within your sphere of influence (large metropolitan area or small country).

## Luminary

You're renowned internationally for an area of expertise or have a broader influence in a smaller area.

**Prerequisite:** Celebrity; character level 4th.

**Benefit:** Gain an extra +2 bonus on Diplomacy checks (total +4). Also, once per session you can call for (or call *off*) official or public intervention — summon the police, arrange for a search warrant, have a nosy reporter pulled off a story, etc — within your sphere of influence (large nation or small continent). You can't use this to break the law, but you can certainly *bend* it. Still, using this for trivial and/or falsified reasons may work for the moment, but could have repercussions later — whether bringing your activities to the attention of others in power or even resulting in your arrest.

**Special:** This benefit adds to that gained from Celebrity.

## Icon

You seldom debate with the top minds in your field, for your views wield such authority that it's almost impossible to gainsay your words. Even if your renown is in art history, your influence as a great mind of the early 21st century lends you tremendous clout in other areas. Whether global politics or military strategy, if you can speak on the subject knowledgeably, people will give everything you say serious consideration.

**Prerequisites:** Celebrity, Luminary; character level 8th.

**Benefit:** Gain an extra +2 bonus on Diplomacy checks (total +6). Once per character level, you may attempt to call for (or call *off*) official or media attention on an international scale. The world at large may not know about your influence in the matter, but there's no hiding your involvement from other figures of power. This requires a Diplomacy check with the DC based on the desired outcome.

| DC | Desired Outcome |
|----|-----------------|
| 10 | Trigger a local protest |
| 15 | Have the *New York Times* run an exposé |
| 20 | Tie up a bill in committee |
| 25 | Call for a political prisoner's release |
| 30 | Have top secret diplomatic or corporate information leaked |
| 40 | Mobilize the US Army |

**Special:** This benefit adds to that gained from Celebrity and Luminary.

# Mentor [Background]

*"Yeah, he kicked your ass before. So what? If you'll listen to me and not go off half-cocked like last time, you can take this guy down."*

You have someone looking out for you, guiding your career and providing protection, training and the benefits of experience. The mentor's reasons for offering these benefits may be obvious and noble ("He's my daddy!") or less of both ("He's just this mysterious man who shows up after I dial this code — that has way too many numbers"). Whatever motivates him, your mentor is a powerful figure who can do a lot for you... but expects something in return. Just what that is may be as obvious or mysterious as the mentor himself.

Although you determine the basic concept for and relationship with the mentor, the GM handles all aspects of his actual capabilities. Unlike a contact or ally, there's no question of this being a meeting of equals. The mentor considers himself your superior — and he's probably right, at least in the beginning. A mentor may be a nova but is not required to be. He increases in character level up to a certain a maximum, as noted below. If you go beyond that level, you surpass your mentor in ability — although he may still have wisdom to bestow.

The mentor may serve as a sort of *deus ex machina* rescuer of last resort, but he won't help you out of every jam you get into. A mentor forced to save your bacon too often will eventually seek out one who shows more potential.

Each Mentor feat lists the mentor's character level in relation to yours. This is influenced further by his availability and influence, as indicated below. Each level modifier increases the mentor's level relative to you, but reduces his maximum possible level. So, an Old Pro who is moderately available gains one additional character level and is reduced to a 9th-level possible maximum.

| Level Adjustment | Reason |
|---|---|
| 1 | Moderately available (brief encounter once per session) |
| 2 | Readily available (frequent interaction each session) |
| 2 | Extensive influence or resources (mentor is police chief, etc.) |

## Old Pro

Your benefactor is probably a great deal like you, only more experienced and better connected.

**Benefit:** Mentor is two levels higher than you, to a maximum of 10th level.

## Wise Counselor

The person supporting you has broad and deep connections, and a great deal of experience when it comes to using them.

**Prerequisite:** Old Pro

**Benefit:** Mentor is three levels higher than you, to a maximum of 15th level.

## The Mandarin

Whoever your mentor is, he is well known among the corridors of power.

**Prerequisites:** Old Pro, Wise Counselor

**Benefit:** Mentor is four levels higher than you, to a maximum of 18th level.

# Nemesis [Background]

*"Damn you, Magnetron! How many bombs are hidden in the stadium?!"*

You have an enemy, someone you have a burning, driving urge to confront, defeat and destroy — and she feels the same way about you. You may not want to kill one another (though it's likely), but nothing else short of the others' total destruction will do. This is not like hating Teragen or some other abstract organization. It's personal. A nemesis must be an individual — though she may employ any number of lackeys to cause you grief.

This may not seem like an advantage at first blush, but these feats do confer ancillary benefits, not the least of which is the sense of purpose a nemesis gives to your life. If the nemesis has other enemies, they're your friends (at least nominally). And if your nemesis is a known villain, being known as her enemy can be good for your reputation.

Also, when you know *for certain* — assuming doesn't count — that your nemesis is behind the plot you're mixed up in, you can roll to regain lost power points (up to your total capacity) as indicated for each feat below. Basically, your character digs deep and comes up with reserves of power he didn't know he had. Discovering the nemesis's influence should be a challenge, perhaps the result of multiple games' worth of adventuring. Uncovering the truth should be as dramatic as if you've actually encountered the nemesis face-to-face. (Note that your enemy can do the exact same thing in response to any plans that you make against her, too....)

## Thorn in the Side

You and your foe have crossed paths a few times.

**Benefit:** Regain 1d3 power points. When investigating some activity or mystery, gain a +4 bonus on any Sense Motive checks to determine whether it smacks of involvement by your nemesis.

**Special:** You may take this feat multiple times, with each representing a different nemesis. However, you only regain Inspiration through this feat once per session — even if your multiple nemeses have joined forces.

## Dedicated Foe

The battles between you and your enemy are memorable and well known.

**Prerequisite:** Thorn in the Side

**Benefit:** Regain one additional power point when your nemesis' plans are uncovered. Also gain a +4 bonus on Bluff and Intimidate checks against those in the employ of your nemesis, due to the stories that have spread about your conflict. (The GM may apply this bonus in secret if you aren't aware that a given person works for your nemesis.)

**Special:** These benefits add to those gained from Thorn in the Side.

## Archenemy

The conflict between you and your foe is the stuff of legend.

**Prerequisites:** Thorn in the Side, Dedicated Foe.

**Benefit:** Regain one additional power point (for a total of 1d3+2 power points) when your nemesis' plots are revealed. Also, once per session while in combat with your nemesis or with those who you have established serve her, you may confirm a critical hit automatically. That is to say, if you've rolled a threat (a natural 20 or a roll within the weapon's threat range), you confirm that hit as a critical without the need to roll again.

**Special:** These benefits add to those gained from Thorn in the Side and Dedicated Foe.

# Node [Background]

*"Must have... more... power!"*

The Mazarin–Rashoud node isn't much to look at; just a lump of grayish flesh about the size of a marble. It can grow bigger — some have been recorded at the size of an apple or baseball — but it's still just a mass of tissue with a few blood vessels, nerve endings and tendrils extending from it. Yet it holds the key to the powers of the universe.

The M–R node gives novas their power, providing them with the ability to channel quantum energies. At the same time, it can af-

fect their psyches and their bodies in strange, often deadly, ways.

A character with this feat has a well-developed Mazarin–Rashoud node. Note the words "well-developed." All novas, even those without this feat, have an active M–R node. Node as a background feat signifies that your node is better developed, or channels quantum energies better, than the typical node. Thus, a nova with Node is often more powerful than others of her kind. She can use more power points per round and can recover them faster, as appropriate to her level of Node.

Each Node background feat level confers the ability to detect quantum, but offers an increased risk of taint poisoning.

• **Quantum Detection:** The nova can detect sources or conduits of quantum energy — other novas in most cases, though nuclear reactors, cyclotrons, generators and other large power sources may also qualify. Quantum detection is a full-round action and covers a cone-shaped emanation that extends from the nova at a range of (20 feet/Quantum). Make a DC 10 Spot check in the first round; if successful, the nova learns a certain amount depending on how long she searches a particular area.

If a nova with his abilities powered down (via the Dormancy background feat) is within another nova's quantum detection scan, he makes an opposed Hide check against the scanner's Spot check. If successful, the dormant nova isn't detected on the quantum scan; otherwise, he registers as normal.

*1st Round:* Presence or absence of a quantum source in the area.

*2nd Round:* Number and general strength of any quantum sources in the area.

*3rd Round:* The location of each quantum source. If the source is outside the nova's direct perception, she discerns its direction and general range but not its exact location.

• **Increased Taint Risk:** This background makes the nova more efficient at processing quantum energies, but drawing more heavily on that power increases the character's chances of taint poisoning (see individual feat descriptions, below). Chapter Three: Quantum has detailed rules on taint poisoning, negative levels and aberrant levels.

## Second-Stage Node

**Prerequisite:** Superhuman template.

**Benefit:** You can spend up to 8 power points per round and your power point recovery rate increases by +2.

## Third-Stage Node

**Prerequisites:** Superhuman template; Second-Stage Node.

**Benefit:** You can spend up to 10 power points per round and your power point recovery rate increases by +4. However, on a failed taint check, you gain *two* negative levels instead of one.

## N-Stage Node

**Prerequisites:** Superhuman template; Second-Stage Node, Third-Stage Node.

**Benefit:** You can spend up to 12 power points per round and your power point recovery rate increases by +6. However, on a failed taint check, you gain *three* negative levels instead of one.

# Reputation [Background]

*"Look! Up in the sky! It's Team Tomorrow!"*

The cult of celebrity was well established in the modern, media-saturated world long before the arrival of the novas. Now, novas and aberrants alike preen for the cameras and cultivate their public personas as a way of building influence — and securing lucrative endorsements from major corporations.

A reputation's truth matters little compared to its impact on those who know of it. Although it conveys no actual authority, a reputation may have a

positive or negative connotation — related as modifiers to certain Charisma-based skill checks — depending on the person who recognizes you.

If your reputation might influence an NPC you encounter, the GM makes a Reputation check using (1d20 + your Reputation bonus + the NPC's Intelligence modifier or Knowledge skill rating if relevant) against DC 25. If successful, the listed modifiers apply to any skill checks relating to that character for the rest of the encounter.

You must describe your reputation in a sentence or two when selecting the first feat of this tree. All relating benefits depend on that reputation. Of course, a character who doesn't know — or know *of* — you can't be influenced by your reputation.

## Recognized

Minor fame or notoriety.

**Benefit:** Your Reputation bonus is +3. If considered famous, you gain a +2 bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information and Perform checks. If considered infamous, you gain a +2 bonus on Intimidate and Perform checks and apply a −2 penalty on Diplomacy and Gather Information checks.

**Special:** You may take this feat more than once, with each applying to different forms of renown.

## Celebrated

You are well-known in the mainstream.

**Prerequisite:** Recognized.

**Benefit:** Your Reputation bonus is +5. If considered famous, you gain a +4 bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information and Perform checks. If considered infamous, you gain a +4 bonus on Intimidate and Perform checks and apply a −4 penalty on Diplomacy and Gather Information checks.

**Special:** You may take this feat more than once, with each applying to different forms of renown.

## Renowned

Your name is familiar to all but the most remote and secluded individuals.

**Prerequisites:** Recognized, Celebrated.

**Benefit:** Your Reputation bonus is +10. If considered famous, you gain a +6 bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information and Perform checks. If considered infamous, you gain a +6 bonus on Intimidate and Perform checks and apply a −6 penalty on Diplomacy and Gather Information checks.

**Special:** You may take this feat more than once, with each applying to different forms of renown.

# Resources [Background]

*"How much? Here, use my corporate card."*

Your class determines your base Wealth bonus, which you use to buy the things you want (see Chapter Six: Drama for specifics). This feat tree indicates your ability to get the most out of your finances. Just how it's handled is up to you — you negotiate incredible deals, someone is always popping by to repay a debt, you enter (and win) every raffle under the sun, you have a keen eye for the stock market, or you're just really, really loaded. The bottom line is that your finances don't suffer the same ebb and flow that others experience.

## Well-Off

You always make sure you have money set aside for a rainy day — or for an urge to indulge.

**Benefit:** Increase your Wealth bonus by +2. An item's purchase DC is considered five points lower when applying a Wealth bonus decrease. The item's purchase price remains the same, and the decrease for a purchase DC 15 or higher still applies.

## Deep Pockets

You lack nothing in the way of comfort and can buy just about anything that catches your eye.

**Prerequisite:** Well-Off.

**Benefit:** Increase your Wealth bonus by +4. An item's purchase DC is considered 10 points lower when applying a Wealth bonus decrease. The item's purchase price remains the same, and the decrease for a purchase DC 15 or higher still applies.

## Wealth Beyond Avarice

It's simplicity itself for you to acquire any mass-produced or common object. More expensive items may require longer (months or possibly even years) — not because you can't afford them, but because they have to be made to order. The plus side is that when you buy very expensive things such as custom yachts and buildings, you can design them to your own eccentric specifications.

**Prerequisites:** Well-Off, Deep Pockets.

**Benefit:** Increase your Wealth bonus by +8. An item's purchase DC is considered 20 points lower when applying a Wealth bonus decrease. The item's purchase price remains the same.

Alternately, you can purchase a unique device, vehicle or building — the sort of thing that counts as a quantum device or sanctum. In such circumstances, your Resources feat benefit drops to the equivalent of Well-Off for as long as the quantum device or sanctum is under construction. After it's completed, you regain the full benefit of Wealth Beyond Avarice within (18 months − your unmodified Wealth bonus).

# Sanctum [Background]

*"It ain't much to look at, but at least I don't have to worry about the press — not unless they rent a submarine, that is."*

Just as a quantum device represents a unique machine or possession, a sanctum represents a unique location. It could be an Antarctic "meditation mansion," a private island, an underground headquarters, a secret valley or some other place. Sanctum feats determine how exotic your special residence is, how useful it is and how difficult it is for your enemies — or simply the curious — to discover and infiltrate it.

You're not homeless if you don't have a sanctum (unless you want to be) — you simply own an ordinary home or rent a regular apartment.

A sanctum is more secure and private than a normal dwelling. Each feat on the tree applies a penalty to any efforts to discover anything about the sanctum — from its very existence to its specific location to its security measures to how many light fixtures it has — and to breach its security. See below for specifics.

## Hideout

A place of limited size that's either particularly pleasant *or* unusually secure (e.g., a handful of secret rooms under your basement).

**Benefit:** A hideout can be as small as a single room or as large as a two-bedroom apartment. It may be especially secure or well-appointed.

*Secure:* A −6 penalty applies on any efforts to learn about a secure hideout. Good security (DC 30 Open Lock, Disable Device); basic furnishings.

*Well-appointed:* A −2 penalty applies on any efforts to learn about a well-appointed hideout. Average security (DC 25 Open Lock, Disable Device); you gain a +4 bonus on any checks made in the sanctum to impress or otherwise influence visitors due to the masterwork furnishings and modern conveniences.

**Special:** This feat may be taken more than once; each additional Hideout feat represents another sanctum.

## Private Palace

Your sanctum is of significant size and is both unusually secure *and* well-appointed.

**Prerequisite:** Hideout.

**Benefit:** A private palace can be anything from a city penthouse apartment to a mansion to a luxury yacht. It includes sleeping quarters for your entire team and any mentor, allies or followers that you may have. It is also equipped in whatever fashion you wish — expensive furniture, a library, fine china; stark and imposing with gleaming machinery arrayed in impressive fashion; relaxing and spare décor with a breathtaking view; and so on.

A −6 penalty applies on any efforts to learn about a private palace. Superior security (DC 40 Open Lock, Disable Device); you gain a +6 bonus on any checks made to impress or otherwise influence visitors in the sanctum due to its impressive location, design and/or furnishings.

**Special:** This feat may be taken more than once; each additional Private Palace feat is in addition to and independent from any gained from Hideout.

## Sanctum Sanctorum

A sanctum sanctorum is frightfully secure and remarkably useful. It is invulnerable to infiltration by any but the most immensely capable burglar, and its defenses are sufficient to hold off an entire army for a week, if necessary.

**Prerequisites:** Hideout, Private Palace.

**Benefit:** A sanctum sanctorum is limited in the direct in-game benefit it offers you, as noted below. Otherwise, however, you are free to design almost any exotic domain imaginable (subject to GM approval).

A −10 penalty applies on any efforts to learn about a sanctum sanctorum. Unparalleled security (DC 45 Open Lock, Disable Device); you gain a +8 bonus on any checks made to impress or otherwise influence visitors in the sanctum due to its impressive location, design and/or furnishings.

**Special:** You may have only one sanctum sanctorum; this is in addition to and independent from any number of Hideouts and Private Palaces.

# Superhuman Feats

Each nova has the same six standard abilities as any human — Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma. However, with mastery of quantum energies, novas' abilities can go far beyond those of mortal men.

Superhuman is a new category of feats that represent the prodigious physical and mental prowess that nova characters can attain. You may use regular feat slots to purchase superhuman feats or superhuman feat enhancements as your character gains experience levels.

As a basic benefit, each superhuman feat adds your Quantum score to a specific related ability. That ability score increases or decreases as appropriate when your Quantum score changes through level progression or other means.

## Superhuman Feat Enhancements

Each superhuman feat has certain special capabilities, called enhancements. You get one enhancement for free when your character first acquires a superhuman feat. You may take further enhancements by using additional feat slots.

Each superhuman feat enhancement functions only for the character who has it. Some require power points to activate. Details are listed with the description as relevant.

## Exceptionally Normal

One of the benefits of superhuman feats is that they allow players to design characters who have comparatively minor abilities instead of the planet-busting quantum powers that many novas display. Given that all superhuman feats require the character to have the superhuman template, there is no question in a rules context as to whether that character is a nova. Still, by purchasing several superhuman feats and keeping a relatively low Quantum, you can present your character as more "human" in the setting.

Combining superhuman feats with the right mix of skills, feats and the latest technology and gear can result in a subtly powerful and highly intriguing character — a Batman "type," rather than a Superman. Batman can't toss buildings around or fly faster than a speeding bullet, but his unmatched intellect, combined with his ability to apply what power he does have exactly where and when it's needed, makes him just as effective as the guy from Krypton.



# Mega-Strength [Superhuman]

Novas with Mega-Strength often have enormous muscles and a love of showing off what they can do with them — whether smashing through buildings or crushing guns into paperweights.

Most superhumanly strong novas have Mega-Constitution also.

**Prerequisite:** Superhuman template.

**Effect:** Increase your Strength by a number of points equal to your Quantum.

## Mega-Strength Enhancements

• **Crush:** You are especially adept at grabbing and crushing objects and delivering blows that are powerful and focused enough to go through most anything — whether a person or a brick wall!

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Strength.

*Effect:* You inflict lethal damage and add (2 x Quantum) to your Strength modifier when applying damage on an unarmed strike. Crush lasts for a single strike (whether successful or not) and can be used for any unarmed maneuver in which your Strength modifier is applied to damage.

Using this enhancement is a full-round action that costs 1 power point for each attempt.

• **Lifter:** You're the guy to call when someone needs to move something big — like, say, a tank.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Strength.

*Effect:* Multiply every two points you spend (up to your maximum per round) by your Quantum score; add the result to your Strength score for the purposes of determining your carrying capacity. While this is in effect, you can carry staggering weights — or

even throw them at a range increment equal to (1 mile x 1/2 your effective Strength for carrying capacity).

A thrown object has a maximum range of five range increments; reduce this by one increment for every 1,000 pounds the object weighs. If this reduces the range to less than one increment, you can throw the object a mile. Range penalties, line of sight, maximum lifting capability and other modifiers apply as normal.

Using this enhancement purely to increase carrying capacity lasts for a single encounter (or your character level in hours, if the GM prefers). Using it for a throw expends the power point boost immediately.

**Example:** *Mondo Strong has Strength 18, Quantum 6 and Mega-Strength, giving him an effective Strength of 24 for determining his carrying capacity. If he spends 4 power points, he has an effective Strength of 30 (Strength 18 + Quantum 12) for determining his maximum load. He can carry a maximum 532 pounds or dead lift a maximum 1,600 pounds. He can also throw an object weighing up to 1,000 pounds (1/2 ton) a maximum of 75 miles ([effective Strength 30/2] x 5 range increments).*

*Say Mondo Strong also has the Node (N-Stage) background feat and spends the maximum 12 power points he can in a single round. His load limits skyrocket thanks to his new effective Strength of 54 (Strength 18 + Quantum 36). He can now carry up to 14,912 pounds or dead lift 44,800 pounds, and can throw a half-ton object up to 135 miles!*

• **Quantum Leap:** Your leg muscles are prodigiously strong — so much so that you can leap enormous distances.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Strength, Strength 16.

*Effect:* You can leap up to 100 feet horizontally or up to 25 feet vertically per power point spent, with no Jump check required. Similarly, you suffer no damage from falling an equivalent distance as long as it is a controlled fall (the GM may call for a Jump or Tumble check, depending on circumstances). The power point expenditure lasts for a single leap.

• **Shockwave:** By stomping your foot or smashing your fists against the ground, you can generate waves of force and pressure that create tiny earthquakes.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Strength, Strength 15.

*Effect:* All targets on the ground within a (10 foot/Quantum) radius must make a DC 15 Reflex save or fall down. At the GM's discretion, the shockwave may result in collateral damage — fissures opening, pipes bursting, ceilings collapsing — that inflicts (1d6/2 levels) points of bludgeoning damage, up to a maximum 10d6 (Reflex DC 15 half).

You are unaffected by the Shockwave, but must roll the collateral damage noted above against the surface you've hit. You are subject to any adverse affects that result — falling through a cracked floor, being hit by debris, and so on.

Shockwave requires no power point expenditure but does take a full-round action.

• **Thunderclap:** With a forceful clap, you create a tremendous burst of sound and air pressure.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Strength, Strength 15.

*Effect:* Thunderclap affects living creatures and brittle or fragile objects (such as glass) in a cone-shaped emanation up to (10 ft./Quantum); "hard" targets — walls, vehicles or metal objects — and very "soft" targets — cloth, paper — are unaffected. Targets must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude save or be deafened for 1d6 rounds (unable to hear, at a −4 penalty on initiative checks, fail Listen checks automatically). Thunderclap also inflicts (1d6/2 levels ) points of bludgeoning damage, up to a maximum 10d6 (Fortitude DC 15 half).

Thunderclap requires no power point expenditure but does take a full-round action.



# Mega-Dexterity [Superhuman]

A nova with Mega-Dexterity is faster, more agile and stealthier than normal, and he often has a better reaction time. Mega-Dexterity is especially useful for novas whose powers are not so overt or "flashy" as most.

**Prerequisite:** Superhuman template.

**Effect:** Increase your Dexterity by a number of points equal to your Quantum.

## Mega-Dexterity Enhancements

• **Accuracy:** You can aim your shots for best effect. Some novas claim that this enhancement is the ultimate in hand-eye coordination, while others speak of "mystic forces" guiding them.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Dexterity.

*Effect:* Add (2 x Quantum) as a competence bonus on your next ranged attack. This enhancement costs 1 power point for each use; you may make only one Accuracy attempt per round.

• **Cat-Footed:** A nova with this enhancement has the potential to walk on dead leaves without making a sound or run through sand without leaving footprints.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Dexterity, Dexterity 13.

*Effect:* You gain a competence bonus on Balance, Move Silently and Stealth checks equal to your ranks in those skills (your ranks are effectively doubled). Further, you can avoid leaving any evidence of your passage with a successful DC 15 Reflex save (apply a −2 penalty if you move double your speed, or a −4 penalty if you run).

This enhancement costs 1 power point to activate; its effects last for one encounter (or your character level in hours, if the GM prefers).

• **Enhanced Movement:** Your reaction time may not be any quicker than, well, the normal superhumanly dexterous nova, but there's no doubt that you are fast — *really* fast.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Dexterity.

*Effect:* Multiply your base speed by the number of power points you spend when triggering this enhancement; the result is your new speed for the round.

*Special:* This enhancement stacks with *hypermovement* (see Chapter Four: Quantum Powers). Determine your *hypermovement* speed before applying the Enhanced Movement multiplier.

• **Fast Tasks:** Whether searching a file cabinet, stripping and rebuilding an engine or cleaning a house, you can zip through tasks at an amazing speed.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Dexterity, Dexterity 17.

*Effect:* You can perform a specific task in half the normal time at most without sacrificing care or workmanship. The specific duration depends on the task and any skill checks involved; painting an interior wall may take only a second, while taking apart and rebuilding a personal computer may require only a half-hour. The GM is the final arbiter of the time required.

You cannot split your attention among multiple tasks — e.g., constructing a wood fence and rebuilding an engine at the same time. Also, this enhancement does not provide an increase to your movement speed or rate of attack. This enhancement may reduce the time necessary for constructing inventions with the appropriate power point expenditures (see Chapter Five: Super-Science).

This enhancement costs 1 power point to activate; its effects last for one encounter (or your character level in hours, if the GM prefers).

• **Flexibility:** Dexterity isn't all speed and reaction time. With this enhancement, you make your flesh and bones flexible or rubbery enough to stretch short distances or squeeze through narrow openings.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Dexterity.

*Effect:* By spending 1 power point, you can contort and reshape your form to fit through any opening that your fist can pass through normally (the GM is the final arbiter on whether you can fit through a given opening), and/ or stretch your limbs up to 3 feet. You can stretch your form an additional 3 feet for each extra power point spent. You also gain your Quantum score as a competence bonus on any Escape Artist or Sleight of Hand checks.

You may select this enhancement multiple times; each additional purchase doubles the distance your limbs can stretch for each power point spent (e.g., 6 feet with Flexibility 2, 12 feet with Flexibility 3, 24 feet with Flexibility 4, and so on).

The enhancement stays active for one encounter (or your character level in hours, if the GM prefers).

• **Physical Prodigy:** You have a certain "genius" for all physical activities, knowing instinctively what to do and how to position yourself for the best results in any given athletic endeavor.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Dexterity, Dexterity 15.

*Effect:* Add your Quantum score as a competence bonus on any Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Jump, Ride, Swim, Tumble or Use Rope check. This enhancement costs 1 power point to activate; its effects last for one encounter (or your character level in hours, if the GM prefers).

• **Rapid Strike:** You can deliver a series of rapid-fire punches or kicks to a single target. The individual blows are no more powerful than an ordinary strike, but they hit so fast and furious that the cumulative effect is much more powerful.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Dexterity, Dexterity 15.

*Effect:* Add your Quantum score to your Strength modifier when applying damage on a successful melee attack. Rapid Strike lasts for a single attempt (whether successful or not) and can be used for any melee attack in which your Strength modifier is applied to damage.

Using this enhancement is an attack action that costs 1 power point for each attempt.
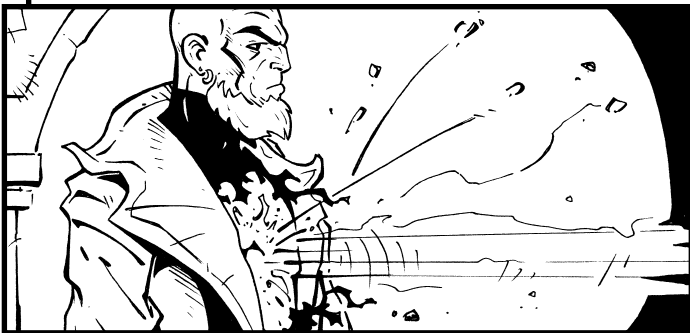
# Mega-Constitution [Superhuman]

A nova with Mega-Constitution is hardier, more durable and more resistant to injury than your average superhuman (though not always as resilient as novas with defensive powers such as *force field*).

**Prerequisite:** Superhuman template.

**Effect:** Increase your Constitution by a number of points equal to your Quantum. Mega-Constitution does not apply to your Constitution when determining your Quantum score.

## Mega-Constitution Enhancements

• **Adaptability:** You use ambient quantum energies to evolve and bolster your body's natural defenses, thus allowing you to survive in environments normally hostile to human life (e.g., the vacuum of outer space, underwater). You can also do without food, sleep or other necessities of life. It is not uncommon for a nova with this enhancement to manifest gills, toughened skin or other physiological modifications as needed.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Constitution.

*Effect:* By spending 1 power point every 24 hours, you can endure temperature extremes between −50° and 140° Fahrenheit without having to make a Fortitude save (as described in the *DMG*). You don't need to eat, sleep or breathe (you must relax or rest as normal to regain spent power points). You are immune to most poisons, gases, diseases and drugs, and gain your Quantum score as a bonus on all Fortitude saves against particularly virulent diseases or nova-derived poisons.

By spending 1 additional power point, you can endure without harm extremely hostile environments — the vacuum of space, the bottom of the Marianas Trench, the heart of a volcano, the core of a nuclear facility — for one encounter (or your character level in hours, if the GM prefers).

Moreover, your lifespan increases dramatically — your body ages as if each decade were only a year. This requires no power point expenditure.

Adaptability protects solely against natural environmental conditions, not against specific weaponry or attacks such as *quantum bolt*.

• **Durability:** You are tough as nails — channeling deadly kinetic energy away from your body, rolling with devastating blows, and otherwise reducing even the most powerful attack to the level of minor irritation.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Constitution, Constitution 17.

*Effect:* By spending 1 power point, you gain damage reduction N/non-kinetic, with N equal to 1/2 your Quantum score and "non-kinetic" encompassing attacks with the acid, cold, compulsion, darkness, death, electricity, fear, fire, healing, language-dependent, light, mind-affecting, negative energy and positive energy descriptor. The damage reduction lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Constitution modifier. You may take this enhancement up to four times; each additional purchase doubles the Quantum score multiplier (Quantum x 1 with Durability 2, Quantum x 1.5 with Durability 3, Quantum x 2 with Durability 4).

• **Hardbody:** Your body becomes tougher, allowing you to shrug off even devastating attacks.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Constitution, Constitution 17.

*Effect:* Spend 1 power point to apply your Quantum score as a natural armor bonus. This lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Constitution modifier.

• **Regeneration:** All novas heal more quickly than the human norm, but a superhuman with this enhancement heals even quicker than most novas.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Constitution, Constitution 15.

*Effect:* As a move action, each power point you spend heals 1d8+1 hit points of damage.

You can also reattach severed body parts (fingers, toes, hands, feet, arms, legs, tails) and grow back limbs or organs. It takes one minute and costs 2 power points to reattach a severed body part if the member is present and touching the spot from which it was severed.

Regenerating a limb or organ takes (12 weeks – Quantum) and costs 1 power point per day until the regeneration is complete. So, a character with Quantum 4 who spends 1 power point per day can regenerate a severed hand in eight weeks.

• **Resiliency:** Channeling quantum energies has toughened your frame so that you bounce back faster than most novas from damage that you suffer.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Constitution, Constitution 18.

*Effect:* Spend 1 power point to convert any lethal damage you sustain into nonlethal damage. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Constitution modifier.

| Target | Effect |
|---|---|
| Living creature | +4 insight bonus on attack rolls against the target. |
| Physical object | Object's hardness is halved (round down). |
| Structure[1] | +4 insight bonus on checks to repair, modify or damage the target. |
| System[2] | +4 insight bonus on checks to interact with or bypass the system or procedure. |

[1] Buildings, bridges, vehicles and the like.
[2] Security system or program, plan of attack, tactical situation, bureaucratic system.

# Mega-Intelligence [Superhuman]

Like Intelligence itself, this feat represents the overall *quality* of a character's thinking processes — how clearly and precisely she can put facts together and draw conclusions from them. However, Mega-Intelligence also measures the speed at which a nova can analyze facts and perform calculations. Characters with high Intelligence scores solve problems quickly, but a nova with Mega-Intelligence makes them look like mental tortoises.

**Prerequisite:** Superhuman template.

**Effect:** Increase your Intelligence by a number of points equal to your Quantum.

## Mega-Intelligence Enhancements

• **Analyze Weakness:** Every object, every system, every procedure has flaws and vulnerable points. Thanks to this enhancement, you can sense where a flaw lies and how to exploit it to your advantage regardless of whether it's physical (a place where a crack is likely to develop) or less tangible (a part of a security net where protection is lightest).

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Intelligence.

*Effect:* To analyze an object or system for weakness, you must spend 1 power point, and make a DC 15 Intelligence check as a full-round action. The DC may increase at the GM's discretion if the target of examination is a particularly well-made or relatively flawless object, or if the system or procedure is so efficient that it lacks any measurable vulnerabilities. You can use this enhancement on a particular object or system only once per encounter.

If the check fails, you perceive the object or procedure to be without weaknesses or working at peak efficiency. Success on the check gives you a differing benefit depending on the nature of the target, as indicated in the chart below.

• **Enhanced Memory:** You may not have the comprehensive recollection of someone with *super intelligence*, but you are a master of short-term recall. You can study a specific subject and recall every detail with perfect clarity for a short time before it fades. This is perfect for memorizing floor plans, guard patrol schedules and personal information about a target long enough for a mission. Extensive topics like "the complete works of Shakespeare" or "physics" are beyond the scope of this enhancement.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Intelligence.

*Effect:* Select a particular subject or collection of data to memorize — a complete mission briefing, a couple of textbooks, basics of a foreign language — then spend 1 power point and make a DC 15 Intelligence check. On a successful roll, you've memorized the entire subject matter. The GM may increase the DC secretly if you try to read up on exceptionally large amounts of information. Failure against the adjusted DC means there will be gaps in your memory when you try to recall information.

Once memorized, the information remains in your short-term memory for 1 day per character level. No Intelligence checks are required to retrieve details during this time. The information then starts to fade, requiring an Intelligence check to remember details on following days (DC 15 with a cumulative +2 DC for each day following). Failing one of these Intelligence checks means the information has vanished from your memory.

• **Linguistic Genius:** You know phrases like *Quelle heure et il?*, *¿Habla español, señor?*, *Bom dia!*, *Sprechen sie deutsch?* as well as any vernacular in your native tongue. You have an intuitive understanding of the structure and nature of language. Even if you've never heard a particular language before, you can determine what a person is saying just by listening to her speak for a few minutes (although you can't necessarily speak the language yourself).

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Intelligence.

*Effect:* You gain a number of bonus languages equal to your Quantum score, and may add (2 x Quantum) as a bonus on any Decipher Script or Speak Language checks involving understanding a language.

This enhancement is always active and costs no power points to use.

• **Mathematical Savant:** Calculator? Computer? Who needs them?! You can run numbers in your head so fast that reaching for an electronic calculator is often a waste of time. Multiplication and division, even involving four- to eight-digit numbers, takes maybe a second. More complex algebra, trigonometry or calculus problems may take up to a minute. Extremely complex mathematical operations, such as all the calculations necessary to launch a rocket to Jupiter, may take up to an hour.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Intelligence.

*Effect:* Add (2 x Quantum) as a competence bonus on any checks involving complex mathematical calculations.

This enhancement is always active and costs no power points to use.

• **Mental Prodigy:** You are adept at synthesizing information and applying it in the most effective and efficient manner possible. You

can recall facts and discern relationships between concepts to develop radical new ideas and interpretations of existing information.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Intelligence, Intelligence 15.

*Effect:* Add (2 x Quantum) as a competence bonus on any Knowledge checks.

This enhancement is always active and costs no power points to use.

**• Speed Reading:** You can process written and textual information (in a book, on a computer screen, etc.) four times faster than the average highly educated person without any loss of comprehension.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Intelligence.

*Effect:* You can read four times faster than an educated person at a minimum. To read even faster, make a DC 10 Intelligence check; on a successful roll, increase your Speed Reading multiplier by one for every full 5 points by which you exceed the DC (e.g., five times faster with a result of 15–19, six times faster with a result of 20–24, etc.).

This enhancement is always active and costs no power points to use.

**• Taint Resistance:** You make efficient use of your brain cells. You are more stable mentally than other novas and suffer less from mental aberrations brought on by expansion of the M–R node.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Intelligence.

*Effect:* Gain a +4 bonus on your save to confirm whether a negative level goes away or becomes an aberrant level (see Chapter Three: Quantum, "Taint Poisoning and Negative Levels").

This enhancement is always active and costs no power points to use.



# Mega-Wisdom [Superhuman]

Scientists theorize that normal humans use only a fraction of their ability to observe things. Novas with Mega-Wisdom take it *all* in — every detail, every nuance, every little fact. They may not remember it for very long (that's a function of Intelligence), but nothing gets by them initially. Such novas make excellent sentinels, guards, detectives and trackers.

**Prerequisite:** Superhuman template.

**Effect:** Increase your Wisdom by a number of points equal to your Quantum.

## Mega-Wisdom Enhancements

**• Bloodhound:** You can use your sense of smell to identify familiar odors just as you'd use vision to identify familiar sights.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Wisdom.

*Effect:* You can detect other creatures within 30 feet by sense of smell. This increases to 60 feet if the creature is upwind and drops to 15 feet if the creature is downwind. You can detect strong scents, such as smoke or rotting garbage, at twice these ranges. You can detect overpowering scents, such as skunk musk, at triple normal range. This doesn't reveal the source's exact location, just that the source is within range. With a move action, you can sniff to determine the di-

rection; only if the source is within 5 feet can you pinpoint it.

If an opponent makes a successful attack roll targeting your face with a strong odor source (e.g., pepper or mace), this enhancement is "blinded" for 1d6 minutes until the odor clears from your nose.

You also gain the Track feat (see *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 5) and can follow tracks by smell on a successful Survival check. This follows the rules for the Track feat, with the following exceptions: The DC for a fresh trail is usually DC 10 (no matter what kind of surface holds the scent). This DC increases or decreases depending on how strong the target's odor is, the number of creatures, and the age of the trail. The DC increases by +2 for each hour that the trail is cold. Tracking by scent ignores the effects of surface conditions and poor visibility.

This enhancement is always active and costs no power points to use.

**• Electromagnetic Vision:** By processing and amplifying waves in the middle end of the electromagnetic spectrum (infrared, visible light, ultraviolet), you gain a number of sensory abilities.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Wisdom.

*Effect:* While this enhancement is active, you gain a bonus on Spot checks equal to your rank in the skill (your ranks are effectively doubled) and you can see beyond the human visual norm — ultraviolet or infrared, and telescopic or microscopic. Activating ultraviolet or infrared vision is a free action; switching between them is also a free action but requires a successful DC 15 Concentration check. The same holds for viewing at telescopic or microscopic levels.

*• Ultraviolet Vision:* You can see without penalty whenever ultraviolet illumination (such as from the sun, moon or stars) is present. Much like a cat, you can see as well in darkness as you do in daylight, provided there is at least some light (faint starlight is enough). You cannot see in the total absence of light (such as in an unlit interior room).

*• Infrared Vision:* You can see in the infrared ("IR") spectrum, both by viewing anything illuminated by IR light and by picking up the heat that living things and hot objects radiate. Hot things appear "bright" while cool things are "dark."

*• Visible Light Attunement:* You can magnify objects in your line of sight as though you were looking through a high-powered telescopic scope or an electron microscope. You can magnify a distant (or tiny) object by a power of (10 x Quantum).

Spend 1 power point to activate this enhancement for a number of rounds equal to your Quantum score.

**• Hyperenhanced Hearing:** You can hear and transmit sounds that are too high-pitched or low-pitched to be audible to the normal human ear (e.g., dog whistles, radio waves, security devices that utilize ultrasonic sound, etc.).

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Wisdom.

*Effect:* While this enhancement is active, you gain a bonus on Listen checks equal to your rank in the skill (your ranks are effectively doubled). You also gain the following enhanced hearing modes.

*• Infra/Ultrasonic Hearing:* You can hear sounds clearly that lie outside the normal human hearing range. The GM may require a Listen check if the sound is extremely soft or distant, with the DC the same as with any normal whisper or distant sound.

*• Sonar:* You can generate continuous sonar waves like a bat (the specific sound is up to you — and may even be in the infra- or ultrasonic range). You use this echolocation to maneuver as well as if you had sight — or better, since you can register your surroundings in a 360-degree radius. Invisibility, darkness and most kinds of concealment are irrelevant, though you must have line of effect to discern to a creature or object. You don't need to make Listen checks to notice creatures within (10 ft. x Quantum score).

Spend 1 power point to activate this enhancement for a number of rounds equal to your Quantum score.

• **Lie Detector:** No polygraph is needed when you're around. As long as you concentrate on what a subject is saying, you can detect if she is lying.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Wisdom, Wisdom 17.

*Effect:* While this enhancement is active, you can determine automatically whether a target is speaking a conscious falsehood. This is a free action and requires no skill check, but there are limitations: You must be able to understand the gist of what the target is saying; and you do not gain the truth *per se*, only that she is being false. Furthermore, you cannot sense that a target is lying if she *believes* that what she is saying is the truth, regardless of whether it is proven accurate later.

Spending 1 power point activates this enhancement for a number of minutes equal to your Quantum score.

• **Ultraperipheral Perception:** You just about fit the old chestnut of someone who has "eyes in the back of his head." You can sense all around yourself almost as readily as you can look straight ahead.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Wisdom, Wisdom 16.

*Effect:* Your normal visual clarity extends in a 360-degree circle. You cannot be surprised by people sneaking up on you from behind, and you cannot be flanked.

Spending 1 power point activates this enhancement for a number of minutes equal to your Quantum score.
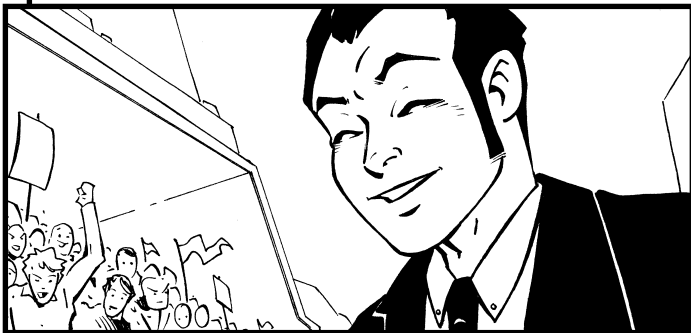


# Mega-Charisma [Superhuman]

A nova with Mega-Charisma exudes such self-confidence, poise and charm that she can win over just about anybody. She is at home in any social situation — even if she doesn't feel like being the center of attention, you'd never know it from her amicable and entertaining demeanor.

**Prerequisite:** Superhuman template.

**Effect:** Increase your Charisma by a number of points equal to your Quantum.

## Mega-Charisma Enhancements

You gain one enhancement for free when first purchasing Mega-Charisma.

• **Awe-Inspiring:** For whatever reason, your appearance gives rise to awe, admiration and even worship. Normal humans often have trouble dealing with you in a straightforward manner. The weak-willed are inclined to edge away or be worshipful, and even the strong-willed feel intimidated and inadequate.

You can't outright control others through your staggering appearance. Still, it's not uncommon for an Awe-Inspiring nova to be surrounded by an entourage of fawning, adoring lackeys.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Charisma, Charisma 16.

*Effect:* You are phenomenally captivating to everyone you meet. This has no direct rules influence, but there GM should bear it in mind during interactions with NPCs — servers are deferential, groupies throw themselves at you, etc.

More significantly, by spending 1 power point, you can focus your charm to influence others. Add (2 x Quantum) as a bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate and Perform checks against targets in your direct presence and who are looking at you. This lasts for one encounter (or your character level in hours, if the GM prefers).

• **Commanding Presence:** You are a born leader. Your influence is so enduring that others strive to fulfill your wishes and live up to your example even when you're not around.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Charisma.

*Effect:* You gain your Quantum score as a bonus on any Charisma-related check that involves commanding people or giving orders. This does not apply to persuading someone through reason or logic, appealing on a personal level, or the like; it works only when you give actual commands.

You need not have formal authorization to dispense orders — such as being the target's boss, commanding officer or parent — for this enhancement to work. The GM may reduce the bonus if you are significantly out of place or otherwise beneath the target's station, however — such as an ordinary citizen barking an order at a high-ranking government official.

This enhancement is always active and costs no power points to use.

• **Dreadful Mien:** You can use your charm as a weapon — your anger or disappointment can become so potent as to feel like a crushing blow.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Charisma, Charisma 15.

*Effect:* As a constant effect that requires no power point expenditure, add (2 x Quantum) as a bonus on Intimidate checks.

By spending 1 power point, you can focus your displeasure even more intensely for a number of minutes equal to your Quantum score. Make an Intimidate check against a single target as an attack action. If you are successful, the target will not attack you for a number of rounds equal to your Charisma modifier. A target who you attacked previously in the current encounter gets a +2 morale bonus on his check to resist.

If you attack the target's friends or compatriots, a new Intimidate check is required to keep the target at bay. If you take a violent or threatening action toward the target himself, your enhancement's influence is negated. Once Dreadful Mien is canceled against a specific target, it cannot be used against him for the remainder of the encounter.

You must be within 30 feet and have line of sight to the target to use this enhancement.

• **Persuader:** You are an expert at bringing people around to your point of view. You have an innate talent for knowing what people are thinking and can manipulate their opinions until they are thinking what you want them to think.

*Prerequisites:* Superhuman template, Mega-Charisma, Charisma 15.

*Effect:* Add (2 x Quantum) as a bonus on any Charisma-related checks made to persuade or convince a single individual (primarily Bluff or Diplomacy). Such checks are resolved as normal, although the GM may give the target a bonus to resist assertions that would violate her morals or beliefs, or result in her physical harm.

Spend 1 power point to activate this enhancement for a number of rounds equal to your Quantum score.

# CHAPTER THREE: QUANTUM

Quantum energies flow throughout the universe and all things within it. These energies bind matter together and throw it apart, harmonize energy and disrupt it, and affect all living things every day of their existence. As mystic, even arcane, as this sounds, quantum energies derive from scientific principles — albeit scientific principles of which humans have little understanding at present.

A character's Quantum score measures his ability to control and manipulate quantum energies — and thus, in general, his "power." See Chapter One, "Superhuman Template" for specifics.

## Quantum Benefits

The specific powers a nova manifests depend on myriad different factors. Still, all superhumans share certain qualities by virtue of the quantum forces suffusing their bodies, as described below. (A character with the Mega-Constitution Adaptability enhancement gains even greater benefit of a number of these inherent abilities.)

• **Appearance:** The higher a nova's Quantum score the less human he looks. The quantum energy itself changes him in some obvious fashion — whether making him grotesque or impossibly perfect and beautiful. Whatever the case, observers can tell he isn't a baseline. Specific changes to a character's appearance depend upon his powers, the player's desires and the GM's whim.

To perceive a nova's subtle — or not-so-subtle — physiological distinctions, the GM may call for a Spot and/or Sense Motive check against a DC of 20 (−1 to the DC per 3 Quantum the target has).

A nova's reserve of quantum energy influences his appearance. A nova with at least two-thirds of his total power points seems charged — vibrant, excited, vigorous. He may even crackle with energy, glow or otherwise display visible signs of his power. The GM may apply an additional −2 to −4 to the DC of any Spot and/or Sense Motive checks. Conversely, a nova with less than one-third her total power points seems fatigued or drained. She may look healthy, but something about her suggests that she's running out of steam.

• **Extended Lifespan:** A nova's metabolism increases his lifespan; those with a low Quantum score (1−3) can live up to 150 years, while novas with a medium Quantum score (4−6) might live up to 200 years or more. The most powerful novas — those with a Quantum scores of 7−10 — have lifespans in the centuries... and some wonder if they might be immortal.

• **Inherent Immunity:** A nova is immune to all effects of his own powers. Thus, a character can see without hindrance within a darkness field he generated, and is unharmed by an explosive attack he launches. A nova's inherent immunity grants no defense to similar or even identical effects generated by other novas.

• **Raw Power:** Most powers' effects are based, at least in part, on a character's Quantum score. See descriptions in Chapter Four for specifics.

• **Resistance to Disease, Drugs and Poisons:** A nova is immune to all but the most virulent diseases and infections, and can shrug off most drugs and poisons with no ill effects. This does not include anything derived from another nova — whether from a quantum power, an aberration or physical extraction. (See Chapter Six: Drama for more details.)

• **Superhuman Metabolism:** A nova draws some degree of sustenance from the quantum energies he channels. A character can go a number of days equal to his Quantum score without food, water or sleep before suffering any ill effects.

## Power Points

A superhuman draws upon quantum energy to fuel his powers. This is represented by power points (pp), which are equal to:

$$10 + (character\ level + [Quantum\ score \times 3])$$

Thus, a 3rd-level character with Quantum 3 has 22 power points (10 + [3 + (3 x 3)]), while a 7th-level character with Quantum 5 has 32 power points (10 + [7 + (5 x 3)]). Your power points are recalculated when your Quantum score increases through level progression or similar means.

**Spending Power Points:** Many quantum powers cost a certain number of points to manifest (see Chapter Four). You can spend a maximum of 6 power points each round. The Node background feat can increase this spending limit further (see Chapter Two). Spending all your power points depletes your energy reserves until you can rest and recover.

**Spending Hit Points for Power Points:** If you lack sufficient power points for a certain action, you can expend hit points instead — burning your own life force to trigger an effect. You suffer 2 hit points of damage for each power point you generate in this fashion, up to your maximum power points. This is the only circumstance in which you can raise your available power points above the normal maximum.

Any power points generated in this fashion that are unused vanish at the end of the round (this does not restore your hit points). You may still spend no more than 6 power points in a round (plus any additional amount from Node).

## Recovering Power Points

There are four ways to recover power points: relaxing and resting; the Node background feat; quantum powers; and accelerated recovery. You cannot recover total power points above the normal maximum.

• **Relaxing and Resting:** A nova is a natural collector and receptacle of quantum energy. While relaxing (e.g., going for a walk, doing paperwork, watching television, talking with friends), you recover 2 power points per hour. While resting (e.g., sleeping, meditating, sitting around doing absolutely nothing), you recover 4 power points per hour.

• **Node Background Feat:** The Node feat increases the amount you recover through relaxing and resting (see Chapter Two).

• **Quantum Powers:** Powers like *quantum regeneration* may increase your rate of recovery (see Chapter Four).

• **Accelerated Recovery:** You push your M−R node to draw in more quantum energy than your body normally processes safely. This requires a Will save with a DC equal to 13 + the additional points to be recovered (up to your Quantum score). If successful, you recover this extra amount in addition to the base amount you get back for the hour (relaxing or resting as appropriate). A taint check is required with each accelerated recovery attempt (see Taint, below).

**Example:** *Blue Steel (Quantum 5) wants to recharge before the Proteus goons catch up to him. He spends an hour wandering around a mall and focusing to draw in more power. He'll get 2 points already for an hour of relaxing; he also wants to recover the maximum 5 points his Quantum score allows. This is a DC 18 Will save; his result is 24. One hour later, Blue Steel recovers a total of 7 power points. He must also make a taint check.*

# Taint

Quantum energies are powerful and unpredictable. The growth of an entire new structure in the brain — the Mazarin–Rashoud node — coupled with quantum energies seething through the human body works changes on even the most potent superhuman. A nova who is exposed to too much quantum energy places an enormous strain on his system; this translates into quantum poisoning called "taint" that often results in physical and mental mutations. If allowed to grow unchecked, it can turn a nova into a twisted, homicidal monster — an *aberrant*.

## Taint Check

A taint check is required for each accelerated recovery or power stunt attempt, regardless of whether the attempt was successful. Make a Fortitude save against (DC 15 + any aberrant levels your character has + each power point to be recovered or spent, as appropriate). On a failed save, your character suffers taint poisoning (see below).

**Example:** *As noted above, Blue Steel accelerated his power point recovery by 5 and must make a taint check. This calls for a DC 20 Fortitude save (the character has no aberrant levels... yet), but the player only gets a result of 14 — Blue Steel suffers taint poisoning!*

## Taint Poisoning and Negative Levels

Taint poisoning is the enormous physical and mental strain that a superhuman suffers while his M–R node struggles to process a flood of quantum energies. The nova gains one negative level after each failed taint check, which applies the penalties noted in the corresponding chart.

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**Negative Level Penalties From Taint Poisoning**
−1 on all skill checks and ability checks.
−1 on attack rolls and saving throws.
−5 hit points.
−1 effective level (whenever the character's level is used in a die roll or calculation, reduce it by −1 for each negative level).

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Negative levels remain for 24 hours. After 24 hours, the afflicted superhuman must attempt a Fortitude save against the same DC used for the initial taint check. A separate saving throw is required for each negative level gained.

If the save succeeds, the nova's M–R node purges the quantum overload safely. The negative level goes away, leaving no lasting harm.

If the save fails, quantum energy warps the nova. The negative level goes away, but the nova's highest character level becomes an aberrant level instead (see below). When a character has more aberrant levels than character levels (whether class and/or superhuman levels), he is no longer considered a nova. He has become an aberrant, one of the scourges of humanity.

## Changing Character Levels to Aberrant Levels

When changing an existing character level to an aberrant level, only the character's base attack bonus, Armor Class bonus and saving throw bonuses are refigured. Do not recalculate his current hit points

or skill levels. Likewise, the character does not gain a superhuman feat or power. His Quantum score may increase, depending on the number of aberrant levels he has already (see "Quantum," below).

Once relevant changes are made, apply the effects of the character's new aberration.

# Aberrant Level (Abr)

A superhuman may gain an aberrant level in two ways: through taint poisoning or by reckless channeling of quantum energy.

• **Taint Poisoning:** Failing the Fortitude save to purge a negative level (see Taint Poisoning and Negative Levels, above) changes your highest character level to an aberrant level.

• **Quantum Channeling:** At any time during standard level progression, you can take an aberrant level in place of a class or superhuman level (you must have at least one class level).

## Aberrant Level Benefits

There is no limit to the number of aberrant levels a character can have. Each aberrant level stacks with the character's class levels for the purposes of character level advancement and bestows the following abilities.

**Hit Die:** d10.
**Class Skills:** Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Drive (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Move Silently (Dex), Pilot (Dex), Profession (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str).
**Skill Points at Each Level:** 2 + Int bonus.
**Base Attack Bonus:** The character's base attack bonus increases by +1 for each aberrant level attained.
**Armor Class Bonus:** The character's AC bonus increases by +1 for every two aberrant levels gained.
**Save Bonus:** The character's base Fortitude and Reflex saves increase by +1 for every two aberrant levels gained. His base Will save increases by +1 for every four aberrant levels gained.
**Quantum:** A character adds +1 to his Quantum score for every 2 aberrant levels he attains after the superhuman template is acquired.
**Power Slot or Superhuman Feat:** Upon taking the first aberrant level and again with every other aberrant level gained after the first, the character gains one power slot that he may spend on a quantum power or upon a superhuman feat (or feat enhancement). He must meet all prerequisites for the chosen feat or power (including having access to higher-level powers).
**Aberration:** At each level, the character gains a permanent aberration. The degree of aberration depends on how many aberrant levels the character has already, as noted on the accompanying chart. See Aberrations, below, for a list of aberration options.

| Aberrant Levels | Degree of Aberration |
|---|---|
| 1–4 | 1 minor |
| 5–8 | 1 major |
| 9+ | 1 severe |

# Aberrations

Each aberrant level that a character gains signifies a warping of his mind or body as a result of quantum energy overload. These changes range from merely disturbing to outright horrific. A list of suggested aberrations follows in minor, major and severe categories. Roll randomly from Table 3–1 or select a given aberration as appropriate to your character's current aberrant levels.

You are free to create additional aberration options. On average, a minor aberration applies no more than a −2 penalty to a common circumstance; a major aberration applies no more than a

−4 penalty to a common circumstance or a −6 penalty to a specific task; a severe aberration applies no more than a −6 penalty to a common circumstance or a −8 penalty to a specific task. Also use the existing selections as guidelines. An aberration need not be constant or obvious to have an appropriately negative impact upon the character. Also, an aberration that makes everyday life difficult for a nova is often as effective as (or more effective than) one that inhibits his combat abilities.

## Table 3–1: Aberrations

*Minor Aberrations*

| d20 | Aberration |
| --- | --- |
| 1–4 | Aberrant Eyes |
| 5–6 | Anima Banner |
| 7–9 | Colored Skin |
| 10–11 | Feeding Requirement |
| 12–14 | Glow |
| 15–18 | Hyperaccentuated Musculature |
| 19–20 | Unearthly Beauty |

*Major Aberrations*

| d20 | Aberration |
| --- | --- |
| 1–3 | Allergic Reaction |
| 4–7 | Energy Emission |
| 8–10 | Hormonal Imbalance |
| 11–14 | Mental Disorder |
| 15–17 | Twisted Limbs |
| 18–20 | Vulnerability |

*Severe Aberrations*

| d20 | Aberration |
| --- | --- |
| 1–2 | Contagious |
| 3–4 | Hardened Skin |
| 5–6 | Megalomania |
| 7–8 | Oozing Skin |
| 9–10 | Permanent Power |
| 11–12 | Radioactive |
| 13–14 | Second Self |
| 15–16 | Sheer Hideousness |
| 17–18 | Sloughed Flesh |
| 19–20 | Vestigial Limbs |
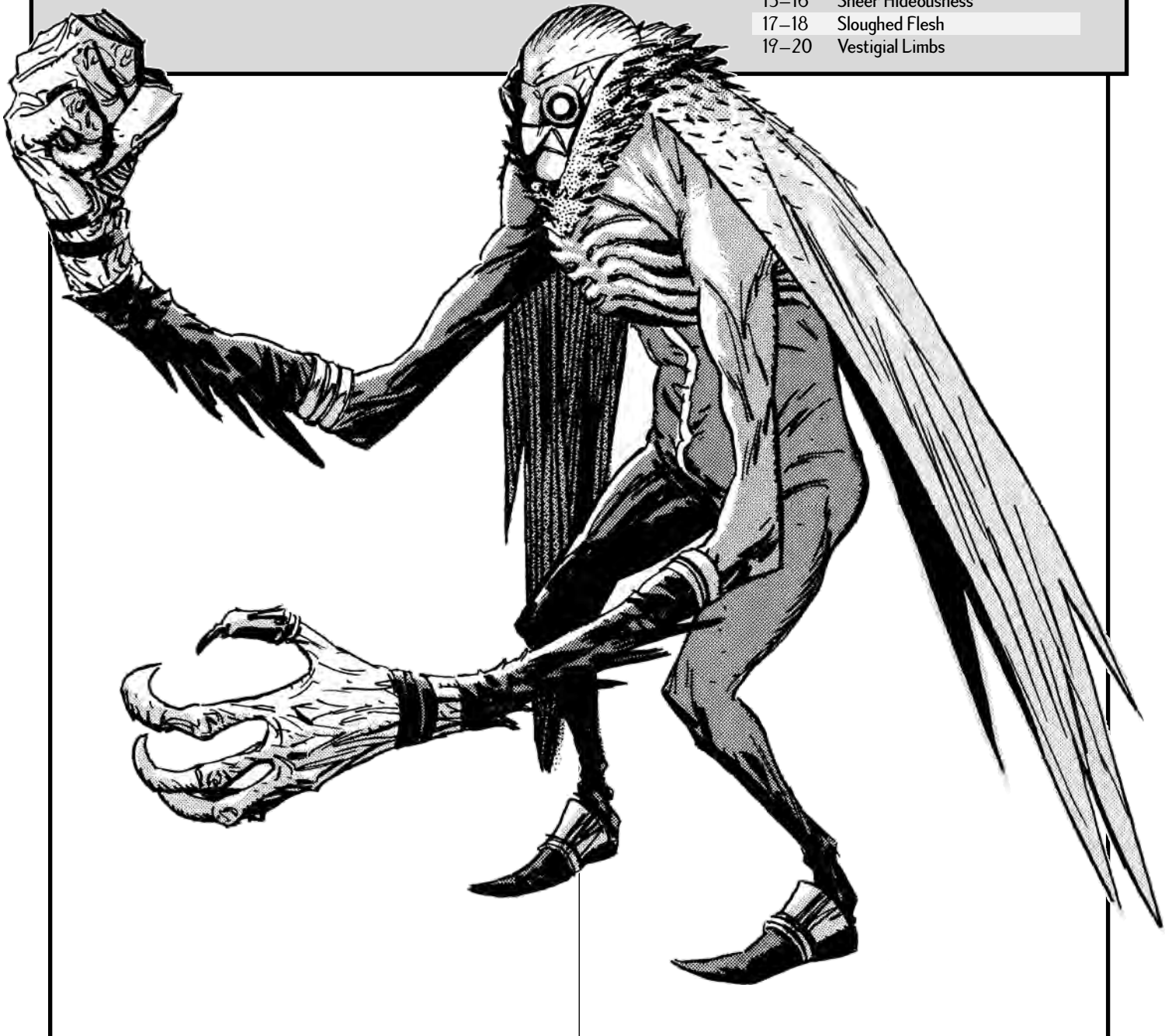
## Aberration Saves

Any Will saves that the character must make when suffering the effects of a given aberration are against DC 13 + the character's own aberrant levels.

## Minor Aberrations

• **Aberrant Eyes:** Something's strange about the nova's eyes. With few aberrant levels, they may be a very weird color — glowing red, pure white, jet black — or have an odd pattern — covered with blood-red spiderwebs, overlaid with a matrix pattern, or reflective or translucent (windows to the soul, indeed). At medium levels they may look like cat's eyes or appear otherwise obviously inhuman. At higher levels they may actually change physical form. The character suffers a −2 penalty on all Charisma-based checks (except Intimidate).

• **Anima Banner:** The nova's anima manifests visibly when he uses his powers, or even when he doesn't. This anima is a holographic, audial or telepathic manifestation of some object or symbol important to the character's subconscious; for example, a character who identified with a certain card in the Tarot might manifest that symbol when he activates his quantum abilities. An anima banner has no tangible effect; it is merely a display of quantum energies.

• **Colored Skin:** The nova's skin turns an unusual — though not necessarily unattractive, color — golden, bright cobalt blue, green, scarlet, silver or whatever else comes to mind. A particularly wicked GM may have the nova become splotched with different colors, or striped like a zebra or tiger. Whether the nova's hair also changes color is up to the player or GM. The character suffers a −2 penalty on all Stealth checks.

• **Feeding Requirement:** The nova develops a dependence on or addiction to some food, substance or form of energy. He must ingest this substance to fuel his powers. With few aberrant levels, this dependence should be an ordinary food or substance, such as silver. The demands become more extreme as the character gains more aberrant levels. Either he requires ever more enormous amounts of the substance, or his desire mutates. A nova with seven or more aberrant levels might need to consume blood, plutonium or human flesh. The character suffers a −2 penalty on any attack rolls, saves, skill checks and ability checks if he has not consumed the requisite substance within (24 hours − her total aberrant levels).

• **Glow:** The nova is so filled with quantum energies that he can't hold them in. He emits excess energy intermittently — whether in a soft glow or as crackling sparks or some similar phenomenon. The color and nature of this effect may or may not be attractive, and depends on the type of powers the nova has (as well as the GM's imagination). The character suffers a −6 penalty on Stealth checks and a −2 penalty to his Armor Class in dark environments.

• **Hyperaccentuated Musculature:** The nova's muscles bulge to an inhuman degree, making him appear like a caricature of a bodybuilder. Observers may wonder how he can keep his balance with such huge arms and chest and relatively tiny legs. The character's musculature remains within the limits of human norms to start, but swells to ever more freakish degrees as he attains high aberrant levels. The character gains no enhanced Strength from this aberration, and suffers a −2 penalty on any checks that involve moving through or fitting in cramped spaces.

• **Unearthly Beauty:** The nova is the paragon of attractiveness. His hair is always perfect, his muscles show the perfect amount of definition, his teeth are straight and white, his eyes are fascinating — in short, he's *too* perfect, so much so that it's eerie and disturbing. Even other "beautiful people" seem uneasy around him, sometimes expressing their unease through vicious jealousy, envy, barbed humor or the like. The character suffers a −2 penalty on any checks made to influence NPC attitudes (*Player's Handbook*, Chapter 4, "Influencing NPC Attitudes" sidebar).

## Major Aberrations

• **Allergic Reaction:** Choose a certain common substance or phenomenon that does not cause harm to baselines at casual exposure (e.g., sunlight, iron, electrical fields, temperatures below freezing, etc.). The character suffers a −4 penalty on any attack rolls, saves, skill checks and ability checks each round he is in its presence (or absence, depending). The GM may apply additional penalties if the character is subject to a heightened concentration of the substance or phenomenon.

• **Energy Emission:** The nova gives off small "sparks" of energy which may pose a danger to people and objects around him. The nature of the emissions depends upon his powers — a nova with flame powers might emit sparks of fire from his pores, or drip lavalike blood down his body. Each round that the nova is in contact with a person or object, the subject must make a DC 13 Fortitude save or suffer 1d3 points of nonlethal damage from the energy emission.

• **Hormonal Imbalance:** The nova has difficulty resisting base urges. This can be fits of destructive rage, sexual desire, gluttony, or other impulse control problems. In non-stressful situations, the character suffers a −4 penalty on any checks relating to the imbalance — refraining from angry outbursts, making lewd remarks, snacking constantly, etc. In a stressful situation (rolling a 1 on an aforementioned check, or at the GM's discretion), the character must succeed at a Will save to stay in control. If he fails, he falls under sway of his imbalance for a number of minutes equal to his total aberrant levels — whether attacking those around him (or simply him surroundings), assaulting a target of his preferred sexual orientation, gorging on any edibles to hand, etc.

While in this state, the character may make a new Will save each round to recover his composure, though with a cumulative +2 DC. Efforts from others may offer an aid another bonus to the save (trying to calm him using Diplomacy, mental powers and the like).

• **Mental Disorder:** The nova develops a mental disorder (see below); the more tainted he becomes, the more the disorder affects his behavior (or he may develop additional, even stranger, psychoses). This aberration is the most common in novas with mental powers or well-developed M–R nodes.

*Amnesia:* The nova forgets a significant segment of his past, whether all memories or a few hours of time. The GM determines when these bouts of amnesia occur and how much time is lost — the character may wake up with blood on his hands and have no idea what he might have done.

*Delusions:* The nova sees and hears things that don't exist. This may only be distracting, or it may cause a complete detachment from reality. The character may attempt a Will save to recognize the delusion for what it is, although he must first suspect that he's even facing a delusion. On a successful save, the character resists indulging in the delusion, but the mental effort applies a −4 penalty on any attack rolls, saves, skill checks and ability checks until the end of the encounter.

*Homicidal Tendencies:* The nova has a literal addiction to violence. The character suffers a −4 penalty on any attack rolls, saves, skill checks and ability checks until he causes at least serious injury (50% of a target's hit points) to someone. The homicidal urge is then sated for (72 hours − his total aberrant levels).

*Multiple Personality Disorder:* The nova's psyche has split into different personas, each with its own identity and behavior. The char-

   
acter must succeed at a Will save under times of great stress (specific circumstances are at the GM's discretion) or one of his alternate personalities emerges for the rest of the encounter.

*Obsessive/Compulsive Disorder:* The nova cannot resist a certain urge (e.g., obsessive cleanliness or organization, kleptomania, compulsive lying, etc). The character may resist this urge for one encounter with a successful Will save.

*Polar/Bipolar Disorder:* Also known as depression, polar disorder causes lethargy, depression and an inability to function in normal society for months at a time. Manic-depressives suffer the same symptoms, but their bouts are interspersed with energetic bursts. The character may resist this behavior for one encounter with a successful Will save.

*Schizophrenia:* This affliction causes a complete detachment from reality. Acute cases of paranoid schizophrenia are accompanied by severe delusions of persecution and elaborate paranoid theories. The character may resist this behavior for one encounter with a successful Will save.

• **Twisted Limbs:** The nova's arms and/or legs are bent, twisted and warped. They may be unnaturally long, oddly slender (yet lacking nothing in strength), have joints which bend at disturbing angles or even an extra joint or two. This aberration applies a −4 penalty on Dexterity- and Charisma-based checks.

• **Vulnerability:** The nova's body becomes so changed that he takes an additional 1d6 points of damage per aberrant level from a particular type of attack (e.g., fire, electricity, sonic).

## Severe Aberrations

• **Contagious:** The nova's altered body exudes a virus that is harmful to baselines. This does not affect the character or other novas, but makes her a walking Typhoid Mary among baselines. For game purposes, treat the effects of this aberration as the *contagion* spell in the *Player's Handbook,* except that it is always active.

• **Hardened Skin:** The nova's skin has hardened into some other material — chitin, metal, horn, wood, scales, shell, sharklike "sandpaper skin" or something similar. Though not normal to the touch or the eye, this offers no additional Armor Class bonus or other protection — in fact, it may interfere with the nova's sense of touch or ability to manipulate fine objects. The character suffers a −6 penalty on all Charisma-based checks (except Intimidate) and may also suffer a −2 penalty on checks requiring touch or fine manipulation, at the GM's discretion.

• **Megalomania:** The nova develops a "god complex," believing himself to be the mightiest, most powerful being in the world — even compared to other novas. He requires absolute obedience (perhaps even worship) from his lessers. The character must make a Will save to accept input, counsel or advice from others; he also applies his aberrant levels as a bonus on character level checks to resist Intimidate attempts.

This aberration often leads to the character taking on additional aberrant levels in a quest to attain ultimate power.

• **Oozing Skin:** The nova's skin is covered with slime, mucus or a similar loathsome substance that oozes out of his pores or otherwise somehow remains on him all the time. Regardless, it's disgusting to look at and worse to touch. The character suffers a −6 penalty on all Charisma-based checks (except Intimidate).

At the GM's discretion, the secretion may also act as an acid or toxin. Treat as a contact poison (DC 13 Fortitude save, +1 per two aberrant levels; inflicts 1d6 points of initial and secondary damage, +1d6 per two aberrant levels).

• **Permanent Power:** One of the nova's powers operates constantly (subject to GM approval) — examples include *density control, immolate, bodymorph,* etc. On the plus side, this requires no power point expenditure. However, this can make it very difficult for the nova to interact with his environment safely. In addition to the power's parameters, the character suffers a −4 penalty on all Charisma-based checks (except Intimidate) and may suffer additional limitations at the GM's discretion.

• **Radioactive:** The nova emits a low-intensity or "soft" radiation. This inflicts 1d4 points of nonlethal damage per round to anything living (except novas) within 5 feet of the character (DC 15 Fortitude half). This radiation also scrambles personal electronic devices and memory storage units, and interferes with radio, cell phone and video reception within 10 feet/Quantum.

• **Second Self:** Portions of one or more other bodies sprout from the nova. These are most often limited to faces — on the side of his head, in his chest, in his stomach, etc. — although shoulders or limbs may emerge. These body parts are useless to the character (offering no sensory input, ability to grasp, etc.) and apply a −6 penalty on all Charisma-based checks (except Intimidate).

• **Sheer Hideousness:** The nova is too horrifying for description — warped, twisted, deformed or otherwise resembling something from a nightmare. Those exposed to the character's visage must make a Will save against DC 10 + the character's aberrant levels or be frightened (see the *Player's Handbook* Glossary).

• **Sloughed Flesh:** The nova's skin and flesh no longer sit right on his bones, as if he were slightly melted or askew. Skin and flesh is bunched up where it should be thin, and paper-thin where it should rest thick on the skeleton. The character suffers a −6 penalty on all Charisma-based checks (except Intimidate).

• **Vestigial Limbs:** The nova has extra, but functionally useless, limbs — tiny withered arms, flightless wings, a lifeless tail, a set of tentacles below his arms or sprouting from his chest, etc. Limbs with the ability to grasp may do so at Strength 2, but are otherwise no more than hideous decorations. The character suffers a −6 penalty on all Charisma-based checks (except Intimidate).

# CHAPTER FOUR: QUANTUM POWERS

Quantum powers are categorized in 1st, 2nd and 3rd levels. Power slots are used to get powers for your nova — you spend a number of slots equal to the desired power's level (see Table 4–1: Purchasing Quantum Powers).

You get one power slot when you first take the superhuman template. You then gain one additional power slot every other character level thereafter. You do not need to spend a new power slot immediately. Instead, you may save it — effectively "banking" it to get a 2nd- or 3rd-level power later when you receive additional power slots during further level progression.

You must have one superhuman level to purchase 2nd-level powers, and two superhuman levels to purchase 3rd-level powers (see "Superhuman Levels" in Chapter One).

### Table 4–1: Purchasing Quantum Powers

| Quantum Power | Slots Required |
| --- | --- |
| 0-level "extra"[1] | 1 feat slot |
| 1st-level | 1 power slot |
| 2nd-level | 2 power slots |
| 3rd-level | 3 power slots |
| Technique[2] | 1 power slot |

[1] Available for 1st- and 2nd-level powers only.
[2] Available for 3rd-level powers only.

## Using Quantum Powers

You can manifest any power that you know as long as you succeed at any relevant check and/or spend the required power points (pp). Unless stated otherwise, activating a power is a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity. As a move action, you can maintain a power with a duration other than "instantaneous" by spending the required power points before its current duration expires. The new duration starts that round.

Unless noted otherwise, effects from more than one source that apply to the same condition (including damage reduction, specific bonus types, specific penalty types, and so on) do not stack. Instead, you get the benefit of whichever effect is greatest in that situation. Note that a bonus that isn't named (merely a "+2 bonus") stacks with any bonus.

## Power Boost

A nova can push his powers to the utmost — "maxing out" to enhance effects to far beyond normal levels. This is also known as a "special maneuver," "special," "boost" or "stunt."

To max a power, select which boost categories you which to apply to the power, as listed on the corresponding chart. You then spend the requisite power points for the boosts selected. The total power points spent — including those needed for the power itself — cannot exceed your Quantum score or the maximum of six that you can spend in one round.

You may allocate multiple points to different categories, but you must make a save for each stunt category on which you spend power points. (The save type depends on the power boost category you select.)

The power manifests as desired with each successful save. If you fail any required power boost save, the power functions as normal but that stunt does not occur; the extra power points are still lost, however.

Trying a boost is a full-round action, and you can make only one attempt per encounter. A maxed power lasts for 1 round or use, unless you spend power points to increase its duration. Channeling such a torrent of energy at one time has its price. A taint check is required whenever you attempt a power boost (see Chapter Three, "Taint").

### Save for Each Boost Category
DC 15 + power level + extra power points allocated

| Category | Save | Power Boost Effect (per power point spent) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Area/Explosive[1] | Reflex | Add the [Area] or [Explosive] extra to a power that does not have the extra. |
| Damage | Fort | Increase the power's damage by one additional die. |
| Duration | Will | Double the power's duration. |
| Effect | Reflex | Double the power's area of effect or number of targets. |
| Range/Speed | Will | Double the power's range increment or speed. |

[1] Requires 2 power points.

**Example:** *Blue Steel (Quantum 5) wants to boost his quantum bolt. He spends 2 power points for the power plus an additional 3 for the boost — 2 to gain [area] (DC 18 Reflex save) and 1 to increase damage (DC 17 Fort save). He rolls a Reflex save result of 19 and a Fort save result of 14. Blue Steel fires a quantum bolt [area], but the power inflicts no additional damage.*

## Power Extras

Extras are special advantages that you can purchase with feat slots to add to existing powers (with the GM's approval). General extras are listed below; some powers have additional choices. Each extra costs one feat slot; you then apply the extra to a specific power. For ease of reference, list each extra you purchase in brackets after the power name — *quantum bolt* [explosion], *shroud* [increased duration] and so on. Some further notes on extras follow:

• Each 1st-level power can have up to two extras and each 2nd-level power can have one extra.

• An extra is applied to a specific power at the time of purchase; you cannot change this once it's set.

• Using a power with an extra costs power points in addition to those required for the power normally (see each extra listing). You need not apply an extra each time you use the power to which it is linked.

• The 3rd-level powers are quite potent and/or flexible. As such, they have their own specific extras instead of using those listed here; see "3rd-Level Techniques," below.

### General Extras

• **Area:** The power can affect a 5-foot radius area per character level. This extra is available only to powers that target a single creature. *Cost:* 2 pp.

• **Armor Piercing:** A target struck by the power has her Armor Class bonus from character level, armor and natural armor reduced by one-half (round down). A target with hardness instead of Armor Class reduces its hardness by one-half (round down). This does not affect the target's Armor Class bonus from Dexterity, deflection or other sources. This extra is not available for powers that do not inflict damage. *Cost: 2* pp.

• **Cloud:** The power fills a 5-foot radius area per two character levels with a cloud of gas or energy, and lingers for one extra round. Any targets within the area during this additional round suffer the power's effect at half-strength. *Cost: 2* pp.

• **Efficient:** The power's power point cost to manifest and maintain is reduced by one-half (round down). Include this extra's power point cost before halving the total. *Cost: 1* pp.

• **Explosion:** The power has a full effect in a 10-foot radius; this amount is then reduced by one die of damage for every additional 5 feet (down to 0 dice of damage). If applied to an extra that affects an area through some other means already, the explosion reduces by one die of damage for every additional 5 feet beyond the listed area. *Cost: 2* pp.

• **Homing:** The power "locks on" to a target, suffering no modifiers for range and ignoring the target's Dexterity bonus to Armor Class (if any). The power cannot reach beyond its maximum range. *Cost: 2* pp.

• **Increased Range:** The power's range is doubled. This extra is not available for powers with a range of "personal" or "touch." *Cost: 2* pp.

• **Impervious:** The power ignores the effects of the [armor piercing] extra. This extra does not apply to powers that do not offer a bonus to Armor Class or hardness. *Cost: 1* pp.

• **Multiplier:** The power affects twice the listed number of targets (a power with a target of "you" is considered to have a range of "touch"; the target can make a Will save [harmless] to negate and power resistance also applies). *Cost: 2* pp.

• **Persistent:** The power's duration is doubled (a power with a duration of "instant" lasts for two rounds). *Cost: 2* pp.

• **Range:** A power with a range of "touch" can affect targets up to 10 feet per character level distant, and is handled as a ranged touch attack. *Cost: 2* pp.

• **Reflexive:** You can manifest the power as a free action to defend against an incoming attack (e.g., manifesting *armor* to avoid being hit). This requires a Reflex save against 10 + 1/2 the attacker's character level + the attacker's attack bonus (or against the attack's listed save, if relevant). This extra is available for defensive powers only. *Cost: 2* pp.

## 3rd-Level Techniques

Rather than focusing on one specific effect, most 3rd-level powers have a variety of techniques that you can learn.

Unless noted otherwise, you take two techniques for free when you first select a 3rd-level power (if a 3rd-level power has two or fewer techniques, you get them all to start). You can purchase additional techniques for that power with available power slots through level progression as normal (see Table 4–1: Purchasing Quantum Powers).

A technique has the power point cost designated for the associated 3rd-level power unless noted otherwise. A technique with a separate power point listing costs that amount to manifest. As always, you cannot spend more than 6 power points per round (unless you have the Node background feat).

## Power Effects

The Mazarin–Rashoud node does not confer the ability to manipulate the weather or disintegrate objects with a touch. Instead, it gives a nova access to quantum energies that he channels to emulate such effects. This may not seem like much of a distinction, but it is key. Shut down a nova's access to quantum power and he's no more a god than any baseline.

Though this is the heart of how a nova's powers function, it has little influence on how they appear to manifest. A superhuman's powers most often manifest as a logical extension of his drives and desires, and in terms of phenomena he is used to: fire, ice, wind, super-dense muscles, magnetism or a thousand other forms of energy or matter that are familiar and comfortable. For purposes of scientific measurement in the Nova Age — and for game rule application — they are the real thing, not "quantum energy." A power based on fire has the chemical and physical properties of fire.

Quantum energies allow a nova's powers to range farther from the scientific norm, though. For example, a nova might *immolate* herself with raw nuclear forces rather than with fire, or she might wield a weird "flame" that burns an eerie green, feels cold to the touch or is otherwise distinct from "real" fire.

So what's all that mean to you? You can choose some phenomenon or "special effect" for some powers — or perhaps adjust their names — to fit with your concept. For instance, a character with powers based on manipulating fire may have a *quantum bolt* that she calls her *inferno blast*, which manifests as a blast of superhot flame.

Adding a quantum power extra can make a power even more distinctive. Many novas have *quantum bolts*, but a fire-manipulating nova could lob balls of fire with a *quantum bolt* that adds the [explosion] extra.

## Altering Quantum Powers

No rigid guidelines can capture every aspect of every nova's powers. You might want to adjust a listed power to better suit a character concept or game premise. When altering a power, balance one parameter against another. You may want a *quantum bolt* with incredible range, but that loses energy as it travels. This can be done by increasing a standard *quantum bolt*'s range increments, but noting that it loses 1d6 points of damage for each increment beyond the first. The GM is the final arbiter regarding any proposed changes.

# Power Descriptions

Powers are divided into 1st-, 2nd- and 3rd-levels. Each is listed with the following format.

**Name:** The name by which the quantum power is known (though you may choose a unique term for your character's version).

**Power Descriptor:** Any descriptors that apply are listed [in brackets]. Descriptors include acid, bludgeoning, cold, compulsion, darkness, death, electricity, fear, fire, force, healing, language-dependent, light, mind-affecting, negative energy, piercing, positive energy, slashing, sonic and teleportation. Descriptors function as described in the *Player's Handbook* (see Chapter 10: Magic, "Spell Descriptions," *[Descriptor]*), except that compulsion is the equivalent of the Enchantment subschool.

**Level:** The power's level, an indicator of its initial comparative potency as well as the number of power slots required for the initial purchase.

**Manifestation Time:** The time required to manifest the power.

**Range:** The maximum distance from you at which the power can affect a target.

**Target or Targets/Effect/Area:** The number of creatures, dimensions, volume, or weight that the power affects.

**Duration:** How long the power lasts with each power point expenditure. You can sustain a power for an additional duration by spending power points before the duration expires (as long as you have sufficient points to spend).

**Saving Throw:** Whether a power allows a saving throw, what type of saving throw it is, and the effect of a successful saving throw. Unless noted otherwise, saving throws against your quantum powers have a DC of 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Wisdom bonus (if any).

**Power Resistance:** Whether power resistance (PR) resists the power. (If you use creatures from the *MM* or other magic-setting d20 sources, just convert spell resistance to power resistance.)

**Power Points:** The power's cost to manifest. A power bought with an extra requires an additional power point expenditure (see above). For a power with a duration other than "instantaneous," you can also spend the listed amount to maintain the effect before its current duration expires. This is a move action; the new duration starts that round.

**Description:** An explanation of the power's function.

**Effect:** How the power works in a rules format.

**Extras:** Any extras unique to the power. These are purchased like general power extras (see above), and require an additional power point expenditure for each use.

# Quantum Powers List

## 1st-Level Quantum Powers

**Armor:** Gain enhanced resistance to damage.
**Bioluminescence:** Emit visible light.
**Body Modification:** Modify your body in some permanent manner.
**Boost:** Increase ability score temporarily.
**Claws:** Grow natural claws that inflict lethal damage.
**Empathic Manipulation:** Manipulate a target's emotions.
**ESP:** Gain sensory input of a distant location.
**Force Field:** Gain enhanced resistance to damage.
**Healing:** Heal yourself and others.
**Immobilize:** Reduce a target's ability to move.
**Intuition:** Gain a heightened awareness of danger.
**Luck:** Circumstances often go your way.
**Mental Scan:** Scan for a "mental signature."
**Psychic Shield:** Resist mental powers.
**Quantum Bolt:** Fire a blast of energy.
**Quantum Conversion:** Convert quantum energy into electricity, fire or force.
**Quantum Regeneration:** Increase your power point recovery.
**Sensory Shield:** Gain protection against potential sensory impairment.
**Shroud:** Create a field that stifles senses.
**Sizemorph:** Decrease or increase height and mass.
**Telepathy:** Communicate from mind to mind.

## 2nd-Level Quantum Powers

**Absorption:** Convert physical or energy damage sustained into Strength.
**Animal/Plant Mastery:** Communicate with and summon fauna or flora.
**Bodymorph:** Take on aspects of one specific type of matter or energy.
**Density Control:** Alter your density to gain defense or to become intangible.
**Disorient:** Confuse and weaken opponents.
**Disrupt:** Reduce other powers' effectiveness.
**Domination:** Control a target's brainwaves.
**Flight:** Fly without artificial assistance.
**Holo:** Create holographic images.
**Hypermovement:** Increase running, flying or swimming speed.
**Immolate:** Manifest a damaging aura.
**Invisibility:** Fade from sight.
**Invulnerability:** Gain damage reduction.
**Memory Alteration:** Alter existing memories or implant false ones.
**Mental Blast:** Inflict damage to a target's brain.

**Mirage:** Create illusions within the target's mind.
**Poison:** *Poison* or infect a target by touch.
**Quantum Leech:** Absorb power points from a target.
**Quantum Vampire:** Transfer a target's power to yourself.
**Strobe:** Disable a particular sense.
**Stun Attack:** Stun or knock out a target.
**Telekinesis:** Lift and move physical objects through mental focus.
**Teleport:** Move from one location to another without passing through intervening space.

## 3rd-Level Quantum Powers

**Clone:** Create one or more duplicates.
**Cyberkinesis:** Control computers and machines.
**Disintegration:** Destroy a target.
**Elemental Anima:** Control a particular substance or phenomenon.
**Element Chameleon:** Duplicate properties of specific types of matter.
**Entropy Control:** Control and manipulate entropic forces.
**Gravity Control:** Manipulate gravity and gravitic fields.
**Homunculus:** Separate and animate your body parts or create small creatures from your body.
**Magnetic Mastery:** Manipulate magnetism and magnetic fields.
**Matter Creation:** Create various sorts of matter.
**Molecular Manipulation:** Manipulate and control molecules.
**Pretercognition:** Foresee future or view past events.
**Quantum Construct:** Create creatures or objects out of quantum force.
**Quantum Imprint:** Copy the powers and abilities of a touched target.
**Shapeshift:** Alter your shape.
**Temporal Manipulation:** Manipulate time.
**Warp:** Create a "gate" that anyone can pass through from one physical place to another, bypassing the intervening space.
**Weather Manipulation:** Alter and manipulate weather.

# Quantum Powers
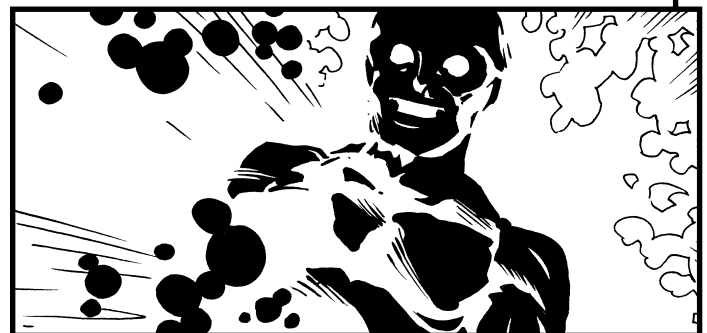


## Absorption

*"Bring it on, muscle boy. It'll end up hurting you more than it'll hurt me."*
Quantum
**Level:** 2
**Manifestation Time:** 1 free action
**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)
**Power Points:** 1 (see text)

**Description:** You can absorb damage and even convert it into Strength. This may be applied either to energy damage (e.g., fire, *quantum bolt*) or physical damage (e.g., force, punches, bullets); specify the type of energy when you choose the power.

**Effect:** While this power is active, when you are hit with an attack of the type you can absorb, make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2

the attacker's HD + the attacker's Quantum score). If successful, you may ignore points of damage rolled from the attack equal to your Quantum score. Any remaining damage is applied as normal.

By spending 1 additional power point, you may convert every 2 points of damage absorbed from the attack into a +1 enhancement bonus to Strength. This enhancement bonus may not exceed your Quantum score and fades at a rate of 1 point per round.

You may wait to use the power until damage is rolled, but before any other action occurs.

You may use *absorption* to increase an ability other than Strength. The ability must be chosen when the power is first purchased and is subject to GM approval.

## Extras

*Extended Effect:* The enhancement bonus fades by 1 point per your character level in rounds. *Cost:* 2 pp.

*Energy Magnet:* You can absorb energy from a nonliving source at a range of (10 feet/level). You must make a DC 15 Concentration check instead of a Fortitude save, and the total enhancement bonus cannot exceed your Quantum score. You cannot absorb more power than is available, as determined by the GM (e.g., a household appliance should confer no more than a +1 enhancement bonus). *Cost:* 2 pp.



## Animal/Plant Mastery

*"Attack the interlopers, my loyal flock!"*

Quantum
**Level:** 2
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** 1000 ft. + 100 ft./character level
**Effect:** One or more creatures or plants in range; see text
**Duration:** 1 min./level (D)
**Saving Throw:** See text
**Power Resistance:** No
**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You can communicate with animals or plants, and can even direct them to action.

**Effect:** Choose between *animal mastery* and *plant mastery* when you select the power. The GM may assign specific personalities to creatures and plants based upon their natures — lions and tigers might seem regal; poison ivy may act sarcastic and snide; antelopes may seem nervous and edgy; rats excitable and shifty; a cactus might be laconic and unflappable; and so on.

*Animal Mastery:* You understand the intent of any mundane noises that animals and vermin make (though you may not be able to respond in kind). In addition, you can influence a number of creatures whose combined HD do not exceed twice your character level, or at least one creature regardless of HD. If there are more potential targets than you can affect, you choose them one at a time until you choose a creature with too many HD. Each target that fails a Will save against *animal mastery* is subject to the following:

You can engage in telepathic dialogue with each target as long as it is in line of sight.

Each target regards you as a trusted friend and ally (treat its attitude as friendly). A target that you or your allies are threatening or attacking receives a +5 bonus on its saving throw.

You can emit a telepathic call to summon a particular creature of the animal or vermin type (or any creatures of a type within either category) up to a total number of Hit Dice equal to your character level + Quantum score. If the animal or type of animal is within the power's range, it rushes to you at its best speed.

You cannot control the target as if it were an automaton, but it perceives your wishes in the most favorable way. You must win an opposed Charisma check to convince the creature to do anything it wouldn't ordinarily do. (Retries are not allowed.) An affected creature never obeys suicidal or obviously harmful orders, but it might be convinced that something very dangerous is worth doing. Any act by you or your apparent allies that threatens the target breaks the effect.

*Plant Mastery:* You can understand and communicate with plants in the same manner as described for animals under *animal mastery*, Rather than calling plants, you can imbue targeted flora with mobility and a semblance of life. Each animated plant then attacks whomever or whatever you designate initially as though it were an animated object of the appropriate size category. You may animate one Large or smaller plant, or an equivalent number of larger plants, per three character levels. A Huge plant counts as two Large or smaller plants, a Gargantuan plant as four, and a Colossal plant as eight. You can change the designated target or targets as a move action, as if directing an active power.

Use the statistics for animated objects, except that plants smaller than Large usually don't have hardness.

Alternatively, you may call upon plants in a 40-foot-radius spread to entwine around creatures in the area. Each creature can break free and move half its normal speed by using a full-round action to make a DC 20 Strength check or a DC 20 Escape Artist check. A creature that succeeds on a Reflex save is not entangled but can still move at only half speed through the area. Each round on your turn, the plants once again attempt to entangle all creatures that have avoided or escaped entanglement.

*Plant mastery* cannot affect plant creatures, nor does it affect nonliving vegetable material.

## Extras

*Nature Mastery:* You possess both *animal* and *plant mastery*, and can direct both fauna and flora at the same time. *Cost:* 2 pp.



## Armor

*"Ain't nothin' can get through the hide of Stegosaur!"*

Quantum
**Level:** 1
**Manifestation Time:** 1 move action
**Range:** Personal

**Target:** You
**Duration:** 10 min./level (D)
**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You have some form of natural physical defense. This typically relates to your powers in some way — a chitinous dermal layer if you have insect-like powers, interlocking metal plates if you control metal, or even a sheet of "living ice" if you manipulate cold.

**Effect:** Gain a +4 bonus to your Armor Class. This bonus increases by +1 every three character levels, to a maximum of +10. Certain limitations apply while *armor* is active:

- *Armor Check Penalty:* −2 on Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Sleight of Hand and Tumble checks; −4 on Swim checks.
- *Speed Penalty:* −10 feet to unencumbered speed of 30 feet or higher; −5 feet to unencumbered speed under 30 feet.
- *Encumbrance:* Assume that you're carrying an additional 20 pounds for the purposes of determining encumbrance.

## Extras

*Mega-Armor:* You "bulk up" the *armor* to create a nigh-impenetrable hide that lasts 1 round/level. Double both the power's Armor Class bonus and all the listed limitations; you are also limited to moving no faster than triple your speed when running. *Cost:* 2 pp.

*Permanent:* The power's effect is considered "constant" and cannot be turned off. It costs no power points to maintain, but is visible and unnatural in appearance (suffer a −4 penalty on Charisma-based checks except Intimidate). *Cost:* 0 pp.

# Bioluminescence

*"Let's shed a little light on the situation, shall we?"*
Quantum
**Level:** 1
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** 10 ft. x Quantum score
**Target:** You
**Area:** Spherical emanation (10-ft. radius/Quantum)
**Duration:** 10 min./level (D)
**Power Points:** 1

**Description:** You can emit visible light; it's insufficient to blind someone, but it's perfect for illuminating dark places.

**Effect:** The light you radiate is in the visible spectrum and is the equivalent of a clear day in intensity. The method in which *bioluminescence* manifests depends on your powers — anything from an eerie eldritch flame to an angelic glow to a ball of fire.

For one additional power point, you can project a beam of light like a flashlight with a range of (15 feet/level).

## Extras

*Increased Spectrum:* You extend the illumination range into the infrared and ultraviolet. *Cost:* 1 pp.

# Body Modification

*"Your strength is no match for the grip of the Kraken!"*
Quantum
**Level:** 1
**Manifestation Time:** N/A (see text)
**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** Constant
**Power Points:** 1 or 0 (see text)

**Description:** Your body is changed in some permanent fashion — anything from color-changing skin to an extra limb to a series of dorsal spikes.

**Effect:** The modification chosen is permanent and costs no power points to maintain or use, unless noted otherwise. You may take *body modification* a number of times equal to your Quantum score; each represents a different alteration to your form. Some common modifications are listed below; new options are subject to GM approval.

- *Adhesive Grip:* You bond with surfaces through some physical or ionic means; this allows you to travel on vertical surfaces or even ceilings as well as a spider does. You gain a climb speed of 20 feet, but cannot use the run action while climbing. You need not make Climb checks to traverse a vertical or horizontal surface (even upside down). You retain your Dexterity bonus to Armor Class (if any) while climbing, and opponents get no special bonus to their attacks against you. You must have your hands free to climb in this manner.
- *Chromatophores:* You can change the color of your skin, much like a chameleon or a squid can. You gain a +10 bonus on Hide checks as long as you are almost naked or wearing attuned eufiber when this power is active. It costs 1 power point to activate *chromatophores* for 1 minute/level; you may change colors and basic patterns at will during this time.
- *Extra Limbs:* You have an additional limb — an arm, tail or tentacle, most commonly — that sprouts from a location of your choice. This limb has the same reach, degree of deftness and muscle power as your off-hand.
- *Gills:* You can breathe underwater freely.
- *Spines:* Your body has spikes or even natural sharp edges (for instance, if you're made of living crystal). A combatant who hits you with an unarmed attack must succeed at a DC 15 Reflex save or suffer 1d3 points of damage per three levels (round down). This damage is slashing or piercing, depending on the type of spines.
- *Tendril:* You can extrude a physical or energy manifestation in the shape of a tentacle, whip, flagellum or other similar "limb." The *tendril* extends up to 3 feet per Quantum and inflicts 1d6 points of bludgeoning damage per three levels (round down).
- *Webbed Extremities:* Your hands and/or feet are webbed. You gain a +10 bonus on Swim checks and may swim at up to your normal speed.
- *Wings/Patagia:* You grow a pair of leathery bat wings or feathered bird wings (alternately, you grow a flap of skin that stretches

between your side and your arms). You can glide in a controlled fall at up to your normal speed with poor maneuverability, but do not have independent flight.

## Bodymorph

*"A locked door means nothing to one who can become the wind itself!"*
Quantum
**Level:** 2
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)
**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You transform into a specific type of matter or energy — rock, fire, wind, computer chips and circuitry, etc.

**Effect:** Choose the form of matter or energy when you first take the power. A form grants certain special "form benefits" and one "form-specific" quantum power that is active with *bodymorph*. The list below offers some standard form options; you may invent your own or suggest alternate benefits with the GM's approval. All *bodymorph* powers activate simultaneously when you pay the power points to transform.

• *Air/Gas:* Form Benefits: You move through air at your normal speed (you move vertically at half this rate and cannot run); gain the benefits of the Flexibility superhuman feat enhancement. Form-Specific Power: *Density control (decrease)*.

• *Energy:* Form Benefits: You inflict lethal damage with unarmed attacks; power resistance 10 + 1/2 character level (round down). Form-Specific Power: Choose one of *density control (decrease)*, *force field*, *immolate*, *invulnerability* (to the appropriate energy type), or *magnetic mastery* (*EMP*).

• *Hard Solid (metal, stone, etc.):* Form Benefits: You inflict lethal damage with unarmed attacks; gain the benefit of the Durability superhuman feat enhancement. Form-Specific Power: Choose one of *armor*, *claws* or *density control (increase)*.

• *Liquid/Amorphous:* Form Benefits: You can breathe without penalty in water; gain the benefits of the Flexibility superhuman feat enhancement. Form-Specific Power: *Density control (decrease)*.

### Extras

*Link:* You can purchase a power or superhuman feat enhancement that functions only when this power functions, much like a form-specific power. You can buy an enhancement even if you don't have the base superhuman feat (see example). You have no access to any *link* powers or enhancements if *bodymorph* is not active. *Cost:* A power or enhancement purchased as a *bodymorph link* costs one power point less than normal to use.

**Example:** *The Dervish doesn't have Mega-Strength. She does have Strength 15, however, and may* link *the Thunderclap enhancement to her* bodymorph (air).
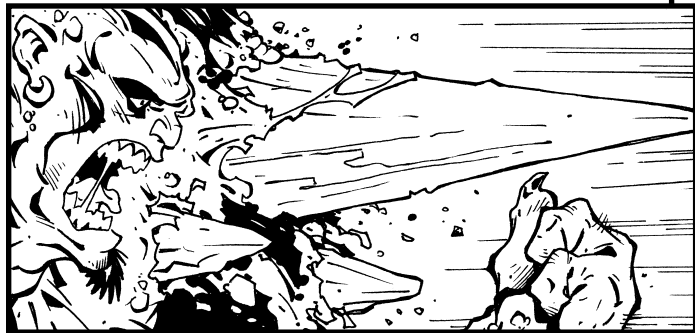
## Boost

*"Not strong enough? I'm as strong as I need to be."*
Quantum
**Level:** 1
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 round/level
**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You can infuse your body with quantum energy to increase an ability temporarily.

**Effect:** Gain your Quantum score as an enhancement bonus to a specific ability for the power's duration. You must define which ability gains the benefit of this power when you select *boost*; it cannot be changed thereafter.

You may take this power more than once; each new selection *boosts* another ability as a separate manifestation.
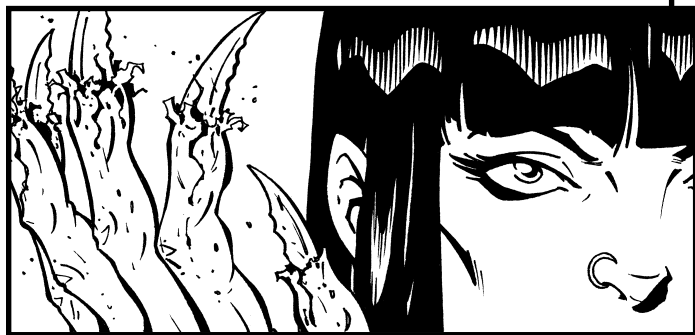
## Claws

*"Steel doors won't keep you from my talons!"*
Quantum
**Level:** 1
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 min./level
**Power Points:** 1

**Description:** You can grow claws, talons or similar natural weapons — maybe even a field of hissing quantum energy that springs into being around your hands!

**Effect:** You have natural weapon proficiency with claws that inflict 1d6 + Strength modifier points of slashing damage. Base claw damage increases by +1d6 for every three character levels (maximum 6d6).

## Clone

*"I am Legion!"*
Quantum
**Level:** 3
**Manifestation Time:** 1 full round (see text)
**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 10 min./level (D)
**Power Points:** 3

**Description:** You use quantum energy to create an exact duplicate of you — with the same appearance, memories, basic capabilities and potentially even the same powers.

**Effect:** You can create a single duplicate with each use of this power. The clone takes one full round to create, and you must do nothing else during that time (not even talk or move). It lasts until the power's duration ends or until you subsume it back into yourself (subsuming the clone requires physical contact, and may perform no other action for the round, just as with creation). You gain the clone's memories and experiences when you absorb it. A clone that is not recombined dissolves into nothingness as the energies forming it dissipate.

The clone has your personality and outlook, but it is loyal to you and is under your absolute command. It appears to be the same as you, but it has only one-half of your character levels (and the corresponding hit points, skill ranks, feats and special abilities). It has a Quantum score, but it lacks any superhuman feats and quantum powers that you have.

Choose two techniques when you first take the power; the rest are purchased with additional power slots.

### Clone Fodder

**Effect:** Instead of a more "fleshed out" clone, you create a number of rudimentary duplicates equal to your Quantum score. Each is little more than an automaton with an Intelligence of 2; other ability scores are one-half your own, and they each have your 1st-level characteristics (hit points, base attack bonus, save bonuses, etc.).

### Empathic Connection

**Range:** 10 miles/level
**Target:** Any single clone

**Effect:** You can take a free action to sense the general mood and demeanor of one of your clones (happy, scared, hurt, etc.). In turn, you can project your emotional state at a clone as a move action — conveying danger, urgency, peace, and so on. Duplicates cannot sense the emotional states of one another.

### Increase Duration

**Duration:** 1 hour/2 levels (D)
**Power Points:** 1

**Effect:** Duplicates you create last longer than normal.

### Manifest Powers

**Target:** 1 clone

**Power Points:** 2

**Effect:** When you create a duplicate, it gains your superhuman feats and powers (except for *clone*). It also shares your power points, however, and you are both subject to the normal power point limit that you can spend each round — so, if you spend 4 power points in a round, your duplicate can spend no more than 2 power points.

### Multiples

**Power Points:** 1/2 additional clones

**Effect:** In addition to the base clone, you can choose to create one additional duplicate every five character levels (maximum 5 clones).

## Cyberkinesis

*"I can overload your whole network in a heartbeat if I don't get what I want."*
Quantum
**Level:** 3
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Touch
**Targets:** 1 terminal/3 levels
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)
**Saving Throw:** None
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 3

**Description:** You can manipulate machines, particularly electronic machines and computers, with quantum power.

**Effect:** You can connect your consciousness directly to a site as long as you touch a portion of the target, which is designated a "terminal." A terminal can be any electronic system — a personal computer, a web server, a video camera, an ATM, a keycode lock, a cell phone, etc. This may require a melee touch attack if the terminal has motive capability (e.g., a vehicle, a robot, in the possession of someone else).

Use Computer Use, adding your Quantum score, as if making a defeat security attempt with the security level DC reduced by −10 (see Chapter One). You may ignore "trained only" restrictions if you don't have any ranks in the skill.

You can affect one terminal for every three character levels. They need not all be part of the same site, but you must have physical contact with each. You may use only one technique at a time, except for *network*.

Your session ends if you lose physical contact with the terminal. You may connect via a wireless device, in which case your session ends if you lose contact with the wireless device itself.

Choose two techniques when you first take the power; the rest are purchased with additional power slots.

### Alter Data

**Effect:** You can alter, read or remove existing data or insert or create new information permanently, up to 10 megabytes (MB) x Quantum score per round.

### Control

**Effect:** You take control of a machine with electronic, mechanical or hydraulic parts.

### Fool

**Effect:** You can alter images and/or sounds in sensors, security systems or communications devices. The GM may call for a Bluff, Perform or Craft (visual art) check depending on what you want to do, with failure indicating an obviously artificial change (think poor CGI).

### Network

**Effect:** You can use other *cyberkinesis* techniques upon a number of terminals equal to your character level.
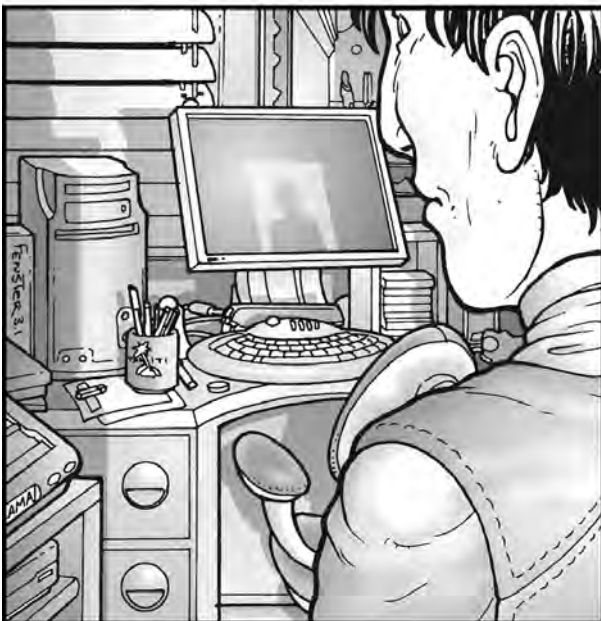
## Overload

**Effect:** You overload the terminal for your power's duration. The specific means can vary — electrical or electromagnetic surge, system error, forced shut down command, etc.

## Reprogram

**Effect:** Unlike changing data files with *alter data*, you use this technique to add to or rewrite the terminal's programming in some fashion. The changes are permanent until otherwise altered.



## Density Control

*"No barrier can stop the Whisper!"*

Quantum
**Level:** 2
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 min./level
**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You can either decrease your density to the point that you can pass through solid barriers, or increase it to gain tremendous durability and mass.

**Effect:** When you first select the power, choose whether you can decrease or increase your density.

*Decrease:* Gain damage reduction N/energy, with N equal to your Quantum score x 2 (so, a character with Quantum 6 gains DR 12/energy). You can pass through solid objects at will (though not through force effects). Your Strength is 0 for purposes of physical attacks and interaction; you suffer no penalty when using any energy-based attacks. You have no weight, leave no footprints, have no scent and make no noise unless you wish it. You gain no aerial movement with this power, but you take no falling damage from a fall.

*Increase:* Apply your Quantum score as a bonus split between your Strength score and Armor Class any way you like; you can change the allocation from one round to the next as a move action. Also, multiply your current weight by your Quantum score. Do not apply a Strength increase to any Jump checks (the extra weight offsets any Strength benefit). Density increase is often, though not always, accompanied by visible effects (e.g., turning to rock or metal).

### Extras

*Full Control:* You can both increase and decrease your density.
*Cost:* 2 pp.

**Description:** You cause a target to become confused, weakened, disoriented and unable to take action effectively.

**Effect:** The target suffers a −2 penalty per Quantum on all attack rolls, damage rolls, skill checks and ability checks while disoriented. The effect can be physical (inducing nausea) or mental (creating hallucinations), depending on how your powers are defined. The target makes a Fortitude save against a physical manifestation and a Will save against a mental manifestation. You must choose whether your disorient power has a physical or mental manifestation when you purchase the power, and it may not be changed later.

## Disintegration

*"She just touched the wall and it crumbled to powder!"*

Quantum

**Level:** 3
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
**Target:** 1 creature or object
**Duration:** Instantaneous
**Saving Throw:** Fortitude half (object)
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 3

**Description:** You can disintegrate — or otherwise destroy utterly — anything!

**Effect:** On a successful ranged touch attack, the targeted creature takes 1d6 points of damage per character level (maximum 20d6). Any creature reduced to 0 or fewer hit points by this power is disintegrated entirely, leaving behind only a trace of fine dust.

When used against an object, you disintegrate as much as one 10-foot cube of nonliving matter. Thus, the power disintegrates only part of any very large object or structure targeted. *Disintegration* affects even objects constructed entirely of force, but not power effects such as a *force field.*

A creature or object that makes a successful Fortitude save suffers half damage. If this damage reduces the creature or object to 0 or fewer hit points, it is disintegrated entirely. Equipment for a target that is disintegrated entirely must make a Fortitude save or be disintegrated also.

## Disorient

*"I'd watch my step if I were you — it's a very long way down."*

Quantum [can be Mind-Affecting (see text)]

**Level:** 2
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
**Target:** 1 creature
**Duration:** 1 round/level
**Saving Throw:** Fortitude or Will negates (see text)
**Power Resistance:** Yes, if mind-affecting (see text)
**Power Points:** 2

## Disrupt

*"Blast me? Heh; I don't think you have it in you."*

Quantum

**Level:** 2
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Touch
**Target:** 1 creature
**Duration:** 1 round/2 levels
**Saving Throw:** No
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You can inhibit another nova's ability to channel quantum energy, limiting or even suppressing access to her powers for a period of time.

**Effect:** On a successful melee touch attack, you reduce the total amount of power points the target may spend each round by 1d4+1, with an additional +1 every three character levels (maximum 1d4+7).

## Domination

*"Why don't you drop the weapon and let's talk this out?"*

Quantum [Mind-Affecting]

**Level:** 2
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
**Target:** One living creature
**Duration:** 1 min./level (D)
**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Power Resistance:** Yes

**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You project your quantum consciousness upon a sentient target's brainwaves. With sufficient control, you can make a victim do anything your mind can imagine.

**Effect:** The target makes a Will save to resist *domination* initially; if she fails, she is subject to your control for the power's duration. She may make a Will save to resist each command you issue during this time, with a bonus to her save depending on the command's intensity (see below). If successful, she resists performing the action but is considered dazed for the round. The target may act normally if you do not issue a command for a given round.

You may attempt *domination* on any target within range whom you can perceive clearly (e.g., line of sight, video monitor) and who can hear and understand the language in which you give commands.

| Save Bonus | Command Intensity |
|---|---|
| 0 | *Minor/Quirky:* Blink, eat a bug, wear a particular suit of clothes. |
| +2 | *Major/Noteworthy:* Do my chores; buy dinner for someone you hate. |
| +4 | *Complex/Antithetical:* Worship a foreign god; follow a particular set of commands ("Fill out this form, mail it to Wilkes-Barre, PA from Boise, Idaho, and after doing so, take out a full-page newspaper ad which reads…"); attack (or refrain from attacking) whomever you indicate in combat. |
| +8 | *Total Control:* Commit suicide; perform any task, no matter how difficult or vile. |

## Extras

*Hypnosis:* You can implant a long-term command to occur any time within the power's duration, which increases to 1 day per level. The target may make a Will save to resist once per day and once before performing the command. Total control is not possible with this extra, but the power otherwise functions as normal. *Cost:* 2 pp.

*Parasitic Possession:* Your body transforms to quantum energy that possesses the target's central nervous system. You gain the target's physical abilities, knowledge, any superhuman feats and quantum powers; the victim may still make a Will save to resist an action you take with her body, as above with commands. If the target dies while you possess her, you die also. You must make eye contact to attempt this version of *domination*. *Cost:* 4 pp.

*Telepathic Domination:* You can communicate your commands to the target without need for speech (this also ignores any language barriers). *Cost:* 2 pp.

## Elemental Anima

*"You have no conception of the powers at my command. Allow me to demonstrate."*

Quantum

**Level:** 3

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** See text

**Effect:** See text

**Duration:** See text

**Saving Throw:** See text

**Power Resistance:** See text
**Power Points:** See text

**Description:** You can project your quantum consciousness into a particular element or phenomenon — fire, sound, ice, electricity, darkness, water, etc. — allowing you to control and shape it to your will as a kind of "anima."

**Effect:** Choose the anima you want when you select the power (subject to GM approval). A reasonable portion of the anima must be within 10 feet per level — flame from a fireplace, a steady breeze, a room in shadows — for you to build upon it to manifest various effects. As a general guide, the minimum element or phenomenon should cover a 5-foot area; the GM is the final arbiter of what is considered a reasonable portion. Only if you have the *elemental mastery* technique (see below) can you manifest these techniques without an existing source of anima.

The exact method of manifestation depends on the nature of the element you choose. Further, some techniques may not be appropriate to certain properties — you may get movement capability from fire or water powers, but it's unlikely that you could get that benefit from darkness.

The listed techniques are common expressions of this power; pick two when you determine your anima (the rest are purchased with additional power slots). You may purchase this power more than once; each new *elemental anima* represents a different element or force.

## Adjust Temperature
**Range:** 0
**Area:** Spherical emanation (10-ft. radius/level)
**Duration:** 1 min./level (D)
**Power Points:** 2

**Effect:** This functions like the *temperature control* technique under *weather control*, with modifications to area and duration.

## Alter Amount
**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
**Area:** Spherical emanation (10-ft. radius/Quantum)
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)
**Power Points:** 3

**Effect:** You increase or decrease the effect of your anima's element or force in the area (e.g., brighten or dim light, increase or reduce a fire's intensity), as indicated below. You may not alter your own quantum powers, but you may adjust the powers of a character with same element or force as your anima.

A target whose powers you want to adjust may negate the influence with a successful Fortitude save against the effect; otherwise, the power is enhanced or diminished for the listed duration.

| Effect Type | Result |
|---|---|
| Non-damaging effect[1] | Enhance by 25%/3 Quantum |
| | Diminish by 25%/2 Quantum |
| Damage effect | Enhance by 1 die/3 Quantum |
| | Diminish by 1 die/2 Quantum |

[1] Enhancing liquid to fill a space or diminishing air to create a vacuum may require those within the area to deal with the effects of drowning or suffocation (see the *DMG*, Chapter 8, "Suffocation" and "Water Dangers").

## Barrier
**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
**Target:** Wall whose area is up to one 5-ft. square/level
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)
**Power Points:** 3

**Effect:** You create an anchored plane formed from your anima, with hardness equal to your Quantum score and hit points equal to your character level per inch of thickness. The *barrier* is 1 inch thick per four character levels; you can double its area by halving its thickness.

The *barrier* is considered solid regardless of whether your anima is physical (ice, stone, wood) or energy (darkness, fire, wind). In the latter case, assume that the energy is of sufficient intensity as to prohibit any passage through. (At the GM's discretion, an energy form such as electricity or fire may deal 1d4 points of damage per round to creatures who come in contact with the *barrier*.)

A *barrier* can be created in simple shapes (curve, bridge, ramp, etc.). This requires a successful DC 20 Craft (structural) check. A span extending more than 20 feet over open space must be arched and buttressed, reducing the power's area by half.

The *barrier* is stationary once created, although you can take a standard action to move it with you as long as it remains connected to a solid surface. You may separate a *barrier* from a solid surface if it's made of an energy anima, at the GM's discretion.

A *barrier* can be destroyed by damage inflicted through conventional means or quantum powers (note that *disintegration* does not affect energy forms). Each 5-foot square has 15 hit points per inch of thickness and hardness 8. A section whose hit points drop to 0 is breached. Breaking through the *barrier* with a single attack requires a successful Strength check against DC 20 + 2 per inch of thickness.

## Blast
**Range:** 150 ft.
**Area:** 150-ft. line
**Duration:** Instantaneous
**Saving Throw:** Reflex half
**Power Points:** 2

**Effect:** You shape, strengthen and redirect the anima into a powerful burst that deals 1d6 points of damage per two character levels (maximum 10d6) to each target within its area. The anima determines the damage type — fire, sonic, force water, darkness, wind, etc.

## Crush
**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
**Area:** 1 target
**Duration:** See text
**Power Points:** 3

**Effect:** You slam or grapple a target with a quantity of the anima — an intense burst of wind, giant fire talons, a hand of stone that erupts from the ground, etc. Make a ranged touch attack with an attack bonus equal to (your base attack bonus + the slam or grapple Strength bonus given below). The anima is not subject to an attack of opportunity for the attempt.

As a slam attack, the anima inflicts 1d10 points of bludgeoning damage per two character levels (maximum 5d10) and performs an overrun on the target as a Large creature with Strength (18 + your Quantum score) and the Improved Overrun feat (see the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 8, "Overrun"). Regardless of whether you succeed or fail the Strength check, the anima's crushing shape disperses immediately after the overrun attempt. This is an instantaneous effect.

As a grapple attack, the anima makes an opposed grapple check as a Large creature with Strength (25 + your Quantum score). You can perform any viable maneuver options while grappling a target (see the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 8, "Grapple"). This lasts 1 round per level, until the target breaks free or until you dismiss it.

## Defense
**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)

**Power Points:** 3

**Effect:** Your anima stirs in a protective barrier that grants you damage reduction equal to your Quantum score against all attacks except those that oppose your anima (fire vs. ice, water vs. earth, light vs. darkness, electricity vs. metal, etc.). You also gain a +2 deflection bonus to Armor Class due to the obscuring effect the *defense* produces. This does not stack with the *shield* technique.

## Detonation

**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
**Area:** Spherical spread (5-ft. radius/Quantum)
**Duration:** Instantaneous
**Saving Throw:** Reflex half
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 3

**Effect:** You fire a tiny chunk of the anima to detonate at a distance and height within the power's range. It swells in size to fill the area, inflicting 1d6 points of damage per character level (maximum 10d6) to each target within the area. The anima determines the damage type — fire, sonic, force water, darkness, wind, etc. The *detonation* can explode early if the GM determines that it hits a solid object prior to reaching its destination.

## Elemental Mastery

**Power Points:** 2

**Effect:** You do not need an existing portion of your chosen anima to use other *elemental anima* techniques — you create whatever you require on the spot. You use this technique in conjunction with another *elemental anima* technique, spending the additional power points to generate the necessary element or phenomenon from quantum energy itself.

## Imprison

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
**Effect:** Spherical emanation (1-ft. diameter/level), centered around a creature
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)
**Saving Throw:** Reflex negates
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 3

**Effect:** You confine a target within a globe or other basic geometric shape formed from the anima — a fiery sphere, a fist of air, sinking partway into solid rock — provided the target is small enough to fit within the overall diameter. The confining element has a hardness equal to your Quantum score and hit points equal to your character level x Quantum.

The sphere cannot be moved physically either by people outside it or by the struggles of those within. Nothing can pass through it — if the anima is a closed sphere or other three-dimensional shape, it is opaque or otherwise turbulent enough that it is impossible to get a clear sight inside — though the subject can breathe normally. *Imprison* is breached if the anima is reduced to 0 hit points.

## Mobility

**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 min./level (D)
**Power Points:** 2

**Effect:** You harness the anima's force and direction to propel you through the air, water or earth as appropriate to the anima. Discuss with the GM the nature of the movement — wind to waft you through the air; fire to create a sustained thermal; stone to shape a tunnel through the ground; etc. This functions just like *flight*, except that you move at a speed of 5 feet per Quantum and have average maneuverability.

## Shape

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
**Target:** Anima up to 5 cu. ft. + 1 cu. ft./level
**Duration:** Instantaneous or 10 min./level (D)
**Power Points:** 3

**Effect:** You may alter the shape of existing anima to suit your desire, whether geometric shapes (stone blocks, ice poles) or simple "sculptures" (fire-people, shadow statues). The GM may call for a Craft check if you wish to *shape* objects with detail or skill.

Solid anima (rock, metal, ice) that you *shape* is changed permanently. Non-solid anima (wind, water, fire, darkness, etc.) is changed for one hour per level or until you cancel the effect; it then reverts to its original condition.

## Shield

**Range:** 0
**Area:** 10-ft-radius emanation from you
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)
**Power Points:** 3

**Effect:** You turn the anima away from you reflexively, granting yourself and anyone else within the area damage reduction equal to your Quantum score against attacks of the same phenomenon as your anima.

## Storm

**Range:** Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)
**Area:** Spherical spread (10-ft. radius/Quantum)
**Duration:** 1 round/2 levels
**Saving Throw:** Reflex half
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 3

**Effect:** You whip the anima into a frenzy within the target area, with the effect dependent upon the element or phenomenon — a firestorm, hailstones, bursts of sound, savage winds, etc. You inflict 1d6 points of damage per three character levels (maximum 6d6) each round upon every target within the area. Further, the *storm* generates such noise and fury that every target within the area suffers a −4 penalty on Listen and Spot checks, and moves at half speed.

## Element Chameleon

*"Diamonds are definitely* this *girl's best friend."*

Quantum
**Level:** 3
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)
**Power Points:** 3

**Description:** Your physical form can take on the properties of any type of matter or energy that you touch.

**Effect:** This power is similar to *bodymorph*, except that you are not limited by a specific type of matter or energy and you must touch the substance you wish to emulate.

Choose matter or energy when you select the power; you may then change into any type of that available substance while the power is active (you only spend power points to activate *element chameleon* initially, not for each change). Touching the requisite substance may require a melee touch attack if it is not immobile; however, you never suffer damage from making contact even if the substance normally causes harm (e.g., acid, fire). The specific benefits you gain depend on the substance. Unfortunately, there are too many possibilities to cover adequately here. As a
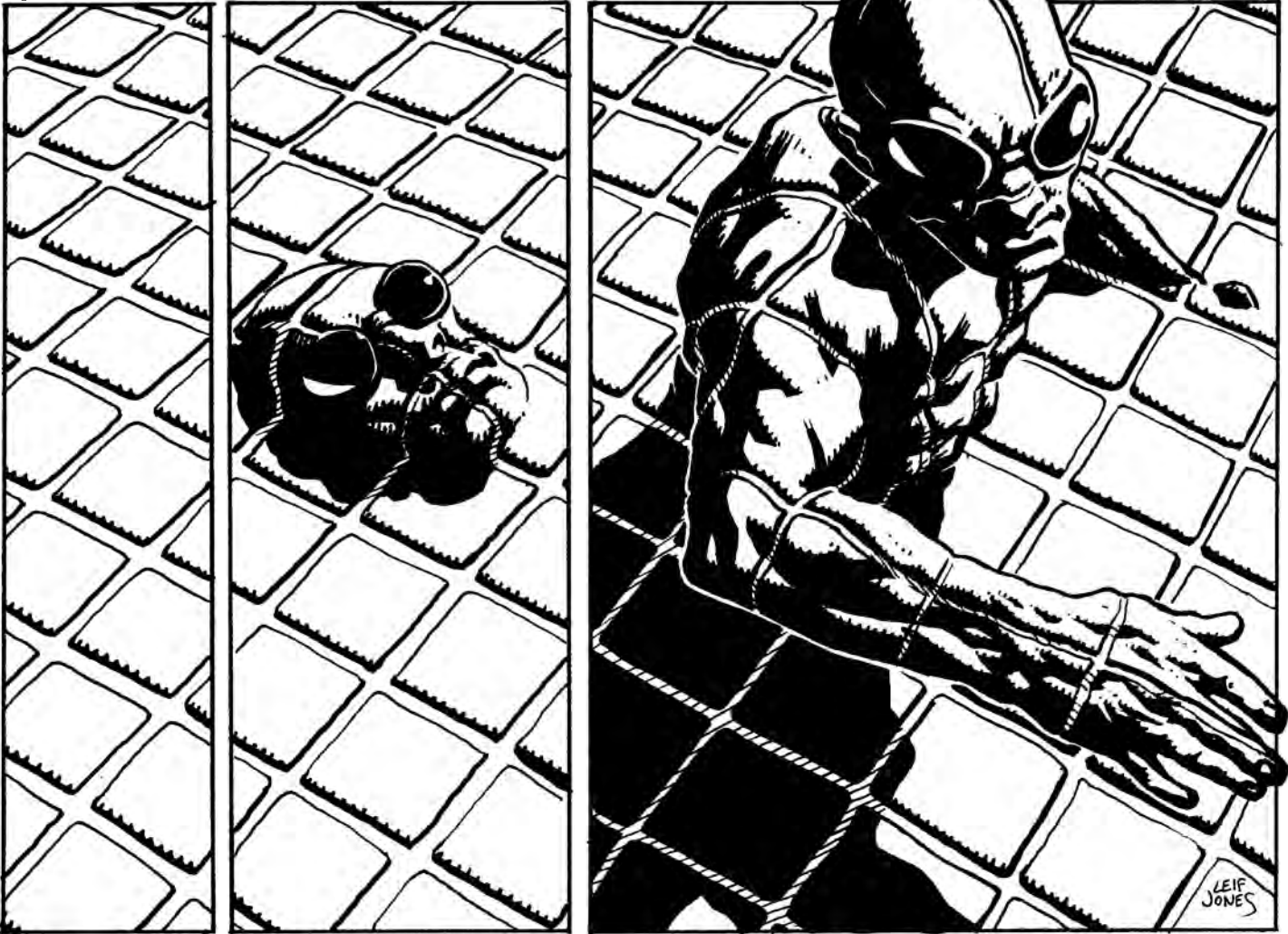
guideline, the GM can use *bodymorph* options most suitable for a substance chosen, and allocate your total Quantum score as a bonus among relevant ability scores, Armor Class and/or damage. Alternatively, a GM with access to the *MM* may let you use the traits, feats and extraordinary, supernatural and spell-like abilities of appropriate elementals or other monsters that fit best a given substance. (Such magic-based capabilities are assumed to be quantum-powered for **Aberrant**.)

Choose two techniques when you first take the power; the rest are purchased with additional power slots.

You may select this power a second time; this allows you to change into both matter and energy.

### Adhesion
**Power Points:** 1

**Effect:** You can traverse vertical and even inverted surfaces in the same manner as *body modification* (*adhesive grip*). If matter-based, you attune your extremities' molecular composition to match the surface; if energy-based, you flow across the surface (roiling flame, arcs of electricity, etc.). You can use this technique to walk on water or other fluids, though it does not protect against the effects of fluids like acid or magma unless you have the properties of such substances at the time.

### Multi-Element
**Power Points:** See text

**Effect:** You can take on the properties of more than one type of matter or energy at once. You can sustain up to one-half your Quantum score in different substances at once, which also requires spending three power points for each substance beyond the first. You must declare which portions of your body have the properties of each substance.

### Phasing
**Power Points:** 2

**Effect:** By touching a physical or energy barrier — rock wall, wood floor, electrical field, etc. — and attuning your molecular composition to it, you can "phase" through it without harm. You move at half your tactical speed and have no normal means of perception while within the object. Individual novas modulate their powers instinctively, so this technique does not work against *armor*, *force field* or other powers that characters manifest, with the exception of the manifestations of *elemental anima*. It can be used against devices that emulate quantum power effects.

### Reflexive Change
**Power Points:** 3 or 1; see text

**Effect:** This technique functions like the reflexive extra (see above). Spend 3 power points if *element chameleon* is not yet active; otherwise, you can make a *reflexive change* with 1 power point.

## Empathic Manipulation

*"You should be very afraid of what I can do. Very afraid."*

Quantum [Mind-Affecting]

**Level:** 1

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./level)

**Target:** 1 creature

**Duration:** 10 min./level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Power Resistance:** Yes

**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You can detect and manipulate a single target's emotions, making them far stronger or weaker, as you wish. While you can change a target's emotional intensity, you have no control over what the target does. For instance, you could heighten a subject's anger at the government into a blinding rage, but it's up to her what she does next — it could be anything from a vitriolic letter-writing campaign to walking into the nearest courthouse with an automatic weapon blazing.

**Effect:** Sensing a target's emotions requires a successful Sense Motive check, adding your Quantum score as a bonus on the roll. If successful, you can adjust the target's emotion by a number of steps up to your Quantum score. The columns listed are general emotional states; the GM may consider additional options.

The target's normal emotional state returns once the effect ends, though this may be dependent upon her circumstances at the time.

| Sadness/ Happiness | Anger | Lust | Love | Hatred | Jealousy/ Envy |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not sad/ happy | Not angry | Not lustful | Apathetic | Not hateful | Not jealous/ envious |
| Sad/ happy | Angry | Interested | Like | Dislike | Jealous/ envious |
| Depressed/ elated | Enraged | Desirous | Love | Hatred | Greedy |
| Distraught/ ecstatic | Berserk | Uncontrollable lust | Mad love | Blind hatred | Blind jealousy/ envy |

## Entropy Control

*"The powers of the universe are mine to command!"*

Quantum

**Level:** 3

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** See text

**Effect:** See text

**Duration:** See text

**Saving Throw:** See text
**Power Resistance:** See text
**Power Points:** See text

**Description:** You can tap into, summon and manipulate entropy the same way other novas play with fire or ice.

**Effect:** In d20 System terms, entropic effects are comprised of negative energy. Pick two of the listed techniques when you first take the power; the rest are purchased with additional power slots.

## Bioentropy Storm

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
**Area:** Spherical spread (10-ft. radius/level)
**Duration:** Instantaneous
**Saving Throw:** Fortitude half
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 3

**Effect:** You cause a sudden tumult of entropic effects relating to organic creatures — victims age, experience spontaneous injuries and suffer other biological breakdowns. Each target within the area must succeed at a Fortitude save or suffer 1 point of ability damage to Strength, Dexterity and Constitution.

## Breakdown

**Range:** Close (25 feet + 5 feet/2 levels)
**Target:** 1 mechanical object
**Duration:** Instantaneous
**Saving Throw:** None
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 3

**Effect:** Make a check with (10 + 1/2 your character level + your Quantum score) against the object's break DC; if successful, you cause the targeted machine or other inorganic device to stop functioning as some part of it breaks, wears out or loses power. The object is not destroyed, but it is nonfunctional until repaired.

Specific break DCs depend on the objects involved. As a general rule, simple objects with few moving parts (mechanical lock, revolver) have DCs around 30; more complex and larger objects (computer, jet) have DCs closer to 20.

## Entropic Shield

**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)
**Power Points:** 3

**Effect:** You disrupt the force of attacks upon you by heightening their entropic reactions. This provides negative energy resistance equal to your Quantum score.

## Probability Corruption

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
**Target:** 1 target
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)
**Saving Throw:** None
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 3

**Effect:** With a successful ranged touch attack, you focus the forces of entropy on a single target, increasing the changes that she will fail whatever tasks she attempts. The target suffers a penalty equal to your Quantum score on attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks and ability checks.



## ESP

*"There are three men inside... one of them is setting the timer on a bomb!"*
Quantum
**Level:** 1
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)
**Area:** Spherical emanation (10-ft. radius/level)
**Duration:** 1 min./level (D)
**Saving Throw:** None
**Power Resistance:** No
**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You attune to the ambient quantum flow to sense things at distances far removed from your physical location.

**Effect:** You don't need line of sight or line of effect, but your familiarity with the locale affects the clarity of your perception (see below). You can't relocate your position of view once *ESP* is engaged, but you can rotate your perception in all directions. Senses enhanced through external means (e.g., night vision goggles) don't work through *ESP*.

| Familiarity | Clarity of Perception |
|---|---|
| Unfamiliar/ never seen | Very hazy, as though sensing through fog; one sense (sight, hearing, etc.) only. |
| Viewed once | Blurred, one sense; or very hazy, all normal senses. |
| Seen casually | Perfect, one sense; or blurred, all normal senses; or very hazy, one superhuman or quantum sense. |
| Studied carefully | Near-perfect, all normal senses; blurred, superhuman or quantum senses. |
| Very familiar | Perfect with normal or superhuman or quantum senses. |

### Extras

*Distant Scan:* Range becomes 1,000 miles + 500 miles per level. However, you may take no other actions, or even perceive your immediate surroundings, while scanning. Further, you can sense no better than casually regardless of how familiar you are with the locale. You may take this extra a second time, doubling the listed range per level (and the corresponding power point cost). *Cost: 2* pp.

## Flight

*"Look! Up in the sky!"*

Quantum

**Level:** 2

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Personal

**Target:** You

**Duration:** 10 min./level

**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You can fly through the air without artificial support.

**Effect:** You can fly at a speed of 10 feet per Quantum (reduced by 10 feet if you carry a medium or heavy load) with good maneuverability. You can ascend at half speed and descend at double speed. Using *flight* requires only as much concentration as walking, so you can attack or manifest powers normally. You can use *flight* to charge but not run, and you cannot carry aloft more weight than your maximum load.

You can hustle at 10 times your speed for long-distance movement without taking nonlethal damage; a forced march still requires Constitution checks (see the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 9, "Movement").

Should the power's duration expire while you are still aloft, the effect dissipates slowly. You float downward 60 feet per round for 1d6 rounds. If you do not reach the ground in that amount of time, you fall the rest of the distance, taking 1d6 points of damage per 10 feet of fall.

### Extras

*Manifestation:* You have some obvious means of flying (wings, flame blasting from the soles of your feet, etc.). This requires *body modification*, *elemental anima* or some other power to act as the flight source. You cannot fly while the *manifestation* is negated by some reasonable method (wings bound, feet doused with water); however, your cost to use *flight* is reduced by −1 power point. *Cost:* 0 pp.

*Underwater:* You can propel yourself underwater and through other liquids at the same rate. *Cost:* 1 pp.
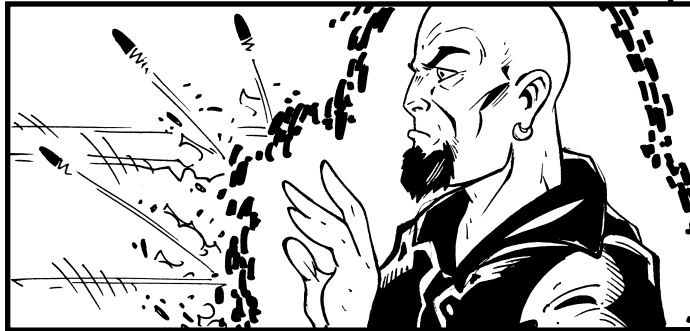
## Force Field

*"What are you, stupid? Bullets can't hurt me!"*

Quantum

**Level:** 1

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Personal

**Target:** You

**Duration:** 1 min./level (D)

**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You generate a quantum aura that protects you against harm.

**Effect:** You gain a +4 deflection bonus to Armor Class. This bonus increases by +1 every three character levels, to a maximum of +10.

### Extras

*Mega-Field:* You push your *force field*'s strength to the utmost, gaining double the power's deflection bonus for 1 round per level. *Cost:* 2 pp.

*Wall:* You create a force barrier 1 inch thick and up to one 5-foot square/2 levels within close range (25 feet + 5 feet/2 levels). It has hardness equal to your Quantum score and hit points equal to twice your character level. The *wall* is stationary once created, although you can take a standard action to move it with you. If a section drops to 0 hit points, the *wall* is breached. *Cost:* 2 pp.

## Gravity Control

*"They say gravity is a weak quantum force. How wrong they are...."*

Quantum

**Level:** 3

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** See text

**Effect:** See text

**Duration:** See text

**Saving Throw:** See text

**Power Resistance:** See text

**Power Points:** 3

**Description:** You can change local gravity field strengths to make targets lighter or heavier, or even propel yourself through the air.

**Effect:** Targets are affected by gravity change as noted below. A target with *gravity control* subject to gravity change can make a DC 15 Fortitude save. If successful, she does not suffer the reduced Dexterity in low gravity and suffers only a −2 penalty to her abilities in high gravity.

| Gravity (g) | Modification |
|---|---|
| 0.5 g or less | +2 Strength, +2 Constitution; −2 Dexterity<br>A fall deals 1d6 points of damage every 20 feet. |
| 1.5 g or greater | −4 Strength, −4 Dexterity<br>A fall deals 1d6 points of damage every 5 feet. |

This power affects weight, not mass (use a character's or object's listed weight as its standard mass).

The listed techniques are common expressions of this power; pick two when you first take the power (the rest are purchased with additional power slots).

## Gravitic Blast

**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
**Target:** 1 creature or object
**Duration:** Instantaneous
**Saving Throw:** Fortitude half
**Power Resistance:** Yes

**Effect:** You manipulate micropockets of intense gravity to bash and tear at a target, inflicting 1d6 points of force damage per two character levels (maximum 10d6). The power otherwise functions like *quantum bolt*.

## Gravitic Field

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
**Area:** Up to one 10-ft. cube/2 levels
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)
**Saving Throw:** None; see text

**Effect:** You alter gravity by up to 0.5 g per Quantum. This shifts weights the same amount (e.g., a 200 lb. object in a 1.5-g environment weighs 300 lb.). A creature whose weight exceeds her maximum carrying capacity becomes too heavy to move, and must make a Strength check against DC (10 + your Quantum score) to keep from collapsing under her own weight.

If you shift the field to negative gravity, all unattached objects and creatures within the area fall upward and reach the top of the area in 1 round. If some solid object (such as a ceiling) is encountered in this fall, falling objects and creatures strike it in the same manner as they would during a normal downward fall. If an object or creature reaches the top of the area without striking anything, it remains there, oscillating slightly, until the power ends — at which point, affected targets fall downward.

Provided it has something to hold onto, a target caught in the area can attempt a Reflex save to secure itself when the power manifests. Subjects who can fly can keep themselves from falling.

Instead of affecting everything in the area, you can adjust only a specific object or creature's gravity field on a successful ranged touch attack.

## Gravitic Flight

**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 min./level (D)
**Power Points:** 2

**Effect:** You manipulate your local gravity for airborne movement. This functions just like *flight*, except that you move at a speed of 5 feet per Quantum and have poor maneuverability.

## Gravitic Shield

**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)

**Effect:** You create a fluctuating gravity field that grants you a +8 deflection bonus to Armor Class against physical attacks and a +2 deflection bonus to Armor Class against energy attacks. This bonus increases by +1 every four character levels, to a maximum of +13 against physical attacks and +7 against energy attacks.

## Gravitokinesis

**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
**Target or Targets:** See text

**Duration:** Concentration (up to 1 round/level) or instantaneous; see text

**Saving Throw:** Will negates (object) or None; see text

**Power Resistance:** Yes (object); see text

**Effect:** You can manipulate a target's gravity field to pick it up, hold it, throw it, etc. This follows the same rules as *telekinesis*, except that you are considered three character levels lower for all details except duration.



# Healing

*"Don't worry; I'll have you fixed up in no time!"*

Quantum

**Level:** 1

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** Creature touched

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Saving Throw:** Will half (harmless)

**Power Resistance:** Yes (harmless)

**Power Points:** Variable; see text

**Description:** You can heal almost any injury to yourself or another by manipulating quantum energies.

**Effect:** Each power point you spend heals 1d8+1 hit points of damage.

## Extras

*Cure:* You can cleanse a target of any poison or disease, ending immediately all temporary poison effects and removing any diseases or parasites that the subject suffers from currently. Additionally, the target is immune to the effects of poison or disease for a duration of 1 minute per your character level.

The power does not reverse instantaneous poison effects, such as hit point damage, temporary ability damage, or effects that don't go away on their own. It also does not prevent reinfection after a new exposure to the same disease at a later date. *Cost:* 3 pp.

*Regenerate:* You can reattach a target's severed body parts and grow back limbs or organs. This functions like the Regeneration superhuman feat enhancement, except that you spend all the power points at once (no more than 6 per round, however, until the total points required are spent). *Cost:* Variable; see text.



# Holo

*"Strike me — the real me — if you can!"*

Quantum

**Level:** 2

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

**Effect:** Figment that cannot extend beyond four 10-ft. cubes + one 10-ft. cube/level (S)

**Duration:** Concentration + 1 round/level

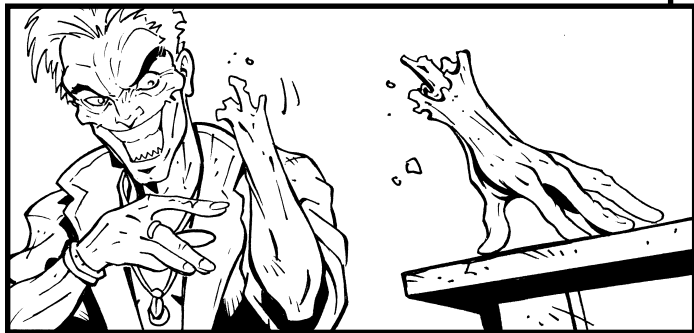**Saving Throw:** Will disbelief (if interacted with)

**Power Resistance:** No

**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You can create images — illusions, if you will — with which to trick and befuddle others.

**Effect:** This power creates a visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile or flavor illusion, as visualized by you. Specify which sense you affect when you select the power. You can move the illusion within the limits of the size of the effect. It disappears when struck by an opponent unless you cause the illusion to react appropriately.

## Extras

*Extra Sense:* You can create illusions that affect two senses at once. *Cost:* 2 pp.



# Homunculus

*"You know what they say — two heads are better than one."*

Quantum

**Level:** 3

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Personal

**Effect:** 1 animated limb or creature separate from your body
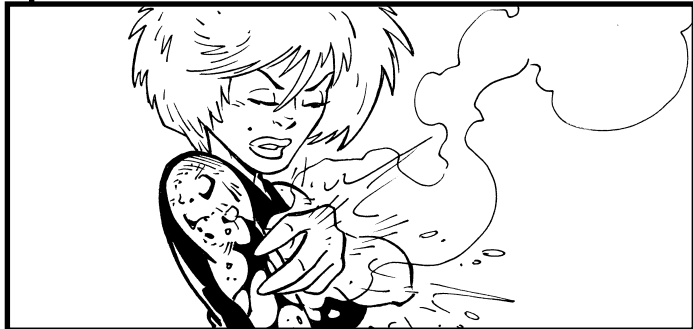
**Duration:** See text

**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You can detach portions of your body that you retain control of, create small creatures from your own flesh, or even break yourself down into a swarm of tiny creatures!

**Effect:** With a successful DC 20 Fortitude save, you can detach a body part up to an entire limb (except your head) or extrude a por-

tion of your flesh to shape into a creature. This is a standard action; recombining it is a move action with no additional roll needed. Once created, a *homunculus* requires no further power point expenditure to maintain.

A creature is a warped version of you — whether miniature (size Small) or twisted in appearance (if you want a perfect duplicate, use *clone* instead). You can shape the creature to have a different appearance with a successful Craft (visual art) check (the GM sets the DC depending on what you hope to achieve).

The *homunculus*'s base attack bonus, Armor Class, saves, ability scores are equal to one-half your scores (round down). Its speed equals yours. It has none of your superhuman feats or quantum powers. With a successful DC 15 Will save, you can shift points from one ability to another at the time of creation (every ability must retain a minimum score of 1).

You lose the limb or mass and 1d10 hit points while a *homunculus* exists. It gains hit points equal to your character level plus the number of hit points you lost. If it is destroyed, you recover hit points as normal, but the limb or mass does not regenerate. You can absorb the *homunculus* at any time, regaining the limb or mass, hit points and any experiences that it had.

You can control its actions as long as it remains in line of sight up to 120 feet. Beyond that range, the *homunculus* stops moving after completing any assigned task.

Detaching a body part or creating a single *homunculus* counts as a free technique; you may choose one additional free technique and purchase others with available power slots.

## Multiples

**Power Points:** 1

**Effect:** You can create a total number of homunculi equal to your Quantum score. All details apply as noted above, except that you lose only 1d6 hit points for each one created; the additional power point cost applies to each *homunculus* created beyond the first.

## Regenerate

**Power Points:** See text

**Effect:** You can regenerate the limb or mass lost from a destroyed *homunculus*. This functions like the Regeneration superhuman feat enhancement, except that you spend all the power points at once (no more than 6 per round, however, until the total points required are spent).

## Swarm

**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)

**Power Points:** 4

**Effect:** Instead of using the base *homunculus* effect, you can split your entire body into thousands of Fine creatures that act as a single creature. You retain your standard hit points, Armor Class and other abilities (including superhuman feats and powers). Your *swarm* occupies a square (or a cube, if flying) 10 feet on a side with a reach of 0 feet. You can move through occupied squares without impediment, but are subject to attacks of opportunity.

While a *swarm*, you have no clear front or back and no discernable anatomy, which conveys the following advantages: not subject to critical hits or flanking; immune to all weapon damage; immune to targeting effects (whether single- or multiple-targets), with the exception of mind-affecting effects; cannot be staggered, tripped, grappled, or bull rushed; can move through cracks or holes large enough to fit a Fine creature; are not subject to a miss chance for concealment or cover.

In turn, you cannot grapple an opponent, you suffer half again as much damage (+50%) from effects that affect an area, and you are susceptible to high winds (treat the *swarm* as a single creature of Fine size for wind effects). Upon falling to 0 hit points, you re-incorporate into your natural form.

Instead of a standard melee attack, you deal 1d6 points of damage per four character levels automatically to any creature whose space you occupy at the end of your move, with no attack roll needed. You do not threaten creatures in your square and cannot make attacks of opportunity.

Any living creature vulnerable to your *swarm* damage that begins its turn within your square is nauseated for 1 round; a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Con modifier) negates the effect. Using skills that involve patience and concentration within the *swarm* requires a DC 20 Concentration check.
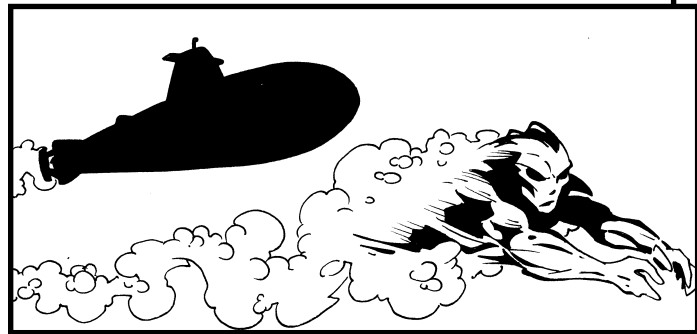


## Hypermovement

*"'Faster than a speeding bullet'? Sounds slow to me."*

Quantum

**Level:** 2

**Manifestation Time:** 1 free action

**Range:** Personal

**Target:** You

**Duration:** 1 min./level (D)

**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You can run, fly or swim at super-fast speeds, even outpacing bullet trains and jets.

**Effect:** When you select the power, choose which mode of movement to enhance: running, swimming or *flight*. You cannot use this power with movement techniques from powers such as *elemental anima* or *gravity control*.

Multiply your speed by your Quantum to determine your tactical *hypermovement* speed. (So, a character with Quantum 6 who takes *hyperrunning* can move 180 feet as a standard action, while a character with Quantum 4 who takes *hyperflight* can move at 160 feet.) You also gain a +1 circumstance bonus to Armor Class for every 100 feet that you move each round. Calculate local and overland movement rates from this speed as normal (*Player's Handbook*, Chapter 9, "Movement").

## Extras

*Boost:* Calculate your overland movement by multiplying your tactical movement (above) by 10; this becomes your overland speed in miles per hour. You break the sound barrier if you exceed 762 mph (the speed of sound at sea level), triggering a sonic boom; handle as the Thunderclap superhuman feat enhancement with the [explosive] extra along your backward trajectory. Using this extra requires your full concentration; you can take no other action and are considered flat-footed if attacked. The GM may call for a Reflex save if a sudden obstruction or rapid change of direction is needed (DC at GM's discretion). *Cost:* 2 pp.

*Multiple:* You have *hypermovement* in one additional movement mode. *Cost:* 1 pp.
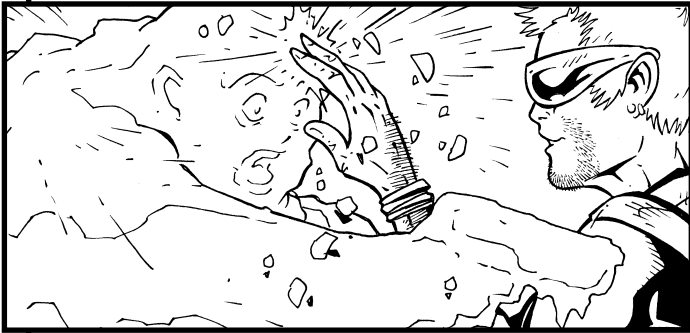
## Immobilize

*"Struggling shall only ensnare you deeper in my web."*

Quantum

**Level:** 1
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Touch
**Target:** 1 creature
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D); see text
**Saving Throw:** Fortitude, Reflex or Will negates; see text
**Power Resistance:** No
**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You can ensnare targets in some way. The specific method depends on your powers — whether trapping a target in a block of ice, secreting a paralytic poison into her bloodstream, or simply imprisoning her within a quantum field.

**Effect:** You paralyze a target on a successful melee touch attack. She is aware and breathes normally but cannot take any actions. Each subsequent round on her turn, she may attempt a saving throw to break free.

Determine the type of imprisonment when you select the power; this also determines the type of save a target makes — physical imprisonment allows a Reflex save, drugs or physiological impairment allows a Fortitude save, and mental imprisonment allows a Will save.



## Immolate

*"Embrace me and know the meaning of pain!"*

Quantum

**Level:** 2
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Personal; see text
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)
**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You wreathe yourself in flame, electricity, raw quantum forces or some other dangerous phenomenon, protecting you from attacks of that same energy type and causing damage to anyone who touches you.

**Effect:** Choose a specific phenomenon when you select the power. You gain resistance to energy equal to one-half your Quantum score (round down) against attacks of the same type as your *immolate* nimbus. Its appearance is typically the same as the phenomenon — crackling blue for electricity, red flames for fire, clear crystal for ice, etc. You may determine a different color, but this cannot change once the power is selected. If the phenomenon produces light, the nimbus illuminates a 10-foot radius around you.

An attacker striking you with its body or a handheld weapon deals normal damage, but takes 1d6 points of damage +1 point per character level (maximum +15) in the process. The damage type is dependent upon the phenomenon you selected, and the attacker can apply power resistance and other defenses as appropriate. Creatures wielding weapons with exceptional reach are not subject to this damage if they attack you.

### Extras

*Multiple:* You can manifest a nimbus of two distinct phenomenon at the same time. *Cost:* 2 pp.

*Selective:* You can shunt the damaging effects of the nimbus away from a portion of your body (hands, face, feet, etc.) so that you may interact with your environment without causing damage to it. *Cost:* 1 pp.
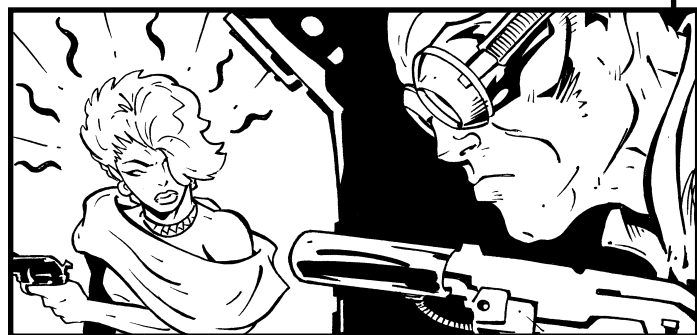


## Intuition

*"I have a bad feeling about this."*

Quantum

**Level:** 1
**Manifestation Time:** 1 free action
**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
**Effect:** See text
**Duration:** Constant; see text
**Power Points:** 0

**Description:** This sensory power warns you of impending dangers or threats.

**Effect:** When the GM designates that you are the target of some threat within close range — you are about to trip a trap, someone points a gun at you, etc. — you may make a Sense Motive check with a bonus equal to your Quantum score to be aware of it automatically. The check is a free action; the DC depends on the severity and immediacy of the danger, as noted on the corresponding chart.

| DC | Category of Danger |
|----|--------------------|
| 13 | Imminent *and* severe, directed (a lethal attack directed at you) |
| 15 | Imminent *and* severe, general (a bomb is about to detonate in the area) |
| 18 | Imminent *or* severe, directed (triggering a tripwire, someone is moving to get a clear shot on you) |
| 20 | Imminent *or* severe, general (an earthquake starts, the floor may give way) |

When aware of a threat, you are not considered flat-footed and may act in a surprise round before regular rounds begin (see the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 8: Combat, "Initiative," *Surprise*).

This power is always active and requires no power points to maintain; however, it alerts you only to dangers to yourself and offers no indication of the severity or source of the possible threat.

### Extras

*Others:* You can detect dangers that anyone around you is subject to within 10 feet per level. This extra lasts 10 minutes per level. *Cost:* 2 pp.
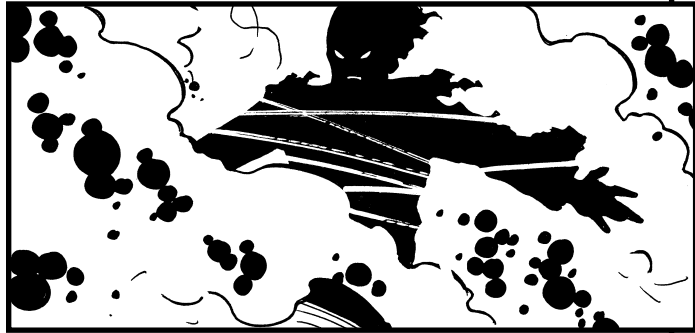
*Premonition:* You may glean the general nature (refer to chart), degree and direction of the danger. This extra lasts 10 minutes per level. *Cost:* 2 pp.



## Invisibility

*"Come out, come out, wherever you are, Ether Girl — ooofff!"*

Quantum
**Level:** 2
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 min./level (D); see text
**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You vanish from sight, and possibly from other senses as well.

**Effect:** You are undetectable by all forms of sight except those that state explicitly that they can perceive invisible targets. You are not silent, and certain other conditions can render you detectable (such as stepping in a puddle).

This power works only for your body; rendering your clothes, effects or carried items invisible requires the Attunement background feat. Any items covered by Attunement are invisible when in your possession while you are invisible, and become visible if you drop them or put them down. Any part of an item that you carry which extends more than 10 feet from you becomes visible.

Your *invisibility* disrupts if you attack any creature, rendering you visible for one full round. For purposes of this power, an attack includes any power targeting a foe or whose area or effect includes a foe. (Exactly who is a foe depends on your perceptions.) Actions directed at unattended objects do not disrupt the power and causing harm indirectly is not an attack.

### Extras

*Enhanced:* The power renders you invisible to one additional sense. *Cost:* 2 pp.



## Invulnerability

*"Is that all you've got?"*

Quantum
**Level:** 2
**Manifestation Time:** See text
**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** Constant; see text
**Power Points:** See text

**Description:** You gain tremendous protection against a specific attack form.

**Effect:** When you first select the power, determine which damage or effect type it applies to: acid, bludgeoning, cold, compulsion, darkness, death, electricity, fear, fire, force, healing, language-dependent, light, mind-affecting, negative energy, piercing, positive energy, slashing or sonic.

If the power applies to an effect that inflicts damage, you gain damage reduction or energy resistance against that specific effect equal to three times your Quantum score. Further, you are not subject to critical hits from attacks of that type.

If the power applies to a non-damaging effect (e.g., compulsion, fear, mind-affecting), you gain a +2 bonus per Quantum on relevant saving throws to resist it. Further, if you fall subject to that specific effect, its listed duration is halved (minimum 1).

*Invulnerability* remains active only as long as you have at least 2 unspent power points (this applies solely to your own supply; you cannot use power points stored in eufiber or by other means).

### Extras

*Multiple:* You gain *invulnerability* to one additional damage or effect type. *Cost:* You must keep two additional power points unspent.



## Luck

*"That was a close one!"*

Quantum
**Level:** 1
**Manifestation Time:** 1 free action

**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 round/2 levels
**Power Points:** 1

**Description:** You enjoy extraordinary luck.

**Effect:** On your action each round while the power is active, allocate a number of points up to your Quantum score as a bonus to your Armor Class or among any attack rolls, damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks or ability checks you make. So, a character with Quantum 5 could apply a +2 bonus to his Armor Class, a +1 bonus on his attack roll and a +2 bonus on his damage roll one round; apply a +5 bonus on his Reflex save the next round; and so on. You may use *luck* a number of times per day equal to your Charisma modifier.

## Magnetic Mastery

*"I hold this city in the palm of my hand. Observe."*

Quantum
**Level:** 3
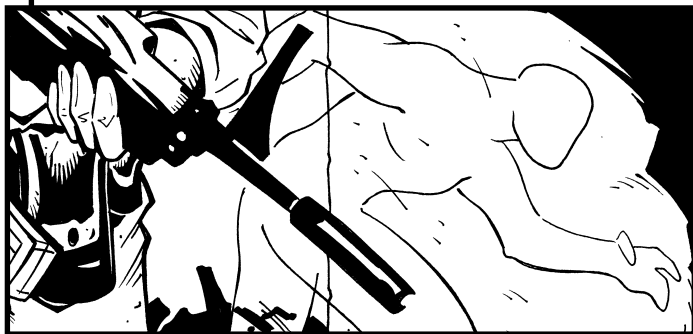**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** See text
**Effect:** See text
**Duration:** See text
**Saving Throw:** See text
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 3

**Description:** You can control and manipulate the forces of magnetism to lift and move metallic objects and even generate powerful magnetic blasts.

**Effect:** As a basic capability of this power, you may take a free action to perform minor tasks like sense magnetic north, gauge the strength of the local magnetic field, and so on. (The GM may call for a DC 10 Spot check in such cases.)

Choose two techniques when you first take the power; the rest are purchased with additional power slots.

### EMP

**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
**Area:** 10-ft.-radius spread
**Duration:** Instantaneous; see text
**Saving Throw:** See text

**Effect:** You emit an electromagnetic pulse that disrupts electronic equipment. Objects affected become functional again after 1 minute per your character level, although the GM may determine that minor devices are shorted out permanently. An object hardened against energy surges makes a Fortitude save to resist with a bonus equal to 2 + one-half its hardness (round down). The GM may allow a save for any gadgets that a target has (the gadget then uses the target's save bonus).

### Magnetic Blast

**Range:** 150 ft.
**Area:** 150-ft. line
**Duration:** Instantaneous
**Saving Throw:** Reflex half

**Effect:** You project a blast of magnetic force that deals 1d6 points of force damage per two character levels (maximum 10d6) to each target within its area.

### Magnetic Field

**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
**Area:** Spherical spread (5-ft. radius/level)
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)

**Effect:** You generate an intense magnetic field that imposes a −2 penalty per three character levels (maximum −12) on all checks involving

electronic equipment within the area. The GM may allow objects which are hardened against energy surges to make a save to resist, as with *EMP*.

## Magnetic Levitation

**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 min./level (D)

**Effect:** You manipulate ambient magnetic fields to pick yourself up and fly. This functions like *flight*, except that you move at a speed of 5 feet per Quantum and have average maneuverability.

## Magnetic Shield

**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)

**Effect:** You polarize metal weapons and projectiles away from you. Gain an Armor Class bonus equal to twice your Quantum score against attacks composed of a magnetic material (bullets, knives, armored fists, etc.) and against other powers that use magnetism.

## Magnetic Storm

**Range:** 0
**Area:** Spherical spread (5-ft. radius/2 levels)
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)
**Saving Throw:** Reflex half

**Effect:** You send all unattended ferrous objects of 40 pounds or less around you in a whirling "magnetic tornado" (objects in holsters, held or otherwise secured are immune). This inflicts 1d6 points of damage per three character levels (maximum 6d6) to all targets within the area (Reflex half). Damage is typically bludgeoning, but the GM may allow slashing or piercing damage depending on the objects hurled about. Targets within the *magnetic storm* are considered shaken each round they remain in the area unless they succeed at a second Reflex save.

## Magnetokinesis

**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
**Target or Targets:** See text
**Duration:** Concentration (up to 1 round/level) or instantaneous; see text
**Saving Throw:** Will negates (object) or None; see text
**Power Resistance:** Yes (object); see text

**Effect:** You can manipulate a metal object to pick it up, hold it, throw it, etc. This follows the same rules as *telekinesis*, except that you can only affect materials subject to magnetic attraction.



## Matter Creation

*"How we gonna pay for it? Don't worry; I can whip up some cash."*
Quantum
**Level:** 3
**Manifestation Time:** 1 minute
**Range:** 0
**Effect:** Unattended object of nonliving plant or mineral matter, up to 1 cu. ft./level

**Duration:** Varies (D)
**Saving Throw:** None
**Power Resistance:** No
**Power Points:** See text

**Description:** You can literally create something out of nothing, from matter in its raw form like ordinary iron or wood to even actual objects and devices like a sword or a briefcase.

**Effect:** The volume of the item created cannot exceed 1 cubic foot per character level. You must succeed on an appropriate Craft or other relevant skill check to make a complex item, as determined by the GM. The power points required and the duration of existence for the created item varies with its relative hardness, complexity and rarity, as indicated on the following table.

| PP | Duration | Category |
|----|----------|----------|
| 2 | 2 hr./level | *Simple Object:* raw organic material, fruit, rope, a knife) |
| 3 | 1 hr./level | *Complex Object:* raw minerals, money, furniture, a book |
| 4 | 30 min./level | *Simple Device:* a clock, a lamp, precious gems |
| 5 | 20 min./level | *Complex Device:* a car, a firearm, a personal computer |
| 6 | 10 min./level | *Very Complex Device:* a jet, a supercomputer, a missile |

## Memory Alteration

*"We're best friends; don't you remember?"*
Quantum [Mind-Affecting]
**Level:** 2
**Manifestation Time:** See text
**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
**Target:** One living creature
**Duration:** Permanent
**Saving Throw:** Will negates
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You can alter existing memories or implant false ones. You cannot read the target's thoughts; that requires *telepathy*.

**Effect:** You decide the degree of intended memory change, as listed on the chart below. You must then maintain line of sight and focus on the target for a corresponding number of rounds. The target makes a Will save, with a bonus depending on the degree of memory change. If successful, she resists the attempt; if she exceeds the save DC by 10 or more, she is aware that someone tried to affect her mind in some way. The GM may keep secret whether you were successful.

You can also use *memory alteration* to restore a subject's memories that were changed by some other use of this power.

| Rounds to Concentrate | Save Bonus | Degree of Alteration |
|-----------------------|------------|----------------------|
| 1 | +0 | *Trivial:* Forget home address or your name. |
| 5 | +1 | *Minor:* Forget anniversary, change basic job facts. |
| 10 | +2 | *Major:* Change vital personal facts, privileged information, perception of relationship with a single individual. |
| 20 | +4 | *Severe:* Change her entire past or her perception of relationships with everyone she knows. |

## Mental Blast

*"All the armor in the world won't protect you from my mental might!"*

Quantum [Mind-Affecting]
**Level:** 2
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
**Target:** 1 living creature
**Duration:** Instantaneous
**Saving Throw:** Will half
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You project your "quantum consciousness" directly into a target's mind, causing psychic pain and injury.

**Effect:** You inflict 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per two character levels (maximum 10d6).

### Extras

*Lethal Blast:* The power inflicts lethal damage. *Cost:* 2 pp.

## Mental Scan

*"I sense him... perhaps a mile away, and moving off fast!"*

Quantum [Mind-Affecting]
**Level:** 1
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** 10 miles/level
**Target:** 1 living creature
**Duration:** Concentration, up to 1 min./level
**Saving Throw:** Will partial; see text
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 1

**Description:** You can scan for a specific person's "mental signature."

**Effect:** Declare the person you wish to scan for; the target must make a Will save if she is within the power's range. If she fails, you know instinctively where she is in relation to you and her general mental state (calm, agitated, happy). If she succeeds, you know only that she is somewhere within range.

If you can describe the mind only generically — "I'm looking for the mind of the nearest UN official" — the target receives a +8 bonus on her Will save.

### Extras

*Channeling:* You can use any mind-affecting powers on a target whom you've found with *mental scan*, as long as she remains within range of this power. *Cost:* 2 pp.

*Enhanced Scan:* A target suffers a −4 penalty to her Will save to avoid the scan. *Cost:* 1 pp.

*Increased Range:* Your range expands to 50 miles per character level. *Cost:* 1 pp.
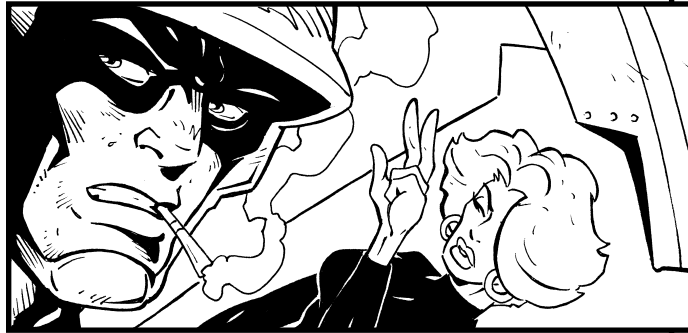
## Mirage

*"I'm telling you I saw him! He was standing right there!"*

Quantum [Mind-Affecting]
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Medium (100 ft. +10 ft./level)
**Target:** 1 living creature
**Duration:** Concentration + 1 round/level
**Saving Throw:** Will disbelief; see text
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You project a mental image, or phantasm, into a single target's mind.

**Effect:** The target makes a Will save to resist *mirage* initially, with a bonus depending on its complexity (see below). If she fails, she is subject to the phantasm for the power's duration. The target may make a new save if the phantasm does not react as she expects (e.g., a stranger treats her like an old friend) or if you change the complexity.

| Save Bonus | Phantasm Complexity |
|---|---|
| 0 | *Simple:* Change appearance or nature of existing objects or persons; generate phantasms of minor objects or people where none exist. |
| +2 | *Complex:* Change appearance or nature of important existing objects or persons; generate phantasms of important objects or people where none exist; minor changes to overall environment. |
| +4 | *Very Complex:* Phantasm changes entirely the target's environment or the people and objects around her. |

## Molecular Manipulation

*"Your tanks will be putty in my hands, General!"*

Quantum
**Level:** 3
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** See text
**Effect:** See text
**Duration:** See text
**Saving Throw:** See text
**Power Resistance:** See text
**Power Points:** 3

**Description:** You wield ultimate control over inorganic and unliving organic molecules.

**Effect:** While you can manipulate nonliving matter, you may not create objects from thin air nor can you change or affect living things in any way. As a basic capability of this power, with a successful DC 15 Craft (chemical) check you can determine the chemical composition and properties of a substance that you can see within 10 feet per level.
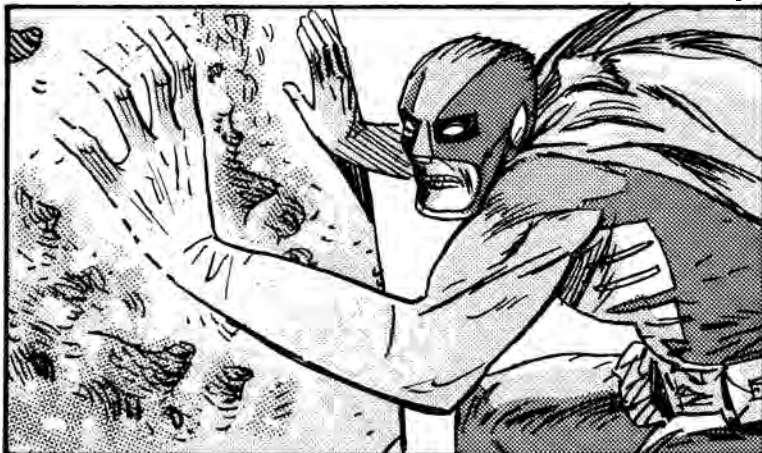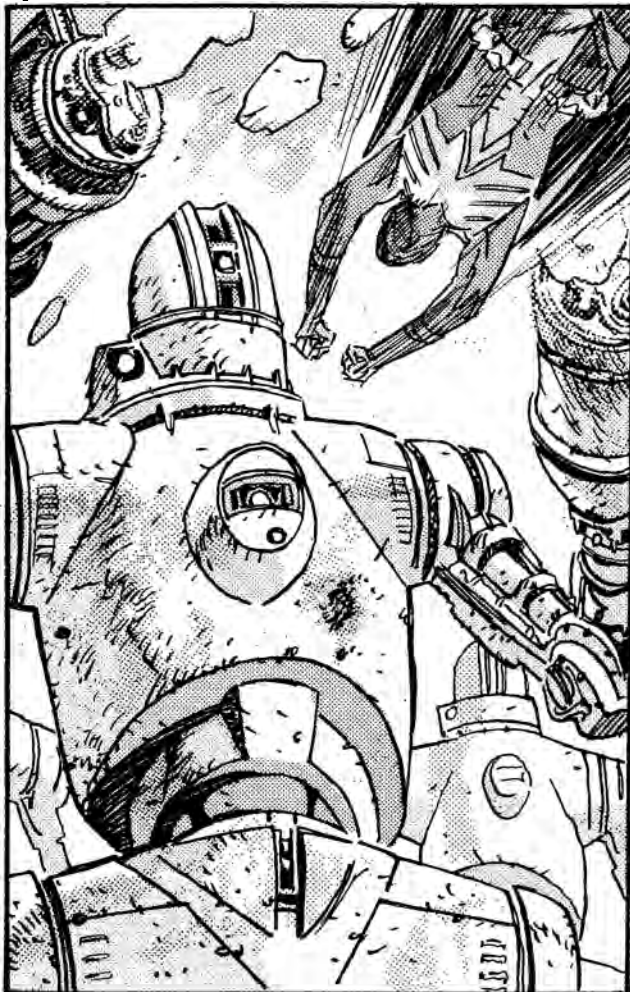
Choose two techniques when you first take the power; the rest are purchased with additional power slots.

## Animation

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
**Targets:** See text
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)

**Effect:** You give inanimate objects mobility and a semblance of life. Each such animated object then makes an immediate attack on whomever or whatever you designate.

An animated object can be of any physical material. You may animate one Small or smaller object or an equivalent number of larger objects per character level. A Medium object counts as 2 Small or smaller objects, a Large object as 4, a Huge object as 8, a Gargantuan object as 16, and a Colossal object as 32. You can change the designated target or targets as a move action. The power cannot animate objects that a creature is carrying or wearing.

## Destruction

**Range:** Touch
**Target:** 1 object
**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Effect:** With a successful melee touch attack, you unravel or destroy the molecular bonds holding a targeted object together. This has the same effect as *disintegration*.

## Modification

**Range:** Touch
**Effect:** Inorganic, unliving object up to 1 cu. ft./level

**Duration:** 1 min./level (D); see text

**Effect:** You make physical changes to an object's current shape — making a hole through it, covering its surface with spikes, making it grow crude limbs, and so on. This differs from the *transmutation* technique in that you are manipulating the existing object rather than changing it entirely into something else. The volume of the object to be modified cannot exceed 1 cubic foot per character level. You may modify only a portion of an object, up to the listed volume.

You can use *modification* to repair damage to an existing object — you repair 5 hit points of damage to the object for each power point you spend (not counting those used to manifest the power). Such repairs are permanent.

## Protection

**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)

**Effect:** You harden air molecules in a thin but durable film that gives you a +4 armor bonus to your Armor Class. This bonus increases by +1 every three character levels, to a maximum +10.

## Transmutation

**Range:** Touch
**Effect:** Unliving object up to 1 cu. ft./level
**Duration:** Varies (D)
**Power Points:** See text

**Effect:** You can convert the object's molecules from one substance to another — e.g., transform a wooden chair into a steel chair

or change water to wine. You cannot change a solid to a liquid, or vice versa. The volume of the object to be changed cannot exceed 1 cubic foot per character level. Appropriate Craft or other relevant skill checks are required to make specific or complex transformations, as determined by the GM. The degree of change dictates the power point cost and the duration of the change, as noted below.

| PP | Duration | Transmutation |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | 2 hr./level | *Change Substance:* Change the elements or substance of which an object is made, but not its size (e.g., change a wooden chair to one of solid gold; change a steel knife to one of silk). |
| 4 | 1 hr./level | *Change Size:* As above, plus you can make the object larger or smaller by up to 10% every two character levels (maximum 100%). |
| 5 | 30 min./level | *Change Shape:* As above, and you can change the object's shape (e.g., change a wooden chair into a lump of gold; change a steel knife into a silk dress). |
| 6 | 10 min./level | *Change Complexity:* As above, plus you can transform the object's nature or complexity — working electrical circuits, moving parts and the like (e.g., you can change a fallen log into a car). |

## Poison

*"Now you know the joys of the Cobra's kiss. A pity you shall take that knowledge to your grave."*

Quantum
**Level:** 2
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Touch
**Target:** 1 creature
**Duration:** Instantaneous
**Saving Throw:** Fortitude half
**Power Resistance:** No
**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You can call upon the venomous powers of natural predators to poison others.

**Effect:** If you hit a target with a successful melee touch attack, the poison deals 1d10 points of temporary Constitution damage immediately and another 1d10 points of temporary Constitution damage 1 minute later. The target negates each instance of damage with a successful a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Wis modifier).

## Pretercognition

*"I can see your future, and the next few minutes don't look good."*

Quantum
**Level:** 3
**Manifestation Time:** 1 minute
**Range:** See text
**Effect:** See text
**Duration:** Special
**Power Points:** 3

**Description:** You can attune to the flux of quantum energies to foresee future events or gain glimpses of the past.

**Effect:** Choose whether you can scan the past or the future when you select the power. You can "read" experiences associated with a specific person, place or object that have occurred or that will occur within 2 hours per Quantum. The base chance for accurate *pretercognition* is 70% + 1% per character level, to a maximum of 90%. If the dice roll fails, you could not gain adequate focus on the quantum energies for an accurate read.

The impressions are clear in the immediate past or future and grow progressively more vague, subjective and surreal the further you scan. If you scan the future, conditions may change depending on the actions you take, making the experiences observed no longer relevant. The GM may apply either circumstance if the alternative would reveal the entire plot of the game and remove any drama and excitement.

### Expanded Timespan

**Effect:** You can scan up to one day per Quantum into the past or future. You can take this technique more than once; each additional purchase multiplies your maximum *pretercognition* timespan by 10.

### Full Control

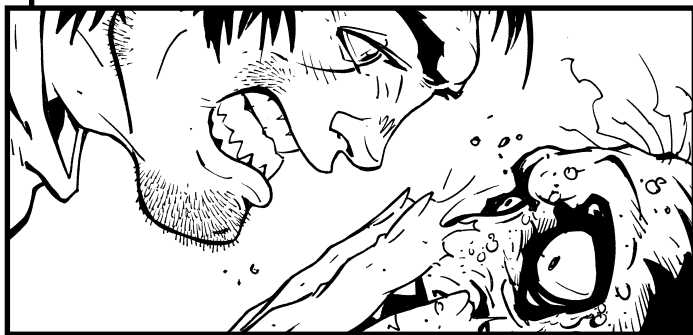**Effect:** You can scan both past and future, though each attempt is a separate use of the power.

## Psychic Shield

*"Keep your filthy thoughts to yourself!"*

Quantum [Mind-Affecting]
**Level:** 1

**Manifestation Time:** 1 free action; see text
**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 10 min./level
**Power Points:** 1

**Description:** You gain a potent defense against powers that assault the mind.

**Effect:** You gain a +4 bonus on your Will save when trying to resist any mind-affecting power. This bonus increases by +1 every three levels (maximum +10). If a mind-affecting power does not allow a save, you may make a Will save (without the +4 bonus) against 10 + 1/2 the attacker's level or Hit Dice. If this power is not active when you are attacked by a mind-affecting power, you may trigger it on the next round, gaining a Will save at that time.

This power does not work against emotion-controlling powers.

## Quantum Bolt

*"Eat hot plasma!"*
Quantum
**Level:** 1
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)
**Effect:** Ray
**Duration:** Instantaneous
**Saving Throw:** None
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** *Quantum bolt* is the general term for one of the most common offensive powers that novas manifest.

**Effect:** You project a beam of energy that strikes a single target on a successful ranged attack roll, inflicting 1d6 points of damage per two character levels (maximum 20d6). You must define the specific energy type when you first purchase the power — acid, cold, darkness, death, electricity, fire, force, light, negative energy, positive energy or sonic.

### Extras

*Extra Energy Type:* The power manifests one additional form of energy. *Cost:* 1 pp.
*Supercharge:* The base damage is 1d10 instead of 1d6. *Cost:* 2 pp.

## Quantum Construct

*"Five of you against one of me? I'd better even the odds a bit...."*
Quantum
**Level:** 3
**Manifestation Time:** 1 round
**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
**Effect:** One or more constructs, no two of which can be more than 30 ft. apart
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)
**Saving Throw:** None
**Power Resistance:** No
**Power Points:** 3

**Description:** You can draw upon raw quantum forces, shaping them into animate constructs that act at your whim.

**Effect:** A construct is clearly unnatural and formed of energy, though it's up to you what it looks like — a fiery "demon," a shimmering rainbow orb, a crackling figure of lightning, etc. The form it takes also dictates the type of damage it inflicts (refer to *quantum bolt* for options). Determine the appearance and damage type when the power is purchased.

You can create a single construct with a number of Hit Dice equal to your character level, or any number of less powerful constructs whose total Hit Dice do not exceed that total. So, a 5th-level character could create one 5 HD construct, one 3 HD construct and one 2 HD construct, or five 1 HD constructs. A *quantum construct*'s capabilities are listed in Table 4—2.

You can direct a construct through force of will to perform any simple action — "attack," "carry this," "open that," etc. Being a shaped matrix of quantum energy, a construct has no will of its own and will continue with the same action unless directed otherwise.

A construct's slam attack deals bludgeoning damage plus damage of the energy type from which it's formed. This energy is otherwise contained, so that the construct can interact with its environment without destroying everything it touches.

You can invest a construct with versions of your own superhuman feats or quantum powers at a cost of 1 additional power point for the first and 2 additional power points for the second, added when the construct is made. You must spend the full amount again to maintain the construct and the invested feats or powers once the initial duration runs out. When the construct manifests the feat or power, you must spend the power points as if you activated it yourself.

Drawing vast amounts of quantum energy like this is draining — to you and to the surrounding environment. You must spend 1 additional power point, cumulatively, each time you use this power while you have a construct active from a previous use.

### Table 4–2: Quantum Construct

**Size:** Small, 1–3 HD; Medium, 4–8 HD; Large, 9–13 HD; Huge, 14–18 HD; Gargantuan, 19–20 HD

**Type:** Construct

**Hit Dice:** 1d10

**Speed:** Small, 20 ft.; Medium–Large, 30 ft.; Huge, 40 ft.; Gargantuan, 50 ft.

**Armor Class:** +1/Hit Die (+1 Small, –1 Large, –2 Huge, –4 Gargantuan)

**Base Attack Bonus:** Equal to 3/4 total Hit Dice.

**Saving Throws:** +1/3 Hit Dice.

**Attack:** Slam attack; bludgeoning damage plus energy damage based on construct type. Add Strength modifier to bludgeoning damage only.

**Full Attack:** Slam attack; bludgeoning damage plus energy damage based on construct type. Add Strength modifier to bludgeoning damage only.

**Damage:** Small, 1d4 + 1d4 energy; Medium, 1d6 + 1d6 energy; Large, 2d6 + 2d6 energy; Huge, 2d8 + 2d8 energy; Gargantuan, 2d10 + 2d10 energy.

**Abilities:** Strength 16, Dexterity 9, Constitution —, Intelligence —, Wisdom 11, Charisma 1. Add +2 to Strength/3 Hit Dice.

**Traits:** A *quantum construct* possesses the following traits:
- No Constitution or Intelligence score.
- Low-light vision.
- Darkvision out to 60 feet.
- Does not eat, sleep or breathe.
- Proficient with its natural weapons only.
- Immunity to all mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms and morale effects).
- Immunity to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease and death effects.
- Cannot heal damage on its own, but can be repaired by an infusion of power points (each power point restores 3 hit points).
- Not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, fatigue, exhaustion or energy drain.
- Immunity to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects, or is harmless).
- Not at risk of death from massive damage. Destroyed when reduced to 0 hit points or less.



### Quantum Conversion

*"I don't need a power adapter; I'll just plug myself in."*

Quantum

**Level:** 1

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Touch; see text

**Target:** Creature or object touched; see text

**Duration:** See text

**Power Points:** See text

**Description:** With this unusual power, you convert your inherent quantum energy into some standard form of "superquantum" energy such as heat or electricity.

**Effect:** Choose which energy type you convert power points to when you select this power. By spending 2 power points, on a successful melee attack or melee touch attack you can inflict 1d6 points of damage per three character levels (maximum 6d6) of the energy type chosen. If used with a melee attack, this damage is applied separately from the melee attack's damage.

Alternatively, each point expended sustains a moderate energy expenditure for an hour relevant to the energy chosen — e.g., heating a 20-cubic foot space, powering a small electrical appliance (personal computer, television). The GM is the final arbiter of how much power is required to achieve a given effect.



### Quantum Imprint

*"Hey, neat power. Mind if I try it out?"*

Quantum

**Level:** 2

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** 1 superhuman

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** Fortitude negates

**Power Resistance:** Yes

**Power Points:** 3

**Description:** You can copy another nova's quantum signature, duplicating some or all of her powers.

**Effect:** Duplicating a target's superhuman feats and/or quantum powers first requires a successful melee touch attack. The superhuman touched does not lose any of her powers or suffer any injury, but she may foil the attempt with a successful Fortitude save.

You gain one slot per three character levels that you can fill with a superhuman feat or power that the target has — so, a 9th-level character with the superhuman template gains three slots that he can use to imprint a target's superhuman feats or powers. Slots are filled just as normal when buying feats or powers, including meeting any prerequisites and taking additional superhuman feat enhancements, extras or techniques (you cannot take enhancements, extras or techniques that the target does not possess). Imprinted feats or powers function as normal, including requisite power point expenditures. An imprinted feat or power's effect ends when the duration of *quantum imprint* ends.

## Quantum Leech

*"Your power is mine!"*

Quantum

**Level:** 2
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Touch
**Target:** 1 superhuman
**Duration:** Instantaneous/1 hour; see text
**Saving Throw:** Fortitude negates
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You can take from other superhumans the one thing that they treasure most — quantum power.

**Effect:** On a successful melee touch attack, you siphon from superhuman target 1d6 power points per two character levels (maximum 10d6). You gain temporary power points equal to the amount you siphon; however, you cannot gain more than the target's current power points, and you must make a taint check if you exceed your normal maximum. The temporary power points disappear 1 hour later; the target recovers his siphoned power points as normal.

## Quantum Regeneration

*"I'll be ready to go in an hour."*

Quantum

**Level:** 1
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** See text
**Power Points:** 0

**Description:** You can recover spent quantum energy faster than other novas.

**Effect:** Each hour that you relax or rest, make a DC 15 Will save. If successful, you recover one-half your character level (if relaxing) or your character level (if resting) in power points that hour. This is in addition to any other power points you recover each hour (see Chapter Three, "Recovering Power Points").

## Quantum Vampire

*"I've always wondered what it was like to fly."*

Quantum

**Level:** 2
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Touch
**Target:** 1 living creature
**Duration:** 1 min./level
**Saving Throw:** Will negates
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You can steal powers or even life force from others.

**Effect:** When selecting the power, define a single quantum power that you can steal from targets (including specific techniques for a 3rd-level power).

The target loses the use of the power and you gain its use for the duration of *quantum vampire*. You do not gain any extras with a stolen power, and you cannot steal powers from a nova whose powers are dormant. If you do not have the requisite number of quantum powers to allow for the power you chose, you must spend double the power points when you use the power. So, a character with *quantum vampire* can use *flight* normally when he steals it if he has two 1st-level powers but no 2nd-level powers. If he also has one 2nd-level power, however, he doesn't have any "open" 1st-level powers to apply to the stolen *flight*; he must then spend double the power points if he uses his stolen *flight*.

You may instead declare that this power steals hit points. Your touch deals 1d8 points of damage per three character levels (maximum 6d8). You gain hit points equal to the damage you deal, up to the target's current hit points +10 (which is enough to kill her). You can gain hit points in excess of your own hit point total; any hit points beyond this amount are temporary and disappear when the power expires.

You can purchase this power more than once, selecting a different power each time.

## Sensory Shield

*"Pepper spray? I put that stuff on my pizza."*

Quantum

**Level:** 1

**Manifestation Time:** 1 move action
**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 hour/level (D)
**Power Points:** 1

**Description:** Whether your eyes have an extra transparent lid that protects against bright lights or armored skin so tough that your nerves cannot be numbed, you become immune to adverse conditions that affect certain senses.

**Effect:** When selecting the power, define which sense it protects (vision, hearing, touch, scent, taste). You succeed automatically at any saving throws against attacks or phenomena that have a direct effect on that sense (or ignore any relevant penalties, if no saving throw applies).

## Extras

*Extra Sense:* The power affects an additional sense. You may select this extra twice, choosing a different sense each time. *Cost:* 1 pp.
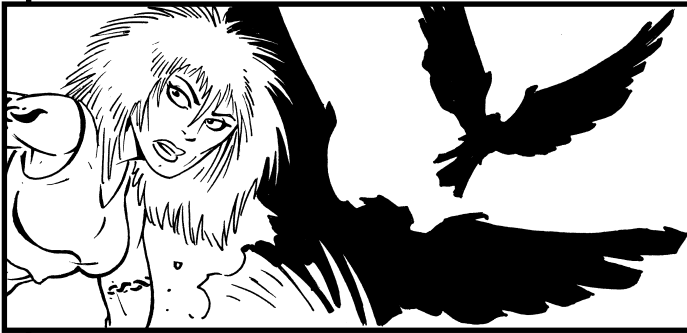
## Shapeshift

*"She ran in here, eh? The only thing in this room is a cat, you idiot!"*

Quantum
**Level:** 3
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 min./level (D)
**Power Points:** 3

**Description:** You can take on the appearance of something else. With sufficient skill, you could take the guise of anyone or anything —— another person, an animal, a piece of furniture, or even something out of myth!

**Effect:** Choose two techniques when you select this power; the rest are purchased with power slots as normal. The technique or techniques you select dictate your *shapeshift* options. *Creature forms* includes the shape of any fauna and flora —— a bear, a dolphin, a rose bush, and so on. *Humanoid forms* encompasses any humanoid creature. *Object forms* covers any object —— a chair, a ramp, a computer, and the like.

This power works only for your body; changing your clothes, effects or carried items along with your body requires the Eufiber or Attunement background feast. You may choose to include attuned items in the change; such items become nonfunctional for the duration of time they are melded into your new form. You revert to your original form if you are killed.

You are disguised as a member of any new form you assume. You can designate basic physical qualities (e.g., height, weight, sex, skin color, hair color, hair texture) within the normal ranges for a creature of that kind. If you use this power to create a disguise, you get a +10 bonus on your Disguise check.

You can use multiple techniques to create unusual forms —— for example, using *creature forms* and *object forms* to become an alligator made of iron, *creature forms* and *humanoid forms* to become a minotaur, or *humanoid forms* and *object forms* to change your hand into a sword. The GM may set specific traits of such unusual creatures herself, or refer to the *MM*. If a creature from the *MM* is used, you do not gain any of its "supernatural" or "spell-like" abilities.

Your character level determines the range of changes available to you. You are limited to forms whose maximum Hit Dice do not exceed your character level; further, your level dictates the size limits of any forms you assume, as noted in the corresponding chart.

| Character Level | Shapeshift Size Parameters |
|---|---|
| 1st–5th | Small to Large |
| 6th–10th | Tiny to Huge |
| 11th–15th | Diminutive to Gargantuan |
| 16th–20th | Fine to Colossal |

*1st level–7th level:* You may assume variations on your normal forms only (see individual techniques for the "normal forms" of each). Your creature type and subtype (if any) remain the same regardless of your new form. You cannot take the form of any creature with a template, even if that template doesn't change the creature type or subtype.

Regardless of the form you assume, you retain the following aspects of your normal form: ability scores, class and level, hit points, alignment, base attack bonus, base save bonus, superhuman special attacks and qualities (except for those requiring a body part that the new form does not have), extraordinary special attacks and qualities derived from class levels (you lose any from your normal form that are not derived from class levels).

When assuming a new form, you retain your own mind but acquire the new form's physical qualities —— natural size, mundane movement capabilities (such as burrowing, climbing, walking, swimming, and flight with wings, to a maximum speed of 120 feet for flying or 60 feet for nonflying movement), natural armor bonus, natural weapons (such as claws, bite, and so on), racial skill bonuses, racial bonus feats, and any gross physical qualities (presence or absence of wings, number of extremities, and so forth). A body with extra limbs does not allow you to make more attacks (or more advantageous two-weapon attacks) than normal. If the new form is capable of speech, you can communicate normally.

You do not gain any extraordinary special attacks or special qualities not noted above under physical qualities (e.g., darkvision, low-light vision, blindsense, blindsight, fast healing, regeneration, scent). You do not gain the form's superhuman abilities. Any part of your body or piece of equipment that is separated from the whole reverts to its true form.

*8th level–14th level:* As with 1st level through 7th level, but the type of forms you can change into expands (see individual techniques for a list of available forms). Further, your creature type and subtype (if any) change to match the new form. You gain the Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution scores of the new form but retain your Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores. You also gain all of the form's extraordinary special attacks, but not any of its extraordinary special qualities or any superhuman abilities.

*15th level–20th level:* As with 8th level through 14th level, but you gain all extraordinary and superhuman abilities (both attacks and qualities) of the assumed form. However, you lose your own superhuman abilities (except the ability to *shapeshift*) for the duration.

Parts of your body or pieces of equipment do not revert to their original forms if separated from you.

## Extended Duration

**Duration:** 10 min./level (D)

**Effect:** You can sustain *shapeshift* for even longer than normal without spending power points on maintenance.

## Creature Forms

**Effect:** Your normal forms for *shapeshift* options are "animal" and "plant." Upon reaching 8th level, you may take any of the following forms: animal, magical beast, plant, vermin.

## Humanoid Forms

**Effect:** Your normal form for *shapeshift* options is "humanoid." Upon reaching 8th level, you may take any of the following forms: fey, giant, humanoid, reptilian.

## Instinctual Change

**Power Points:** 1

**Effect:** You can change form once each round as a free action. The change takes place either immediately before your regular action or immediately after it, but not during the action.

## Object Forms

**Effect:** Your normal form for *shapeshift* options is "object" (use equipment listed in the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 7 for inspiration). Upon reaching 8th level, you may take any of the following forms: Animated objects, objects, ooze. Prior to 8th level, any object you become lacks moving parts.



## Shroud

*"She just gestured and — BAM! — we were in the middle of this red mist!"*

Quantum

**Level:** 1

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

**Area:** One 10-ft. square/2 levels

**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)

**Saving Throw:** None

**Power Resistance:** No

**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You manipulate quantum energy to create an obscuring field in the area you designate.

**Effect:** When selecting the power, determine the type of *shroud* you create (billowing smoke, inky blackness, blinding mist, etc.). The effect billows out from the point you designate, obscuring all sight beyond 5 feet. The 10-ft. squares may be arranged in any single, contiguous shape.

A creature within 5 feet has concealment (attacks have a 20% miss chance). Creatures farther away have total concealment (50% miss chance, and the attacker can't use sight to locate the target). A moderate wind (11+ mph) disperses the *shroud* in 4 rounds; a strong wind (21+ mph) disperses the *shroud* in 1 round.

## Extras

*Sensory Deprivation:* The power affects one additional normal or nova sense (hearing, sonar, *quantum attunement*, etc.). You may purchase this extra more than once. *Cost:* 1 pp.

*Semisolid:* The power halves movement for those within the *shroud*. *Cost:* 2 pp.



## Sizemorph

*"Why don't you pick on someone your own size?"*

Quantum

**Level:** 1

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Personal

**Target:** You

**Duration:** 1 min./level (D)

**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You channel quantum forces to alter your very molecular structure, becoming larger or smaller.

**Effect:** When selecting the power, determine whether you grow or shrink. The base effects of each are described below. The degree of size change increases as you gain levels. Double the power's maximum effect every four character levels. You can change size anywhere within this range, even altering your size from one round to the next as a move action.

This power works only for your body; the Eufiber or Attunement background feats are required to change clothing or carried items. You may choose to include attuned items in the change. Equipment affected in this way changes size if on your person at the initial time of change. If a Eufiber or Attuned item leaves your possession while your size is changed (including a projectile or thrown weapon), it returns to its normal size instantly. You revert to your original size if you are killed.

*Sizemorph (Grow):* Double your height and multiply your weight by 8 (this increase changes your size to the next larger category). Note that a Medium creature whose size increases to Large has a space of 10 feet and a natural reach of 10 feet.

You gain a +2 size bonus to Strength, a −2 size penalty to Dexterity (to a minimum of 1), and a −1 penalty on attack rolls and AC. Apply +10 feet to your speed for every two size categories you grow (e.g., Medium to Huge, Huge to Colossal).

If insufficient room is available for the desired growth, you attain the maximum possible size and may make a Strength check (using your increased Strength) to burst any enclosures in the process. If you fail, you are constrained without harm by the materials enclosing you.

*Sizemorph (Shrink):* Halve your height, length, and width and divide your weight by 8 (this decrease changes your size to the next smaller category). Note that a Small creature whose size decreases to Tiny has a space of 2-1/2 feet and a natural reach of 0 feet (meaning that he must enter an opponent's square to attack).

You gain a +2 size bonus to Dexterity, a −2 size penalty to Strength (to a minimum of 1), and a +1 bonus on attack rolls and AC.

Apply −10 feet to your speed for every two size categories you shrink (e.g., Medium to Tiny, Tiny to Fine).

### Extras

*Complete:* You can grow *and* shrink; changing size from one extreme to the other is a move action. *Cost:* 2 pp.

*Durable (Grow):* You get tougher as you get larger; gain a cumulative +2 bonus to Armor Class for each size category increase. *Cost:* 2 pp.

*Potent (Shrink):* You suffer no size penalty to Strength (nor do you gain a bonus on attack rolls) due to your reduced size. *Cost:* 3 pp.
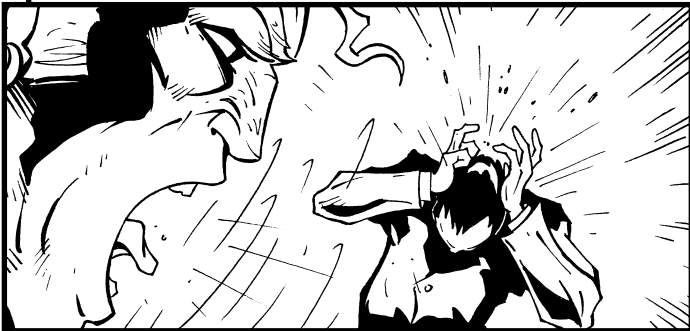


## Strobe

*"Be seeing you, Team Tomorrow. Pity you can't say the same."*

Quantum

**Level:** 2

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Area:** Cone-shaped burst

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** Fortitude negates

**Power Resistance:** Yes

**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You project an energy field that disables one of an opponent's senses temporarily.

**Effect:** When selecting the power, determine the sense being disabled and the method — blinding flash of light, deafening screech, numbing cold, etc. Superhuman senses, such as *ESP* and *intuition*, are also susceptible. Affected targets lose the ability to use the given sense for the effect's duration. The *Player's Handbook* glossary has specifics on blindness and deafness; the GM can extrapolate similar penalties for losing a sense of smell, taste or touch.

### Extras

*Sensory Deprivation Wave:* The power affects one additional normal or nova sense (hearing, sonar, *quantum attunement*, etc.). *Cost:* 1 pp.
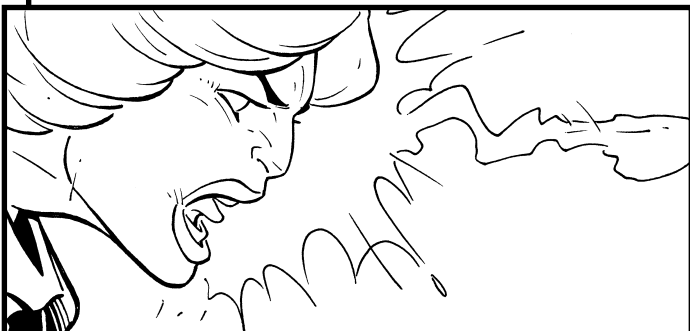


## Stun Attack

*"Say goodnight, Gracie!"*

Quantum

**Level:** 2

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

**Target:** 1 living creature

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** Fortitude partial; see text

**Power Resistance:** Yes

**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** This power inflicts no damage, but can be quite effective at knocking living targets senseless.

**Effect:** If the target fails her Fortitude save, she is considered stunned (drops everything held, cannot take actions, takes a −2 penalty to AC, and loses her Dexterity bonus to AC [if any]) for the effect's duration, and must make a Reflex save or be knocked prone. If successful, she is considered shaken (−2 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks and ability checks) for the next round. This power has no effect on unliving targets, such as buildings, vehicles, constructs or devices.
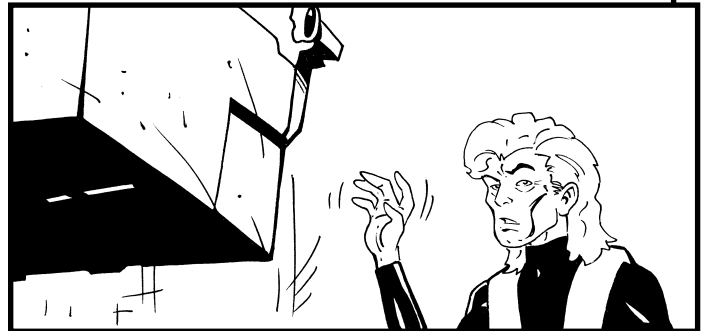


## Telekinesis

*"Y'know that old saying, 'His reach exceeds his grasp?' Doesn't apply to me!"*

Quantum

**Level:** 2

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)

**Target or Targets:** See text

**Duration:** Concentration (up to 1 round/level) or instantaneous; see text

**Saving Throw:** Reflex negates (object) or None; see text

**Power Resistance:** Yes (object); see text

**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You use quantum energies to lift and move things without touching them physically. This power may manifest as mental willpower, focused winds, energy tentacles or talons, or some other effect.

**Effect:** Depending on the version selected, the power can provide a gentle, sustained force, perform a variety of combat maneuvers, or exert a single short, violent thrust.

*Sustained Force:* You can move an object weighing no more than 25 pounds + Quantum per character level up to 20 feet per round. The weight can be moved vertically, horizontally, or in both directions. A target can negate the effect on an object she possesses with a successful Reflex save or with power resistance.

This effort lasts 1 round per character level, but ends if you cease concentration or if the object is forced beyond your range (the object falling or dropping in the process).

You can manipulate telekinetically an object within the weight limitation as if with one hand (e.g., pull a rope or lever, turn a key, push a button, rotate an object). Delicate activities are possible, but require Intelligence checks at the GM's discretion.

*Combat Maneuver:* Once per round, you can use *telekinesis* to perform a bull rush, disarm, grapple (including pin), or trip (see Chapter 8: Combat in the *Player's Handbook*). Resolve these attempts as normal, except that they don't provoke attacks of opportunity, you use your character level in place of your base attack bonus (for disarm and grapple), you use your Quantum score in place of your Strength or Dexterity modifier (as appropriate), and a failed attempt doesn't allow the target a reactive attempt (such as for disarm or trip). No save is allowed against these attempts, but power resistance applies normally. This effort lasts 1 round per character level, but ends if you cease concentration.

*Violent Thrust:* You can expend the effect's energy in an instantaneous attack, hurling one object or creature per character level (maximum 20) that are within range and all within 10 feet of each other toward any target within 10 feet per level of all the objects. You can hurl up to a total weight of 25 pounds + Quantum per character level.

You must succeed on attack rolls (one per creature or object thrown) to hit the target with the items, using your base attack bonus + your Quantum score. Weapons cause standard damage (with no Strength bonus). Other objects cause damage ranging from 1 point per 25 pounds (for less dangerous objects) to 1d6 points of damage per 25 pounds (for hard, dense objects).

You can hurl creatures that doe not exceed your weight capacity, but each is allowed a Reflex save (and power resistance) to negate the effect. The same is true if you target possessions that a creature has in her possession. If a telekinesed creature is hurled against a solid surface, it takes damage as if it had fallen 10 feet (1d6 points) per two Quantum.

## Extras

*Increased Mass:* You can heft targets weighing up to 100 pounds + Quantum per character level. *Cost:* 4 pp.



## Telepathy

*"I'm well aware how open-minded you are. More than you know."*

Quantum [Mind-Affecting]
**Level:** 1
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
**Target:** 1 living creature
**Duration:** 1 min./level (D)
**Saving Throw:** Will negates (harmless)
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You project your quantum consciousness to communicate directly with the minds of others.

**Effect:** You forge a telepathic bond between yourself and a single target with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher. You must have line of sight to establish the link; you can then communicate telepathically regardless of language and over any distance. No special power or influence is established as a result of the telepathic link.

## Extras

*Channeling:* You can use any mind-affecting powers on a target with whom you have a telepathic link, regardless of range. *Cost:* 2 pp.

*Deep Scan:* You concentrate, delving into a target's thoughts. The target is aware of the attempt; she can resist on a successful Will save, severing the telepathic connection. The depth or complexity of thought you discover depends on how long you concentrate. *Cost:* 2 pp.

| Rounds of Concentration | Depth/Complexity of Thoughts |
|---|---|
| 1 round | Surface thoughts |
| 2 rounds | Unguarded thoughts/simple plans |
| 3 rounds | Secret thoughts/involved plans |
| 4 rounds | Intimate secrets/complex plans |
| 5 rounds | Deeply buried secrets |

*Multiple Links:* You can establish telepathic contact with one target per three character levels, no two of which can be more than 30 feet apart at the time you first use the power. *Cost:* 1 pp per target after the first.

*Surreptitious Scan:* If a target fails her Will save, she is unaware of your telepathic contact. *Cost:* 2 pp.



## Teleport

*"Sorry about popping in unannounced."*

Quantum
**Level:** 2
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** Instantaneous
**Power Points:** 2

**Description:** You vanish from one point in space and reappear an instant later in another, bypassing any intervening barriers in the process.

**Effect:** Your designated destination may be as distant as 100 miles per character level. You must have some clear idea of its location and layout; roll d% and consult the corresponding chart to determine familiarity and accuracy of arrival. The clearer your mental image, the more likely the effect succeeds. Areas of strong quantum energy may make *teleport* more hazardous or even impossible, at the GM's discretion.

You can bring along only those objects that are subject to the Eufiber or Attunement background feats.

| Familiarity | On Target | Off Target | Similar Area | Mishap |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Very familiar | 01–97 | 98–99 | 100 | — |
| Studied carefully | 01–94 | 95–97 | 98–99 | 100 |
| Seen casually | 01–88 | 89–94 | 95–98 | 99–100 |
| Viewed once | 01–76 | 77–88 | 89–96 | 97–100 |
| False destination (1d20+ 80) | — | — | 81–92 | 93–100 |

*Familiarity:* The GM is the final arbiter of how familiar you are with the destination. "Very familiar" is a place you've been very often and where you feel at home. "Studied carefully" is a destination you know well, either because you've been there often, you can see it currently, or you have used other means to study it for at least one hour. "Seen casually" is a place that you have seen more than once but with which you are not very familiar. "Viewed once" is a destination that you have seen only once, typically for no more than a few minutes.

"False destination" is a place that does not exist — whether a fake site that you've been led to believe is real, a familiar location that no longer exists as such or a place that has been altered to the extent that it is no longer familiar. In this case, roll 1d20+80 to obtain results on the chart.

*On Target:* You appear where you want to be.

*Off Target:* You appear safely a random distance away from the destination. Distance off target is 1d10 x 1d10% of the distance that was to be traveled. The direction off target is determined randomly.

*Similar Area:* You wind up in an area that's similar visually or thematically to the target area. Generally, you appear in the closest similar place within range. If no such area exists within the power's range, the power simply fails instead.

*Mishap:* You got "scrambled." You take 1d10 points of damage (this bypasses any damage reduction or other defense you may have), then reroll under "false destination" to see where you wind up. Each time "mishap" comes up, you sustain another 1d10 points of damage and must reroll.

## Extras

*Combat Teleport:* You can *teleport* 10 feet per level as a move action in combat, striking as an invisible creature (with a +2 bonus on attack rolls), denying your target any Dexterity bonus to AC. *Cost:* 2 pp.

*Increased Range:* You can *teleport* up to 1,000 miles per character level (instead of 100 miles/level). *Cost:* 2 pp.

*Safe Blind Teleport:* You gain a +2% bonus per character level when rolling for accuracy of your *teleport*, and you never suffer the "mishap" result. *Cost:* 1 pp.

## Temporal Manipulation

*"I have all the time in the world... and then some."*

Quantum

**Level:** 3

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Effect:** See text

**Duration:** See text

**Saving Throw:** See text

**Power Resistance:** Yes

**Power Points:** 3

**Description:** With this rare power, you can influence that most basic, yet mysterious, of phenomena — time. While you can manipulate time in a number of ways, actual time travel remains beyond the capability of even the most powerful novas.

**Effect:** As a basic capability of this power, you may take a free action to know the exact time of day, to know how much time has

passed between two events, or even time events as if using a precise stopwatch.

Choose two techniques when you first take the power; the rest are purchased with additional power slots.

## Age Alteration

**Target:** 1 creature or object
**Duration:** Instantaneous
**Saving Throw:** Fortitude negates (object)

**Effect:** You can accelerate or reverse the aging of a single targeted creature or object which fails a Fortitude save.

Used against a living creature, you age the target further or regress her back as much as two years per Quantum. See the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 6 for details on aging effects. This power does not influence the target's mind or memories (nor does it alter a superhuman's Mazarin–Rashoud node).

Used against an object, regressing age repairs minor damage from wear and tear. Advancing age applies −1 to the object's hardness for every two years; once an object's hardness reaches 0, it loses 1 hit point per two years. An object that loses all its hardness and hit points crumbles into ruin.

## Accelerate Time

**Target:** 1 living creature
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)
**Saving Throw:** Fortitude negates (harmless)

**Effect:** You place yourself or a single target inside a bubble of "fast time," moving and acting more quickly than normal. This confers several effects, listed below. Multiple uses do not stack, but this technique does negate *dilate time*.

*Extra Attack:* When making a full attack action, you may make one extra attack with any weapon you hold. The attack enjoys your full base attack bonus, plus any modifiers appropriate to the situation. (This effect does not grant an actual extra action, so you can't use it to manifest a second power or otherwise take an extra action in the round.)

*Combat Bonus:* You gain a +1 bonus on attack rolls and a +1 dodge bonus to AC and Reflex saves. Any condition that makes you lose your Dexterity bonus to Armor Class (if any) also makes you lose dodge bonuses.

*Movement Increase:* Your modes of movement (including land movement, burrow, climb, fly, and swim) increase by 30 feet, to a maximum of twice your normal speed using that form of movement. This increase counts as an enhancement bonus, and it affects your jumping distance as normal for increased speed.

## Dilate Time

**Target:** 1 living creature
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)
**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Effect:** The reverse of *accelerate time*, this effect slows the flow of time around a target. She can take only a single move action or standard action each turn, but not both (nor may she take full-round actions). Additionally, she takes a −1 penalty on attack rolls, AC, and Reflex saves. The target also moves at half its normal speed (round down to the next 5-foot increment), which affects her jumping distance as normal for decreased speed.

Multiple uses do not stack, but this technique does negate *accelerate time*.

## Stop Time

**Target:** 1 creature or object
**Duration:** 1 round/level (D)
**Saving Throw:** Will negates (object)

**Effect:** On a successful melee touch attack, you can cease the flow of time for a single living creature or object. The creature does not grow older; its body functions virtually cease, and no force or effect can harm it for the duration of this effect.
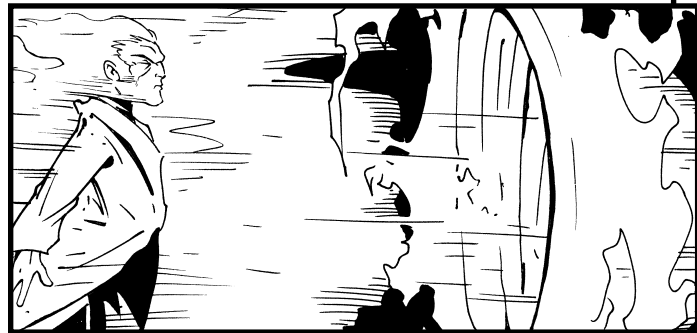


## Warp

*"Care to step through the looking-glass?"*

Quantum
**Level:** 3
**Manifestation Time:** 1 round
**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
**Area:** One 2-ft. square /level
**Duration:** Concentration + 1 round/level
**Saving Throw:** Reflex negates
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 3

**Description:** You create a wormhole that connects two different physical locations.

**Effect:** You establish a gateway between two physical locations no more than 100 miles per level apart. The gate manifests in some obvious fashion as a vertical plane impossible to see through clearly — a roiling gas cloud, coruscating energy, a rippling silvery surface, a hole seemingly cut out of reality, or something similar. Pressure and temperature will not equalize between the two sides — so, you cannot create a *warp* to the center of a volcano and unleash a jet of superheated plasma through the gateway.

Stepping from one side to another takes your action for the turn; anyone who can fit through the opening can pass back and forth as long as the *warp* remains open. An unwilling creature who makes a Reflex save is stunned for one round as she passes through the field of the "entry gate" but does not pass to the other side of the wormhole.

If the *warp* opens on a place that a solid body occupies already, each creature stepping through takes 1d6 points of damage and is shunted to a random open space on a suitable surface within 100 feet of the intended location. If there is no free space within 100 feet, each creature takes an additional 2d6 points of damage and is shunted to a free space within 1,000 feet. If there is no free space within 1,000 feet, each creature takes an additional 4d6 points of damage and the power simply fails.

Choose two techniques when you first take the power; the rest are purchased with additional power slots.

## Clear Warp

**Power Points:** 1

**Effect:** You shunt aside most of the wormhole's quantum "noise" so that you can see through the gateway (unless conditions on either side prevent sight); apply the additional power point cost to each *warp* you create with this technique.

## Increased Duration

**Duration:** Concentration + 1 min./level

**Effect:** The standard *warp* duration increases to the listed duration.

## Increased Range

**Effect:** Your *warp* range increases by a factor of 10 (so, from 100 to 1,000 miles per character level). You may select this technique more than once; each additional purchase stacks.

## Warp Attack

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Duration:** Instantaneous
**Power Points:** 2

**Effect:** You create a temporary *warp* in front of a target. On a successful Reflex save, the target avoids going through the *warp*'s wormhole, but is still stunned for one round as she passes through the fringe of the field's "entry gate." On a failed save, she can't stop in time (if moving) or is enveloped (if not moving). Throwing a wormhole up in such a "quick and dirty" fashion restricts the possible range to 100 feet per level (this is unaffected by the *increased range* technique).

## Weather Manipulation

*"Now, you shall feel the fury of the elements!"*
Quantum
**Level:** 3
**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** See text
**Effect:** See text
**Duration:** See text
**Saving Throw:** See text
**Power Resistance:** See text
**Power Points:** See text

**Description:** You can manipulate quantum energy to influence weather patterns and related phenomena.

**Effect:** As a basic capability of this power, you can take a free action to predict the weather accurately for a number of days equal to your Quantum score.

Choose two techniques when you first take the power; the rest are purchased with additional power slots.

### Fog

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
**Area:** Spherical emanation (10-ft. radius/level)
**Duration:** 10 min./level
**Power Points:** 2

**Effect:** A misty vapor arises, obscuring all sight beyond 5 feet. A creature 5 feet away has concealment (attacks have a 20% miss chance). Creatures farther away have total concealment (50% miss chance, and the attacker cannot use sight to locate the target).

The mist is stationary once created. A moderate wind (11+ mph) disperses it in 4 rounds; a strong wind (21+ mph) disperses it in 1 round. Any fire- or heat-based effect burns away the *fog* in the effect's area.

This technique does not function underwater.

### Lightning Bolt

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)
**Target:** 1 target
**Duration:** Instant
**Saving Throw:** Reflex half
**Power Resistance:** Yes
**Power Points:** 2

**Effect:** This technique functions as per a *quantum bolt* that inflicts electricity damage. Normally, you project *lightning bolts* from your hands, but you may have them strike from storm clouds (this is for dramatic effect only; doing so conveys no bonuses to the attack).

## Temperature Change

**Range:** 100 ft./2 levels
**Area:** Spherical emanation (100-ft. radius/2 levels)
**Duration:** 10 min./level
**Power Points:** 3

**Effect:** You can increase or decrease the ambient temperature around you by up to 10° Fahrenheit per Quantum. It takes 10 minutes — your Quantum score to reach the new temperature (if this reduces the time to less than 1 minute, the temperature changes in 1 round). This temperature zone is stationary once created.

## Weather Alteration

**Manifestation Time:** 10 minutes; see text
**Range:** 1 mile/2 levels
**Area:** Spherical emanation (1-mile radius/2 levels), centered on you; see text
**Duration:** 1 hour/2 levels
**Power Points:** 6

**Effect:** You change the weather in the local area appropriate to the climate and season (examples are listed in the corresponding chart).

Using this technique requires your full concentration for the duration of the manifestation time; you can take no other action and are considered flat-footed if attacked. It takes 10 minutes for the power's initial manifestation; the weather then assumes the desired condition within another 10 minutes (changing gradually, not abruptly). The weather continues for the duration, or until you use a standard action to designate a new kind of weather (which manifests fully 10 minutes later). Contradictory conditions are not possible simultaneously.

You control general weather tendencies, such as the direction and intensity of wind. You cannot control specific applications — e.g., where lightning strikes, a tornado's exact path. *Weather alteration* can do away with atmospheric phenomena (naturally occurring or otherwise) as well as create them.

| Season | Possible Weather |
|---|---|
| Spring | Tornado, thunderstorm, sleet storm, hot weather |
| Summer | Torrential rain, heat wave, hailstorm |
| Autumn | Hot or cold weather, fog, sleet |
| Winter | Frigid cold, blizzard, thaw |
| Late winter | Hurricane-force winds, early spring (coastal area) |

## Wind Control

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** 40 ft./level

**Area:** 40 ft./level radius cylinder 40 ft. high
**Duration:** 1 min./level
**Saving Throw:** Fortitude negates
**Power Points:** 3

**Effect:** You alter wind force in the surrounding area — making the wind blow in a certain direction or manner and increasing or decreasing its strength. This persists until the power ends or until you choose to alter your handiwork, which requires concentration. You may create an "eye" of calm air up to 80 feet in diameter at the center of the area, and you may choose to limit the area to any cylindrical area less than your full limit.

*Wind Direction:* Select one of four basic wind patterns:

• A downdraft blows from the center outward in equal strength in all directions.

• An updraft blows from the outer edges in toward the center in equal strength from all directions, veering upward before impinging on the eye in the center.

• A rotation causes the winds to circle the center in clockwise or counterclockwise fashion.

• A blast causes the winds to blow in one direction across the entire area from one side to the other.

*Wind Strength:* For every three character levels, you can increase or decrease wind strength by one degree of severity (see below). Each round on your turn, a creature in the wind must make a Fortitude save or suffer the effect of being in the windy area.

Strong winds (21+ mph) make sailing difficult.

A severe wind (31+ mph) causes minor ship and building damage.

A windstorm (51+ mph) drives most flying creatures from the skies, uproots small trees, knocks down light wooden structures, tears off roofs, and endangers ships.

Hurricane force winds (75+ mph) destroy wooden buildings, sometimes uproot even large trees, and cause most ships to founder.

A tornado (175+ mph) destroys all nonfortified buildings and often uproots large trees.

## Windriding

**Manifestation Time:** 1 standard action
**Range:** Personal
**Target:** You
**Duration:** 1 min./level (D)
**Power Points:** 2

**Effect:** You manipulate wind to generate airborne movement. This technique functions just like *flight*, except that you move at a speed of 5 feet per Quantum and have poor maneuverability.

# CHAPTER FIVE: SUPER-SCIENCE

All quantum power is personal, drawing on the nova's deepest hopes and fears. Many people dream of changing the world directly, and their powers reflect that. Others dream of changing the world through tools — they expect on a subconscious level to build the new world rather than reshape the existing one with bare hands and force of will. Engineers and gadgeteers also dream of having the power of a god — it's just that in their minds the god is Vulcan or Ogun.

This section offers brief coverage of the creation of devices that mimic the effects of a normal human abilities, or nova enhancements or powers. The device may be mechanical, electronic, nanotechnological or even biological.

## Notes on Super-Science

Before getting into the nuts and bolts, we must cover some basics.

• **Super-Science Feats:** Creating super-scientific devices demands incredible commitment. This is reflected in the rules by requiring a character to have the appropriate super-science feats — Invent Compound, Invent Device and Invent Organism — necessary to make the desired invention.

• **Failed Inventions:** Super-scientific invention is a tricky thing, and different from many other skill-based tasks. With super-scientific invention, a roll of 20 does not always succeed, but a roll of 1 does always fail.

• **Super-Science and Setting:** Super-science that emulates quantum powers is very rare in **Aberrant** — instead, the individual nova powers his abilities through direct quantum use. As such, the GM may disallow any super-science device that proposes to duplicate a quantum power. Some things just don't work in hardware (or wetware), no matter how hard a nova tries. These rules reflect the distinctive cosmology of the Trinity Universe. If the GM has a different campaign setting in mind, she may allow certain modifications.

## Invention Categories

"Invention" refers to any product of super-science. Chemical and medical experimentation play a part, but the vast majority of super-scientific development comes in the form of mechanical invention and gadgetry. Super-science *can* produce a better mouse or better cheese, but 98 percent of super-science is about the mousetrap itself. This is reflected in the three invention categories:

| Name | Invention Category |
|---|---|
| Device | Mechanical apparatus |
| Compound | Chemical or drug |
| Organism | Animal or plant |

## Invention Types

Super-science divides inventions into two types: advancements and innovations.

• **Advancement:** A direct linear development of an existing concept — the better mousetrap, as it were. It doesn't break the known laws of physics; it leaps a generation or two ahead of the current state of the art. The rules reflect this by adding options to existing technology. With the proper skill, any character can use an advancement indefinitely (or at least until it breaks down normally).

• **Innovation:** An innovation goes beyond mere physical improvement, channeling quantum energies to reproduce effects that only a superhuman can enact — in other words, it duplicates a superhuman feat or a quantum power. An innovation may include advancement options, but an advancement cannot emulate a superhuman feat or a power.

## Maximum Inventions per Character

Any character, superhuman and otherwise, can own and use a number of advancements equal to his Wealth bonus. If your Wealth bonus drops lower than the total number of advancements you have, assume that the financial hit you've suffered means you no longer have access to all your fancy gadgetry. Pick or roll randomly to select a number of advancements until your total available once more equals your Wealth bonus. Those advancements selected are unavailable until your Wealth bonus is restored.

A superhuman character can have a number of advancements and/or innovations equal to his Quantum score in addition to advancements bought with Wealth. This does *not* include any inventions purchased with the Gadget background feat. You may have as many gadgets as you like, so long as you purchase the feat.

## Gadgets and Super-Science

Inventions purchased under the Gadget background feat are distinct from those created via the super-science rules. The distinction is not one of function but of importance to your character or the story. An invention is a marvelous creation, but it is not considered an intrinsic aspect of who you are. A gadget is a special, unique item, a defining feature of your capabilities, personality or motivation.

**Example:** *Tony Stark's Iron Man armor is a gadget, while Batman's utility belt is not. Both are inventions, but Tony Stark wouldn't be Iron Man without his armor, while specific equipment is incidental to defining Batman's character.*

### Inventions for Starting Characters

You can start the game with inventions if you don't want to take the Gadget feat. Just follow the super-science rules to create a device, organism or compound. (If you do not have the necessary feats and skills to create super-science devices, you must take the Gadget background to begin play with an invention.) The time required to design and build the invention is factored into your history, but the whole process is considered complete by the start of game play. A starting character may have a total number of inventions equal to half his initial Quantum score (round down).

## Super-Science Creation

Before inventing anything, you must first have at least 5 skill ranks and the super-science feat appropriate to the intended cre-

ation. The skill is also called the "primary" skill for purposes of inventing. (The complementary Craft or Heal skills will be used in the construction phase.)

| Skill | Super-Science Feat | Benefit |
|-------|-------------------|---------|
| Knowledge (technology) | Invent Device | Construct weapons, vehicles or other devices |
| Knowledge (physical sciences) | Invent Compound | Develop chemical compound |
| Knowledge (Earth and life sciences) | Invent Organism | Modify organic tissue, create living organism |

You must also have some level of ability relating to the proposed invention's use. This is either base attack bonus +1 or 1 rank in a specific skill. So, a pistol that uses electricity to fire projectiles requires a base attack bonus of +1; a miniature submersible requires 1 rank in Pilot; a set of automatic lock picks requires 1 rank in Open Locks; a remote-controlled motorcycle requires 1 rank in Drive; and so on.

The invention now goes through three distinct stages (regardless of whether it's an advancement or an innovation): research and development (R&D), construction and use.

# Step One: Research and Development

The time spent on researching information, designing schematics, performing tests and the like is considered "downtime" between encounters unless the GM decides to interject a dramatic event (enemy attack, lab accident, reappearance of an old flame).

**Design Time:** Each design option has a standard R&D time, listed in days on Table 5–1: Design Options, Table 5–2: Compound Options and Table 5–3: Organism Options. The R&D time assumes that you spend 10 hours per day with no appreciable interruptions in a suitable facility. Variables can modify the R&D time further (see below).

**Design Options:** An invention with options only is an advancement; an invention with both options and at least one power effect is an innovation.

A given invention may have one or many options. You may apply a given option once unless it states explicitly that multiple levels are possible. The time listed is cumulative for all options and levels. For example, a single level-one option has an initial one-week R&D time; increasing that option to level three and adding a different level-one option that takes 10 days shoots the initial R&D time to 31 days.

The options listed with each table are by no means definitive. While the most common advancements are to weapons or vehicles, virtually anything is fair game — with GM approval. The GM shouldn't hesitate to say a proposed invention is too powerful or simply is not suitable for the game.

## The R&D Check

An R&D check determines if your research is successful, and whether it takes less than the standard time to accomplish. The R&D check is against a base DC 15 unless noted otherwise. Each level beyond the first for the *same* option adds +2 to the check DC (cumulative). This applies even if you add one level in the initial design and enhance the invention with an additional level at a later date.

The total options, whether separate options or multiple levels of the same option, all add to the initial R&D time.

The R&D check requires the primary skill for the invention type (see above). Success means you accomplish your research after the necessary time. You may reduce this time by 1 day for every 3 points by which your check result exceeds the final DC (to a minimum of 1 day).

Failing the R&D check indicates some misstep along the way — in the experiments, in some aspect of your theory, etc. — but the basic idea remains sound. A botch reveals that the theorized invention is beyond your capacity to create. You may attempt a new period of R&D after a failure, but you can never research the proposed invention again after a botch. Whatever the result, you're committed to spending the time required in R&D.

Keep a note of the R&D check for each invention even after it's completed. It makes it much easier to refer to when adding new options, rebuilding the invention, and the like.

## R&D Variable: Lab Time

These rules assume you have 14 hours each day that you don't spend in the lab — time spent eating, sleeping, socializing, investigating or attending to sundry other matters. You *can* sequester yourself and do nothing else but pursue R&D. For every 3 days you're "locked in the lab," reduce the final R&D time by 1 day (to a minimum of 1 day). You do nothing but work and sleep. Conversely, if your work is interrupted for an appreciable time, the countdown pauses until you can resume the research.

## Size Does Matter

Super-science allows for miniature versions of existing equipment or inventions. The size chart below lists general sizes and matching examples. If you want to make a smaller version of a given item, pick the appropriate size and go down the chart until you reach the size you want. Each step down the chart adds 3 days to the initial R&D time and +2 to the R&D check DC.

The GM may dictate an appropriate starting size for an invention and may restrict the degree to which it can be miniaturized — a modest-sized backpack flamethrower reduced to the size of a butane lighter might be appropriate for some games but not others.

| Size | Example |
|------|---------|
| Colossal | Jumbo jet, cruise ship, brownstone |
| Gargantuan | Airplane, sailboat |
| Huge | Car, helicopter |
| Large | Motorcycle, phone booth |
| Medium | Filing cabinet, .50 machine gun |
| Small | Laptop computer, stereo, shotgun |
| Tiny | Pistol, portable DVD player |
| Diminutive | Clutch purse, bottle |
| Fine | Wristwatch, belt buckle, lighter |

## R&D Variable: Research Assistants

A research assistant provides a benefit similar to the aid another maneuver for your R&D check, adding to your chance of success (and potentially reducing your R&D time). You gain a bonus for each research assistant as indicated on the chart below. These bonuses are cumulative. You can have a maximum number of non-superhuman research assistants equal to your (Charisma modifier + Quantum score), and a maximum number of superhuman research assistants equal to your Quantum score. PCs who assist you do not count against either total.

| R&D Bonus | Research Assistant |
|-----------|-------------------|
| +1 | has 5 or more ranks in the appropriate skill |
| +1 | has 5 or more ranks in one or more related skills, or a closely related feat |
| +1 | is superhuman |

## Table 5–1: Device Options

**Personal Weapon Options**

| R&D Time | Option |
|---|---|
| 7 | +1 bonus on attack roll[3] |
| 3 | +1 damage[3] |
| 3 | +50% ammunition capacity[2] |
| 5 | +50% range[4] |
| 10 | Compact design: +5 to Spot DCs to notice the item when worn |
| 7 | Disguise true appearance; +5 to Spot DCs to pierce the disguise |
| 15 | Change damage from lethal to nonlethal (or vice versa) with no penalty on attack roll |

**Vehicle Weapon Options**

| R&D Time | Option |
|---|---|
| 10 | +1 bonus on attack roll[3] |
| 5 | +1 damage[3] |
| 5 | +50% ammunition capacity[2] |
| 7 | +50% range[4] |
| 10 | Disguise true appearance; +5 to Spot DCs to pierce the disguise |

**Vehicle Options**

| R&D Time | Option |
|---|---|
| 1 | +1 passenger[1] |
| 2 | +25% cargo capacity[1] |
| 10 | +25% speed (safe and max)[8] |
| 10 | +1 maneuver[5] |
| 15 | +2 hardness[3] |
| 10 | Conceal existing armor (purchase DC equal to armor level) |
| 1 | Personal-scale weapons mount (e.g., machine gun)[1] |
| 5 | Vehicle-scale weapons mount (e.g., 3-inch cannon)[1] |
| 1 | Conceal existing personal-scale weapons mount |
| 5 | Conceal existing vehicle-scale weapons mount |
| 10 | Heavy industrial equipment (e.g. mining drill, crane) |
| 2 | Living quarters (barracks, 4 occupants)[1] |
| 3 | Living quarters (luxury, 1 occupant)[1] |
| 20 | Mobile laboratory[1] |
| 20 | Support facilities for one smaller vehicle (e.g., helicopter pad on an aircraft)[1] |
| 10 | Improved fuel efficiency (2x normal)[5] |
| 50 | Extra movement mode (e.g., submersible biplane or aero-car) |

[1] The option allows multiple levels. This does not refine the basic design further, so the additional levels do not add to the R&D check DC. Also, the level limit depends on the vehicle. Vehicles have a wide range of sizes, so use common sense. A motorcycle won't support the same range of modifications that a jet will — just try making four men live off the back of that cycle! It may be easiest to sketch proposed additions on a copy of a vehicle photograph, schematic or blueprint. If it looks implausible even for the genre, it probably is.

[2] Two-level limit.

[3] Three-level limit.

[4] Four-level limit.

[5] Five-level limit.

[8] Eight-level limit.

## Table 5–2: Compound Options

| R&D | Option |
|---|---|
| 5 | Ability enhancement drug (+2 for one encounter)[3] |
| 10 | Reflex enhancement drug (+4 initiative for one encounter)[3] |
| 20 | Acid (1d6 splash/ 1d10 immersion)[3] |
| 20 | Advanced poison (Fort DC 15; 1d4 Str/2d4 Con) |
| 25 | Mind control drug (−4 penalty on victim's Will saving throw) |
| 30 | Silk-steel (clothes grant +4 AC, DR 2/—) |
| 40 | Hypercombustion fuel (10x fuel efficiency, +25% speed)[2] |
| 60 | Concentrated explosive (2d6 explosion in a 5-ft. radius)[2] |
| 60 | Advanced alloy (1/2 weight for metal item) |
| 60 | Healing enhancement drug (gain fast healing 1 for 1 day) |
| 270 | Anti-aging drug (age 1 year per decade) |

[2] Two-level limit.

[3] Three-level limit.

## Table 5–3: Organism Options

| R&D | Option |
|---|---|
| 20 | Muscle implantation (+2 Strength)[3] |
| 40 | Nerve tweaking (+2 Dexterity)[2] |
| 20 | Structural reinforcement (+2 Constitution)[3] |
| 15 | Sensory enhancement (+2 Wisdom)[3] |
| 90 | Brain augmentation (+2 Intelligence)[2] |
| 5 | Plastic surgery (new face, same Charisma) |
| 10 | Plastic surgery (+2 Charisma)[3] |
| 60 | Pheromone implantation (+2 Charisma)[2] |
| 75 | Lobotomatic behavioral modification (+2 Charisma)[2] |
| 20 | Dermal thickening (+2 natural armor) |
| 60 | Subdermal chitin implantation (+3 natural armor, DR 1/—) |
| 120 | Exoskeletal transplantation (+4 natural armor, DR 2/—) |
| 60 | Minor animal transplant (surface, minimal connections — e.g., whiskers) |
| 120 | Intermediate animal transplant (surface, extensive connections — e.g., tail) |
| 240 | Major animal transplant (internal, extensive connections — e.g., claws) |

[2] Two-level limit.

[3] Three-level limit.
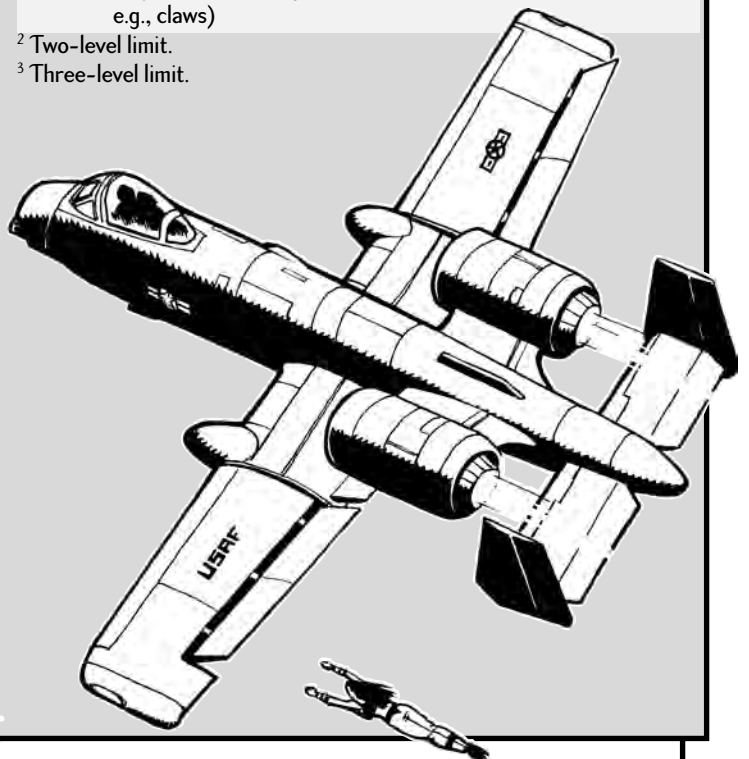
## R&D Variable: Power Points

You must spend 1 power point each time you make an R&D attempt. Each additional power point you spend reduces the final R&D time by 3 days (minimum of 1 day). You allocate any power points before you make the R&D roll; they are spent regardless of whether the research is ultimately successful.

## Reverse Engineering

At the GM's option, you can reverse-engineer an existing invention that you've found, purchased or stolen. The process is the same as designing from scratch, with the R&D time devoted to deconstructing the invention and determining what makes it tick.

# Step Two: Construction

Device construction is based on the appropriate practical skill: Craft (mechanical) for devices; Craft (chemical) or Craft (pharmaceutical) for compounds; or Heal for organisms. This check is made once, against the same DC as the R&D check. Success indicates construction begins as defined by the parameters below. Failure by 10 or less indicates some difficulty in moving from design to execution; this increases either the construction time or cost by one-quarter. Failure by more than 10 indicates some real problems in the process; both construction time and cost are increased by one-quarter — or the inventor can hit the drawing board again and start over.

• **Construction Time:** This is left to the GM's discretion but should reflect the complexity and size of the invention in question, as well as the amount of super-science that went into it. The chart below suggests construction times based on the total time spent on successful R&D. The Fast Tasks Mega-Dexterity feat enhancement should cut construction time by at least half.

| R&D Time | Construction Time |
| --- | --- |
| 1 to 5 days | 4 hours |
| up to 10 days | 8 hours |
| up to 15 days | 12 hours |
| up to 20 days | 1 day |
| up to 30 days | 2 days |
| up to 60 days | 2 weeks |
| up to 120 days | 1 month |
| up to 180 days | 2 to 3 months |
| up to 270 days | 3 to 6 months |
| over 270 days | 6 to 18 months |

• **Funding:** Intricate super-science may require a great deal of funding. The GM can set whatever financial requirements she sees fit, but getting funding should be an occasional plot point rather than a constant irritant. In general, the higher your Wealth bonus, the less of an issue funding becomes. Super-scientific success can even lead to further Wealth bonus increases, if you market your finished product properly.

• **Facilities:** Most construction beyond personal equipment requires a dedicated facility. Assume that vehicular construction requires a facility at least three times as large as the vehicle itself. Chemical super-science requires a functioning lab, and medical super-science must have a surgical theater.

# Step Three: Field Testing

Anyone with the appropriate proficiency or skill can use an advancement: Personal Firearms Proficiency for a pistol advancement, Drive for an automobile advancement, and so on.

For an innovation, you must meet the invention's usability requirements (see "Innovative Super-Science," below). If you don't, you can't use it — period. Using an innovation is a standard action and expends 1 charge from it. Alternately, you can spend 1 of your own power points. You then roll the invention's skill check for its effect (see below). If you have the same power that the invention produces, you may make the check based on your abilities instead.

## Repairing Inventions

When an invention is damaged or suffers malfunction (due to attack, wear and tear, a botch, dramatic editing or a convenient plot point), any character with at least 8 ranks in the appropriate field of study may perform repairs. Baseline characters suffer a cumulative −2 penalty for every two options an invention has, due to the enhanced design's complexity. A superhuman character with ranks in the Repair skill may also attempt repairs.

## Rebuilding Inventions

A rebuild is a thorough repair from the ground up, cleaning every part and replacing anything that's wearing out. This requires a new construction check using the initial DC and expenditure of power points as in the original construction, but it involves no further R&D time and takes only one-tenth the original construction time. The invention cannot be used while it's being rebuilt. A successful rebuild restores an advancement to perfect working order, and starts an innovation's warranty afresh (see below).

# Super-Science Advancements

Advancements are improvements upon existing, early 21st-century technology. The GM may declare that a proposed breakthrough is too potent to be an advancement and require that the invention be an innovation instead.

## Personal and Vehicle Weapons

Firearm advancements often improve upon existing technology (scopes, projectiles, etc.). Melee weapon advancements are masterworks that Muramasa or Wyrcan would envy. Much like personal weapons, vehicle weapons improve upon existing concepts. A single device may include no more than six total weapon advancement options.

## Vehicles

The total number of vehicle options possible in a single invention depends on its size. A one- or two-person conveyance can have up to 10 vehicle advancement options; a 12-passenger invention can have up to 20 vehicle advancement options; anything larger can have up to 30 vehicle advancement options.

## Chemistry

Many accomplishments are pharmaceutical in nature, though chemistry advancements can find uses in construction or destruction. A note to the wily GM: Drug advancements may well have unexpected side-effects. Look at a list of possible problems that modern antibiotics can generate, and go from there — particularly if someone botches during the R&D stage. A single compound may include no more than 3 total chemistry advancement options.

## Medical Experimentation

A given procedure must be planned separately for each individual recipient. Although the R&D time remains the same, the medical procedure's duration differs from the construction times described above. A super-surgery procedure requires 1 hour for every day of

R&D, with a minimum of 4 hours. The surgery must be performed in one stretch — it's impossible to split up a single super-scientific surgical procedure. A lead surgeon (who must have the Surgery feat and at least 8 ranks in Heal) must attend at all times. Particularly long operations may require multiple teams of doctors.

The patient is reduced to 0 hit points and is considered staggered after regaining consciousness. He must then heal naturally. Botches during surgery tend to be fatal — botches during R&D, on the other hand, may result in operations that go just fine, but with consequences that don't turn out as anticipated! Dr. Moreau, anyone?

Even with a successful operation, adding chitin plating or a prehensile tail can cause compensatory limitations. Armor may reduce your speed, a tail may make most seats painful and confining, and any alteration that makes you obviously more than human may hamper social interactions. Every two obvious, non-human options impose a −2 penalty on your Charisma-based checks, except for Intimidate checks when using options intended to inspire fear or loathing.

A single organism may have no more than 10 total medical advancement options.

# Super-Science Innovations

An innovation is the product of hypothetical science. It may include any options from Tables 5–1, 5–2 and 5–3; however, innovations duplicate power effects. All innovations have the following traits, each of which influences the initial R&D time and the R&D check DC.

## Effect

This is the power equivalent that the invention produces. The R&D time and R&D check modifiers are listed below. An innovation may also duplicate a superhuman feat, which is considered a 2nd-level power for super-science purposes (including power point expenditures). A power or superhuman feat that costs no power to use and/or functions constantly incurs a power point cost as an innovation effect. When powered from an invention, the effect requires 1 power point to activate and lasts for 10 minutes times the inventor's Quantum score.

A given innovation may have multiple options, but it can only produce one power effect. Gadgets are the only exception to this rule.

| Power | R&D Time | R&D Modifier |
|---|---|---|
| 1st-level | 30 days | — |
| 2nd-level | 60 days | +2 to the DC |
| 3rd-level | 90 days | +4 to the DC |

## Pushing the Envelope

At its most straightforward, an innovation can duplicate the capabilities of any superhuman feat or power. That doesn't mean you can't also come up with new effects. With the GM's input, feel free to design new innovation effects. It's a simple enough procedure on the surface: Decide on an interesting effect, determine the appropriate power level, then refer to "Effect" to find the R&D time needed and the R&D check DC involved in creating the invention.

It can be difficult to decide whether an effect should be 1st-, 2nd- or 3rd-level. Unfortunately, we don't have the room to provide an extensive listing of effect choices. It falls to you and the GM to agree upon an effect's capabilities and level. The GM has final say as to whether something is excessively (or inadequately) powerful. Likewise, she may suggest alternatives if the proposed power simply doesn't fit the rules or genre. The GM may also flat-out disallow anything that you can't justify in terms of super-science. Converting powers should be a route to nifty effects and plot complications, not an excuse for building an über-powered mind-control/disintegration ray.

## Skill Rank

This score is used instead of your own skill when using the innovation's effect. (You may substitute your own skill only if you have the same power.)

An innovation has a base skill rank equal to half the inventor's Quantum score (round down). Increase the R&D time by 3 days for every 2 additional ranks, to a maximum of your Quantum score. You can increase the skill rank further — add 5 additional days and +2 to the R&D check DC for each additional +1 added, up to (1.5 x Quantum).
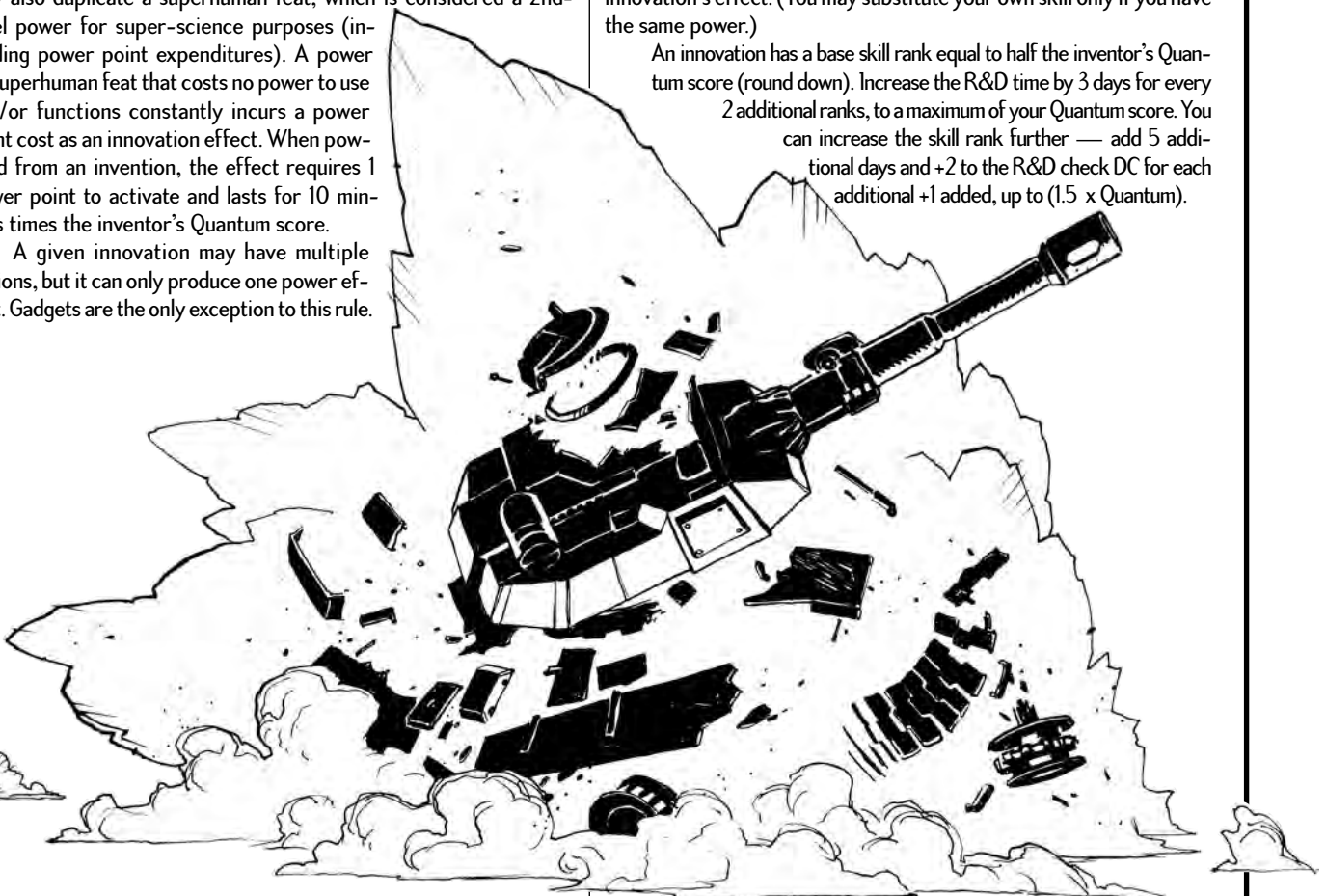
## Options

This covers any options the innovation might have, available from Tables 5–1 through 5–3. Add modifiers as appropriate to those set already by the effect and skill rank to determine the final R&D time and check DC. An innovation may have up to 10 options or the number listed for the invention type, whichever is lower. Options do not require quantum energy to operate (see "Powering Innovations," below).

## Operation

Inventions don't always have standardized controls. You automatically know how to use any innovation that you create. Opening the innovation to use by others makes it more versatile, but adds to the initial R&D check DC as noted below. The additional DC modifiers do not stack.

| R&D Modifier | Usable by... |
|---|---|
| +4 to the DC | Any superhuman |
| +8 to the DC | Any character[1] |

[1] The device also requires a quantum energy source (see below).

## Durability

Each innovation has the minimum hardness, hit points and break DC (see the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 9: Adventuring, "Exploration," *Breaking and Entering*). Improving upon this durability incurs an additional +2 to the initial R&D DC for each durability category that you raise from minimum to maximum.

| Innovation Size | Hardness Min. | Max. | Hit Points Min. | Max. | Break DC Min. | Max. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fine, Diminutive | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 10 | 15 |
| Tiny | 1 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 10 | 15 |
| Small | 3 | 5 | 3 | 9 | 12 | 18 |
| Medium | 5 | 8 | 5 | 15 | 15 | 20 |
| Large | 5 | 10 | 10 | 30 | 15 | 22 |
| Huge | 8 | 15 | 15 | 45 | 20 | 30 |
| Gargantuan | 8 | 15 | 20 | 60 | 30 | 40 |
| Colossal | 10 | 20 | 30 | 90 | 50 | 58 |

## Warranty

An innovation has a base life expectancy, after which point it grows increasingly unreliable. For every point by which your construction check result exceeds the check's DC (as set during R&D), the invention is guaranteed to last 1 week. After that, the invention has a week of unreliable functionality left. It then fails at an appropriate dramatic moment during the unreliable period (GM's discretion). You can increase the innovation's reliable period by giving the invention an overhaul before its standard functionality expires (see "Rebuilding Inventions," above).

You may ensure that an invention has an "unlimited" warranty — that it *always* runs smoothly (barring targeted damage or outright destruction) — by reducing your Quantum score by 1 point during construction or during a rebuild. This reduction is permanent and may only be restored through level advancement. (If applied to an invention made during character creation, the limit on your number of starting inventions is based on your Quantum score *before* this innovation was made.)

Inventions acquired through the Gadget background feat have unlimited warranties.

## Charges

An innovation can store a number of charges equal to half the inventor's Quantum (round down, minimum 1). Add +2 to the R&D check DC for every two charges added, up to a total (1.5 x Quantum).

Each charge is the equivalent of a power point, and is spent to power the innovation's effect. An innovation only recovers charges if you spend power points or transfer them from a quantum energy source (see below) — 1 point for 1 charge, in either case.

After all its charges are used, an innovation has 1 reserve charge left — the last bit of quantum energy that keeps it in working condition. If you expend the reserve charge, the innovation succeeds automatically and at maximum effect. However, it breaks afterward and cannot be repaired — interior wiring melts to slag, delicate components fuse and so on. The inventor may construct a new one as long as he retains the schematics.

# Quantum Energy Sources

A quantum energy source absorbs the ambient quantum force flowing through the universe, and can be used as a power source. Quantum power cells are available but are extremely rare. Size and mass are dependent on storage capacity, as listed below.

| Charges | Weight | Size Equivalent |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | —[1] | A nickel |
| 2 | 1/2 lb. | D-cell battery |
| 5 | 1 lb. | Soda can |
| 10 | 5 lb. | Gallon paint can |
| 25 | 20 lb. | 5-gallon bucket |
| 50 | 500 lb. | 55-gallon drum |
| 75 | 2 tons | Small car |
| 100 | 5 tons | Large truck |

[1] No weight worth noting

## Recharging

Cells are much sought after by those who create and use innovations. Even if they were easy to mass-produce — which they aren't — they would never find widespread use due to one major factor: Once the stored energy is spent, only a new infusion of quantum energy recharges them. An unused cell draws upon ambient quantum energy, regaining 1 charge every 24 hours until it reaches its capacity. A cell does not lose charges if moved; it simply remains in its current state.

Siphoning power points also recharges a cell. This requires hooking a superhuman character to a quantum capture innovation — typically a bizarre-looking headband with pointy probes and wires. It attaches to the character's forehead, and shielded power cables run into the capture device. The character controlling the capture device regulates how much of the donor's power is transferred. The rate of exchange depends on who's in the chair, as indicated below.

| Charge Restored[1] | Character Type |
|---|---|
| 3 | Inventor of the quantum capture device |
| 2 | Superhuman template |

[1] For each power point the donor expends. If a superhuman character has no power points left, or if a baseline character is hooked up, the invention leeches away his very life energy — 1 point of Constitution drain per charge!

# CHAPTER SIX: DRAMA

This chapter covers additional rules to aid in playing adventures in the Nova Age.

## Rules Modifications

### Superhuman Healing

Novas heal faster than baselines do. Healing rates for lethal and nonlethal damage are covered below (also see the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 8, "Injury and Death" for specifics). As always, a character cannot recover hit points past his full normal hit point total.

### Lethal Damage

All characters recover 1 hit point per character level after a full night's rest (8 hours of sleep or more). In addition, a nova also heals 1 hit point per hour per superhuman level (this does not include the superhuman template).

### Nonlethal Damage

All characters recover 1 hit point per hour per character level. In addition, a nova also heals 1 hit point per minute per superhuman level (this does not include the superhuman template).

### Stunt Bonus

Few things are less exciting in a roleplaying game than hearing a 15-minute exchange of: "I blast him. I got a 19." "You hit; roll damage." "Sixteen points." "Okay, who's up next?"

Descriptions of bold action make the game more real and far more enjoyable: "I rip the parking meter from the sidewalk and hurl it like a missile at Quantum Lord." "The meter smashes into the aberrant's chest, hurling him through the storefront window in a spray of shattered glass!"

Novas fight like titans or living gods. They hurl sizzling bolts of quantum energy or knock their opponents through the sides of buildings. Even the good guys are walking natural disasters, hurling cars and smashing property wholesale in order to beat their foes into submission. That's the fun of super-powered battles. The fights are dramatic set pieces that range all over, using exciting stunts and incorporating all manner of props to make for an incredible ballet of mayhem.

To encourage these kinds of cinematic stunts and clever tricks in your **Aberrant** game, a GM may apply a circumstance bonus to reward a well-described and appropriate stunt performed as part of your action. This may be purely a dramatic maneuver — such as leaping into the path of an oncoming car to save a fallen child — or it may incorporate some aspect of the scenery — such as ripping the armor plating off a tank to shield yourself from an opponent's energy blast, then smashing him to the ground with the smoking remnant.

For that action, the GM may apply between a +1 to +3 circumstance bonus either on your attack roll or to your Armor Class (never both at once). The GM is never *required* to provide this bonus, and should feel free not to apply it if you describe the same stunt over and over or come up with a routine inappropriate to the scene just to get a bonus. The goal is to reward cleverness and contributions to the game.

## Dramatic Editing

Dramatic editing is an optional rule which you can use to influence the story — perhaps even to save your character from certain defeat. This version of dramatic editing is pared down from **Adventure!**, a game that emulates the pulp setting in which surprise twists are quite common. If you prefer your **Aberrant** game to be more on the gritty side, just ignore this section.

To use dramatic editing, you spend power points to insert details specific to your character into the scene, *as long as the GM approves of it and it does not contradict anything that's already been established.*

Dramatic editing departs from the usual conventions of roleplaying, in which the player controls his character's actions in the game but cannot dictate how his character is acted *upon*. It does *not* allow you to supersede the GM's descriptions of the scene; instead, it lets you *supplement* them for purpose of making a more enjoyable and exciting story for everyone.

*All* superhuman characters, whether PCs or NPCs, may use dramatic editing. The GM is encouraged to have NPCs do so sparingly, though, since the deck is stacked in her favor by the nature of her role in directing the game.

## Dramatic Editing Parameters

You spend power points each time you want to apply dramatic editing. How much you spend depends on what you want to accomplish (see "Cause and Effect," below). Regardless of your specific desire, all dramatic editing abides by the same overall parameters.

• **Believability:** The dramatic editing result must be something that could conceivably occur within the setting and the events of the story. This maintains suspension of disbelief and encourages everyone to think of dramatic editing opportunities that keep the proper tone for the game. Finding eufiber outfits for the entire team in the middle of the Mojave isn't believable. However, finding the suits in a wrecked Project Utopia jet *is* plausible (and could give rise to further plot ideas).

• **Consistency:** The dramatic edit cannot contradict anything established previously, nor can it overrule a check result that has occurred already *unless the dramatic editing is for the explicit purpose of saving a PC from certain death.* If the GM stated before that a hanger is empty, you cannot use dramatic editing to say, "Hey, look, there's a Blackhawk helicopter in this hanger!" However, if some elite blasts your 5th-level scholar for 100 points of damage, you may use dramatic editing to declare, "Fortunately, the *quantum bolt* struck at just the proper angle to send him flying so he didn't take the full brunt of the attack. He's knocked unconscious, but he's not dead! Whew!"

Along similar lines, you cannot use dramatic editing to contradict or negate another person's power point expenditure. This covers everything from manifesting a power to other dramatic editing

uses, and applies equally to other PCs and to NPCs.

• **Player — Not Character — Influence:** Dramatic editing is a function of *your* self motivation, not your *character*'s. No character is ever aware that dramatic editing has just occurred. Power points power the dramatic edit, but your character does not activate this capability. The points are just a convenient rules measurement.

Dramatic editing is *not* a reality-altering power that exists within the Trinity Universe that characters wield. It is an *out-of-game* way to explain and facilitate the incredible surprises that can occur in situations *within* the superheroic genre. Characters have no awareness that dice are rolled to determine the results of their actions, right? Dramatic editing presents a similar influence.

• **GM Override:** The GM is the ultimate authority in every game. She may deny a given dramatic edit if it will ruin the entire plot, seems overly powerful or intrusive, or simply doesn't fit into the world of **Aberrant**. Any ponied-up power points are not lost if the GM refuses an edit, since they aren't actually spent.

You may provide clarification if the GM isn't clear on how a proposed dramatic edit could happen. To keep the pace of the game running smoothly, however, such modifications should be handled quickly and with decisive action. If the GM's final answer is "no," that's it. End of discussion.

# Cause and Effect

This section outlines the costs to use and degree of influence possible with dramatic editing. A single dramatic edit may cost actual power points (pp) or it may just require a dramatic editing check (see below). Table 5–1: Dramatic Editing Scale shows the range of editing possible and any associated power point costs.

Regardless of plot complications, no dramatic editing effect can cost fewer than 0 power points — in other words, reducing the final cost of a dramatic edit to a negative doesn't *give* you power points.

## Table 6–1: Dramatic Editing Scale

| pp Cost | Dramatic Editing Effect |
|---|---|
| 0 (free) | |
| 0 (check) | Minor offscreen effect; minor extension |
| 1 | Minor onscreen effect |
| 2 | Major onscreen effect |
| 3 | Obvious continuity violation |
| **Step[1]** | **Type of Influence** |
| +1 | Plot ramifications |
| −1 | Plot complications |
| −1 | Improved dramatic editing |

[1] *Step* indicates how both the cost and scope may change depending on the specifics that you incorporate to the dramatic edit (see below).

## Dramatic Editing Checks

You must succeed at a dramatic editing check (1d20 + your character's Quantum score) whenever the proposed dramatic edit falls under "0 (check)" in Table 6–1. The check is against DC 12. You may simply spend 1 power point instead of making a check.

## Minor Offscreen Effect (0 pp + check)

Your edit does not have an immediate impact on the scene, but it will influence events within 15 minutes to an hour. That may be too late depending on the circumstances (like a vat filling with acid) but works just fine for less immediately deadly events (like a shipwreck).

**Example:** *An orbital satellite happens to spot your SOS.*

## Minor Extension (0 pp + check)

Your edit expands on another player's dramatic editing coincidence, typically to benefit both of your characters. A minor extension cannot get too blatant — no fair turning the piece of shipwreck flotsam into a functional motorboat!

**Example:** *The power cuffs have a faulty circuit that cuts out intermittently; if you can just time a Strength check for the moment when it isn't blocking your powers....*

## Minor Onscreen Effect (1 pp)

Your edit doesn't offer an easy solution to your character's situation all by itself, but it can provide breathing room or a fighting chance. A minor onscreen effect may include the unexpected arrival of NPCs who, while unable to rescue your character directly, can provide other sorts of aid. Alternatively, it may be a piece of (easily concealed) equipment that your character "forgot" that he'd had.

**Example:** *The chamber's force barrier is too powerful for you to take down — but is that a hairline crack in the normal concrete wall next to it?*

## Major Onscreen Effect (2 pp)

Your edit provides an immediate, plausible solution in your character's favor to the current circumstance. A major onscreen effect can be just about anything that doesn't contradict the GM's summary of the situation, and may offer a benefit to your character's companions as well.

**Example:** *There's one emergency pod left in the experimental sub that should get all of you to safety.*

## Obvious Continuity Violation (3 pp)

Your edit directly contradicts the GM's description of the scene or is thoroughly beyond the bounds of plausibility. Applying an obvious continuity violation demands the GM's scrutiny, but it should be possible as long as it is creative and maintains the feel of the game and the genre.

**Example:** *The elite about to strike the killing blow is actually an old friend from your college fraternity!*

## Plot Ramification (+1 pp)

Your edit gives you a clue to solving a mystery that has plagued you, lands one of the villain's henchmen in jail or brings any character in the group an unexpected benefit. This extra cost also applies if you choose to solve the team's problem by making the life of another PC much harder (though injury, social inconvenience, great expense, etc.).

A plot ramification doesn't aid much in dealing with the *immediate* situation, but provides a useful benefit to the story afterward.

Minor things — losing property that the subject could purchase again with no reduction of Wealth bonus, a loss of cleanliness or basic human dignity — do not qualify as plot ramifications. You may pile such things on, but the GM is within her rights to nix anything if it looks like you're messing with another player's character for out-of-game reasons (rather than to make the game more interesting). If both parties find the ramification entertaining, the GM should feel free to have it occur.

## Plot Complication (−1 pp)

This is a circumstance that makes life harder for your character — he breaks his leg leaping to safety; he escapes from certain death only to fall under the influence of a lesser enemy; and so on. A plot complication is not a trivial matter. It should affect your character in some fashion for at least the next few encounters, next game session or even — always the best option — give rise to an ongoing subplot.

The reduced cost applies only if your *own* character suffers the complication. Making things complicated for other PCs qualifies as a plot ramification, above.

## Dramatic Editing and Combat

Dramatic editing can liven up an encounter, but it can also complicate things. Given the impact that it can have on combat, the GM may consider the following section an optional addition to the rest of the dramatic editing rules.

### Complication Bonuses

You can add nearly any complication that you can think of to a combat scene. By describing a coincidence that benefits you or inconveniences your opponent, you can use dramatic editing *after* making a roll, granting a +2 circumstance bonus on your choice of attack, saves, or skill or attribute check, or a +2 circumstance bonus to AC, for that round.

You can use a minor onscreen effect to move characters around, essentially providing — or forcing — a bonus 5-foot step. You can do this to friendly or hostile characters, but a plot ramification penalty applies if you put a PC in the direct line of an attack. Conversely, you get a plot complication bonus if you edit *your* PC into the line of danger.

This sort of movement can be applied in one of two ways, pending the GM's approval: Either you describe an event that causes a character to move in the designated direction, or it's a simple "clarification" that hand-waves the entire affair with "oh, it turns out that they were farther apart than they thought."

### Altering the Map

In a non-combat encounter, you can use dramatic editing to make minor additions or changes to the landscape. Any alterations must be reasonable and cannot contradict something the GM has described.

As a minor onscreen effect, you can detail a 10-foot-by-10-foot area of the combat map that the GM has not yet drawn or described in detail. (This may involve using a marker or props suitable for the map being used.) You might add an opening to an alleyway, put a parked car on a street, insert a fire hydrant and the plate glass window behind it, and so on.

If the map portion being modified is at least (100 ft. + 10 ft. per character level) distant from your character, such alterations are considered minor offscreen dramatic editing instead.

## Wealth

The Wealth bonus reflects your buying power — a composite of income, credit rating and savings — and serves as the basis of your Wealth check for purchasing equipment and services. Your starting Wealth bonus is +0 plus:

- 2d4
- Wealth bonus from starting class
- Wealth bonus from relevant feats
- +1 for having 1 or more ranks in the Profession skill

The Wealth bonus fluctuates over the course of play, decreasing as you purchase expensive items and increasing as you gain levels.

The bonus can never fall below +0 and has no upper limit (see the range below). With Wealth bonus +0, you cannot purchase any object or service that has purchase DC 10 or higher, nor can you take 10 or take 20 on a Wealth check.

| Wealth Bonus | Financial Condition |
|---|---|
| +0 | Impoverished or in debt |
| +1 to +4 | Struggling |
| +5 to +10 | Middle class |
| +11 to +15 | Affluent |
| +16 to +20 | Wealthy |
| +21 to +30 | Rich |
| +31 or higher | Very rich |

## Making Purchases

Make a Wealth check (1d20 + your current Wealth bonus) against the purchase DC of the object or service in question to buy it successfully. You succeed automatically if your Wealth bonus is at least equal to the purchase DC. Buying a less common object or service (at the GM's discretion) takes a number of hours equal to its purchase DC, reflecting the time needed to locate the wanted materials and close the deal.

On a failed roll, you can't afford the item or service at the time. You can retry after spending an additional number of hours shopping equal to the purchase DC.

After a successful acquisition with a purchase DC higher than your current Wealth bonus, or if the purchase DC is 15 or higher, your Wealth bonus goes down. Your bonus stays the same if you fail the purchase check.

One other character who makes a successful aid another attempt can give you a +2 bonus on your Wealth check. That character then reduces his Wealth bonus by −1, however.

| Purchase DC Is… | Wealth Bonus Decrease |
|---|---|
| 15+ | 1 point |
| 1–10 points higher than current Wealth bonus | 1 point |
| 11–15 points higher than current Wealth bonus | 1d6 points |
| 16+ points higher than current Wealth bonus | 2d6 points |

## Regaining Wealth

Every time you gain a new level, make a Profession check (or a Wisdom check if you have no ranks in the skill); DC = your current Wealth bonus. On a successful result, raise your current Wealth bonus by 1, +1 for every 5 points by which the check result exceeds the DC.

Riches found or items discovered in the course of gameplay that are sold increase your Wealth bonus, as determined by the GM.

## Selling Stuff

To sell something, you must first determine its sale value. Assuming the object is undamaged and in working condition, its sale value equals the original purchase DC − 3.

You gain a +1 Wealth bonus if the object goes for a sale value greater than your current Wealth bonus, or if the object's sales value is 15 or higher. You cannot sell objects legally that are reported as stolen. Illegal sale often requires dealing with a black market, and reduces the sale value by −3.

## Equipment Lists

We'd love to list various equipment, but we just don't have the room for the sheer number of options available. In general, you should be able to use current day prices for equivalent items as a reference point for any Wealth checks (d20 Modern also has equipment lists, if you have a copy of that handy). Getting a bunch of gear isn't the point of this game, so don't feel the need to quibble over a few dollars here and there. When in doubt, the GM can ask for a quick Wealth check to see if you have (or can pick up) a given piece of mundane equipment as the situation arises.

# Technology in 2008

Science and technology advance dramatically in the 10 years following the *Galatea* explosion and the first appearance of novas. Many advances came about because of the quantum-augmented genius of nova scientists and engineers such as Zushima, Kasheyev and Artifex. Some have even wondered what role "mere humans" have left to play in science.

No one needs to worry. No matter how dramatic advances such as the Zushima macrobe or the hypercombustion engine may seem, these technologies built upon decades of quiet research by hundreds of scientists around the world. Nova scientists merely speed up the process of discovery and invention. Isaac Newton — still the greatest scientific genius in history despite being "only human" — put it best when he said, "If I have seen further than others, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants."

Contrary to the more extravagant science-fiction stories, new technologies seldom appear from nowhere as the product of one transcendent genius. They come as the result of decades of experimentation. The resulting gadgets only surprise people who weren't paying attention. Science-fiction writers described atomic fission bombs 10 years before Hiroshima and Nagasaki; Robert Goddard, Hermann Oberth and Konstantin Tsiolkovsky produced detailed plans for moon rockets decades before the Apollo landing; Charles Babbage laid down the principles of computers in the 1820s.

Most of the "future tech" in **Aberrant** comes directly from research done in laboratories today. Nearly every item in these pages could exist within the next 20–50 years.

## Biology

Without a doubt, the greatest advances of the early Nova Age came in the life sciences: genetics, medicine and ecology.

Cloned tissues and synthetic transplant organs, genetic engineering and new surgical techniques let doctors heal virtually any injury. And medical science is confident that it is but a matter of time — perhaps as little as another decade — before cures are found for those diseases that modern medicine has yet to conquer.

As always, the greatest challenge comes from humanity itself. Will scientific bounty be shared for the benefit — and prosperity — of all? Thus far, at least most governments follow Project Utopia's altruistic lead. Even most biotechnology corporations now see how they can do well by doing good....

## Computer Technology

In the 1980s and '90s, no technology received more hype than computers and information technology. Robot factories would make us all as rich as Croesus — or put us all out of work to starve. The Internet would put the knowledge of the world at our fingertips... if we could *find* it in the flood of pyramid schemes and porn. Perhaps we would create simulated "virtual worlds" or even abandon our bodies to exist as disembodied minds in a digital paradise.

Computer technology *did* mature in the Nova Age, but not in the fanciful ways many imagined. New computer chip designs and the eufiber OpNet improve upon what came before. Although "expert systems" find many uses, the dream of a true "artificial intelligence"

seems as remote as ever. "Uploading" — moving a person's consciousness into a computer — stands revealed as patently absurd. Science sees that the mind is not an abstract program of data running on neural circuits.

Teleconferencing has become an important field of OpNet activity. By plugging v-gogs into their computers, people can see events in real-time with almost perfect three-dimensional fidelity. V-gogs themselves are typical home-entertainment electronics, with each program chip holding up to three hours of 3-D audiovisual entertainment.

Personal computing hardware changed rapidly even before the Nova Age began, but the results continue to be "merely" improvements. Computers have 10 times the processing speed and capacity — but the programs are likewise 10 times larger. The most popular operating systems include speech recognition, for the convenience of the typing-impaired. Most computers also have a jack where the user can plug in v-gogs or some analogous device. Many computers also have screens of flexible plastic instead of rigid, brittle glass.

CD-ROMs and DVDs are on the way out. "Chips" — actually domino-sized blocks of computer chips in a sealed plastic box, with a plug at one end — can hold immense quantities of digital information. A single chip can hold as much data as several DVDs. Chips are very sturdy, but easy to mislay.

## Eufiber

Many technological wonders of the Nova Age are possible only because nova scientists invented new substances with amazing properties. Perhaps the most influential of these is eufiber, a light-transmitting polymer invented — in fact, exuded — by Aníbál Buendia. The Buendia Corporation trademarked the name "Eufiber," but it's often treated as a generic name in common speech.

Eufiber is a tube-shaped molecule composed chiefly of carbon, nitrogen and magnesium. Photons become "entrained" within the tube, unable either to leave or be absorbed. As a result, light passes through the tube with virtually no loss of signal strength or clarity.

Originally, Buendia secreted eufiber from his own epidermis. Ardis Longley's pioneering experimentation on eufiber colonies has led to the development of synthetic varieties that duplicate most of organic eufiber's properties.

Since its discovery, eufiber has superseded copper and optical fiber as a medium for data transmission cables. It equals optical fiber for the volume of data that can pass through a eufiber cable of a given diameter, at a fraction of the cost. Its physical resilience and chemical stability have also led to the use of eufiber in the textile industry.

## Energy

Commercial fusion power is not yet a reality, but superior power sources do emerge in the Nova Age. Hypercombustion (HC) and fuel-cell engines are the norm in most areas of the globe.

In an HC engine, a superheated, ionized gas called a plasma streams into a reaction chamber, where shock waves superheat and ionize the gases of combustion. Constrained by a powerful magnetic field, the exploding plasma moves at supersonic speed. As the plasma moves through the magnetic field, it generates an electrical current.

Hypercombustion engines fueled by gasoline or alcohol can power automobiles or serve as portable generators. Larger HC engines fueled by coal generate electricity for city or national power grids. A slight change to the combustion chamber design makes the sulfur and phosphorus impurities combine with nitrogen in the air to produce a solid ash instead of sulfur dioxide and other pollutants. This ash has found use as a fertilizer.

Fuel cells are different but no less useful. A cell reacts hydrogen with oxygen from the air to generate electricity. This makes no sound at all, and has no exhaust but water. As a gas, hydrogen is extremely explosive. Therefore, the hydrogen is stored in a block of special metal powder that can absorb many times its own volume of the gas. Even if the block is set on fire, the hydrogen can only escape slowly.

## Transportation

Personal transportation experienced little change in the new millennium. Average citizens still drive cars, even if the engine works differently. Thanks to those new engines and high-tech materials discovered by novas, however, some old dreams have come true....

• **Flying Cars:** The dream of 1950s pulp science fiction, realized at last! Flying cars are just that — automobiles equipped with turbofans that provide lift (see below for specifics).

Flying cars come in compact and medium sizes, plus a "flying motorbike" that can carry two people if they squeeze together. (Large aircars are impractical.) The flying bike finds chief use as a highway patrol vehicle. Compact and medium cars are used as a variety of police and emergency vehicles. Squadcars are medium-sized: They need room for prisoners.

As of 2008, no developed nation has been foolhardy enough to license flying cars for private use. Other countries — and perhaps the developed nations, in the future — demand a pilot's license and flight control. In some Third World countries, a person with enough money can get away with flying their car through urban areas.

• **Hyperjets:** Also called suborbital jets, these craft are as much rocket as airplane. They launch into suborbital flight, actually leaving Earth's atmosphere for a brief period, then arcing back down toward their destinations. This saves tremendous travel time — travel anywhere in the world in under an hour! — but is very expensive. At present, only business people and thrill-seeking glitterati can afford to fly on the suborbital express. Otherwise, the majority of commercial hyperjet business comes from satellite-launch companies; the craft releases a small "piggyback" rocket at the apex of its flight path to carry a satellite the rest of the way into orbit.

• **Maglev Trains:** Instead of tires on a roadway or wheels on a rail, the maglev — magnetic levitation — train rides on a cushion of magnetic force that lifts it off its track. A "ripple" in the magnetic field propels the train. Because magnetic levitation is frictionless, such a train can travel with great speed — over 300 mph. Maglev trains only require a few minutes to reach full speed or slow to a stop. Unlike a clattering railway, a maglev train makes no sound except for the breeze of its passing.

A maglev line consists of a shallow trough lined with metal. The train floats a few inches above the surface of the trough. Sensors in the trough detect any obstruction large enough to pose a threat to the train. Because of their great speed, maglev trains can make only very slow, gentle turns.

# Melee and Missile Weapons

Even in an age of high-tech firearms and quantum-fueled energy blasts, individuals from petty criminals to novas sometimes turn to the most archaic weapons to get the job done. See Table 5–5: Weapons in the *Player's Handbook* for a list of simple, martial and exotic melee and missile weapons. (Note: the Archaic Weapon Proficiency feat covers both simple and martial weapons.)

# Ranged Weapons

Modern composite materials, advanced chemical compounds and computerized ballistics models combine to make firearms more lethal, more accurate and more compact than ever before. See Table

6–1: Ranged Weapons for representative firearms. Weapon listings include the following information.

*Damage:* Firearms inflict ballistic damage. Unless noted otherwise, each weapon threatens a critical on a 20 and deals double damage on a confirmed critical.

*Range Increment:* Attacks at less than this distance are not penalized for range, but each full increment applies a cumulative −2 penalty on the attack roll. Ranged weapons have a maximum of 10 range increments.

*Rate of Fire — 1:* Use once per round; must then reload or replace.

*Rate of Fire — Si (Single Shot):* Must operate the action to load a new round between each shot. This allows only one shot per attack, regardless of abilities that might allow more than one shot per attack.

*Rate of Fire — Sa (Semiautomatic):* Fires one shot per attack, but can make multiple shots in rapid succession if you have abilities that allow more than one shot per attack.

*Rate of Fire — A (Automatic):* Fires a burst or stream of shots with a single squeeze of the trigger. Can be set on autofire or used with feats that take advantage of automatic fire.

*Magazine:* Box magazines can be removed and reloaded separately from the weapon; cylinders (cyl.) and internal (int.) magazines are part of the weapon and must be reloaded by hand; linked magazines are bullets chained together with small metal clips, forming a belt.

*Size:* Weapon size categories are as follows: A Small or smaller weapon is a light, one-handed weapon. A Medium or smaller weapon can be used one- or two-handed. A Large weapon requires two hands. A Huge weapon requires two hands and a bipod or other mount.

*Weight:* The weapon's weight when loaded.

*Purchase DC:* The base purchase DC to acquire the weapon.

## Personal and Advanced Firearms

• **Automatic:** A clip-loaded handgun that combines a higher rate of fire than a revolver with as much as three times the ammo capacity. Automatic handguns typically use lighter but more accurate 9mm ammunition, though larger calibers are common.

• **Machine Gun (light), submachine gun:** A fully-automatic weapon that chambers and fires a round as long as the trigger is depressed. Most machine guns fire high-velocity ammunition and are capable of extremely high rates of fire.

• **Revolver:** A simple firearm that stores several rounds in a revolving cylinder. As the trigger is pulled, the cylinder revolves to bring the next bullet in line with the barrel. Less flashy but easier to operate than an automatic, and thus still popular in 2008.

• **Rifle:** Hunting rifles fire high-velocity ammunition and come in a wide range of sizes and calibers, though .30-06 and .30-30 calibers are the most common. These weapons are frequently bolt-action, single-shot weapons, but many designs are semiautomatic, loading from a five-shot magazine.

• **Assault rifle:** Assault rifles fire high-velocity ammunition and are capable of both semi-automatic and full-auto fire. These powerful weapons are restricted to military and special law enforcement units, but criminals and private owners pay premium prices to obtain them.

• **Shotgun:** Shotguns are common among law enforcement personnel, sportsmen and homeowners. They fire a spreading cone of lead shot that is very powerful at close range, and requires little in the way of marksmanship.

## Table 6–1: Ranged Weapons

| Weapon | Damage | Range Increment | Rate of Fire | Magazine | Size | Weight | Purchase DC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Handguns* (Personal Firearms Proficiency feat) | | | | | | | |
| Automatic, light (Glock 17, Beretta 92-F, SITES M9) | 2d6 | 30 ft. | Sa | Box 15 | Tiny | 2 lb. | 15 |
| Automatic, heavy (Glock 22, Heckler and Koch USP .45) | 2d8 | 30 ft. | Sa | Box 15 | Small | 3 lb. | 16 |
| Revolver, light (Pathfinder, Ruger Service Six) | 2d4 | 20 ft. | Sa | Cyl. 6 | Tiny | 1 lb. | 14 |
| Revolver, heavy (S&W M29 .44 Magnum) | 2d8 | 30 ft. | Sa | Cyl. 6 | Small | 3 lb. | 14 |
| Pistol, tranquilizer (Pneu-dart tranquilizer pistol) | 2d4 | 30 ft. | Si | Box 6 | Small | 3 lb. | 14 |
| *Longarms* (Personal Firearms Proficiency feat) | | | | | | | |
| Rifle (Ruger Mini-14) | 2d10 | 80 ft. | Sa | Int. 5 | Large | 8 lb. | 15 |
| Rifle, bolt-action (Remington 700, Winchester 94) | 2d10 | 90 ft. | Si | Int. 5 | Large | 8 lb. | 15 |
| Rifle, assault (M4 Carbine, M16A2, AKM) | 2d8 | 80 ft. | Sa, A | Box 30 | Large | 8 lb. | 16 |
| Rifle, tranquilizer (Cap-Chur Tranquilizer Rifle) | 2d4 | 90 ft. | Si | Int. 5 | Large | 8 lb. | 16 |
| Shotgun, 12-gauge (Beretta M3P, Remington Wingmaster) | 2d8 | 30 ft. | Si | Varies | Large | 9 lb. | 16 |
| Shotgun, 12-gauge beanbag (Beretta M3P, Remington Wingmaster) | 2d6 | 30 ft. | Si | Varies | Large | 9 lb. | 16 |
| Shotgun, 10-gauge (Browning BPS) | 2d10 | 30 ft. | Sa | Varies | Large | 11 lb. | 16 |
| *Machine Guns, Light* (Advanced Firearms Proficiency feat) | | | | | | | |
| Machine gun, light (M249, M240G) | 2d8 | 40 ft. | Sa, A | Varies | Large | 8 lb. | 20 |
| Submachine gun, 9mm (Heckler and Koch MP-5) | 2d4 | 50 ft. | Sa, A | Box 32 | Large | 7 lb. | 19 |
| Submachine gun, .45 (Heckler and Koch UMP-45) | 2d6 | 40 ft. | Sa, A | Box 25 | Large | 7 lb. | 19 |
| *Heavy Weapons* (Exotic Firearms Proficiency feat [Artillery, Flamethrower, Machine Guns])[3] | | | | | | | |
| Artillery | 10d6[1] | 150 ft. | 1 | 1 int. | Large | Varies | 24 |
| Foamthrower | Special[2] | 20 ft. | Si | Int. 10 | Huge | 20 lb. | 19 |
| Grenade launcher | Varies[3] | 70 ft. | 1 | 1 int. | Large | 7 lb. | 20 |
| Machine gun, heavy (Browning M2HB, MG3) | 2d10 | 100 ft. | A | Varies | Huge | 22 lb. | 20 |

[1] An artillery shell explodes like a grenade, dealing its damage to all targets within a 10-foot radius (DC 18 Reflex save for half). The shell has a shaped charge to penetrate armor, ignoring up to 10 points of hardness if it strikes a vehicle, building or object. This applies only to the target struck, not to other objects within the burst radius.

[2] Targets hit with foam are immobilized immediately. Affected individuals can break free and move half their normal speed by using a full-round action to make a DC 20 Strength check or a DC 20 Escape Artist check. Individuals who succeed on a Reflex save are not immobilized but can still move at only half speed through the area. The foam lasts 1d4 minutes before dissolving.

[3] Using a grenade launcher without penalty requires the Personal Firearms Proficiency feat; you then make a ranged attack against a specific 5-foot square (instead of targeting a person or creature).

## Heavy Weaponry

Heavy weapons are used mostly in military situations; the GM may restrict heavy weapons purchases to official military or black market channels (if the latter, add +4 to the purchase DC).

- **Artillery:** Tank armament, mortars and field pieces such as howitzers.
- **Grenade launcher:** A rifle-like device capable of firing grenades much further than the human arm can throw them. Damage depends on grenade type.
- **Machine gun (heavy):** These large machine guns are generally operated by a crew of two (a gunner and a loader), and are often vehicle-mounted.

## Nonlethal Weapons

By the late 20th century, law enforcement and military organizations devoted considerable time and energy to the development of nonlethal projectiles. Tranquilizer ammunition can be purchased in either human or superhuman dosages (superhuman dosages add +2 to the purchase DC). A human dosage inflicts nonlethal damage on

## Table 6–2: Explosives

**Grenades and Explosives**

| Weapon | Damage | Damage Type | Burst Radius | Reflex DC | Range Increment | Size | Weight | Purchase DC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Plastique | 2d6 | Concussion | 5 ft. | 15 | 10 ft. | Tiny | 1 lb. | 12[1] |
| Grenade, fragmentation | 4d6 | Slashing | 20 ft. | 15 | 10 ft. | Tiny | 1 lb. | 15[2] |
| Grenade, smoke[3] | — | — | See text | — | 10 ft. | Small | 2 lb. | 10[2] |
| Grenade, tear gas[3] | See text | — | See text | — | 10 ft. | Small | 2 lb. | 12[2] |
| Molotov cocktail | 1d6 | Fire | 5 | — | 10 ft. | Small | 1 lb. | 6[4] |

[1] The purchase DC is for a single 1-lb. block.

[2] The purchase DC is for a box of 6.

[3] A cloud fills the four squares around it on the round it is thrown. This spreads to all squares within 10 feet on the next round, and to all squares within 15 feet on the third round. It disperses after 10 rounds, though a moderate wind (11+ mph) disperses it in 4 rounds and a strong wind (21+ mph) disperses it in 1 round.

[4] The purchase DC is for the weapon's components.

humans and no damage to novas. A superhuman dosage inflicts lethal damage to humans and nonlethal damage to novas.

• **Tranquilizer pistol:** This is the basic air pistol used by veterinarians and naturalists, but with greater range and rate of fire.

• **Tranquilizer rifle:** This specialized air rifle is designed to deliver its dart at long range.

• **Beanbag shotgun rounds:** Just like it sounds, these soft projectiles filled with synthetic particles resemble palm-sized beanbags that can be fired from a shotgun. They inflict nonlethal damage to humans and novas.

• **Foamthrower:** This device looks and works much like a flamethrower, but instead of napalm it shoots a stream of chemicals that expand into a tough, sticky foam.

## Explosives

Table 6–2: Explosives lists grenades and other explosives. These show information noted above, as well as the following specifications.

*Damage:* The damage dealt to all within the explosive's burst radius. For a Molotov cocktail, only a direct hit inflicts full damage; targets within the burst radius take 1 point of fire damage.

*Burst Radius:* The area the explosive affects.

*Damage Type:* Damage is classified according to type: energy (of a specific type) or slashing. All explosives but a Molotov cocktail threaten a critical on a 20 and deal double damage on a confirmed critical.

*Reflex DC:* Any creature caught within the burst radius may make a Reflex save against the listed DC for half damage.

*Range Increment:* Explosives with no range increment must be set in place before being detonated.

• **Plastique:** Each additional block increases the damage by +2d6 (maximum 10d6) and the burst radius by 10 feet (maximum 20 feet).

On a successful Demolitions check (see Chapter One), you can increase the damage or the burst radius by 50% (your choice) by wiring together several blocks of plastique (DC 10 + 1 per block).

Plastique can only be detonated electronically, either with a timed electronic detonator or a remote detonator. Timed detonators can be set to explode within a few seconds to as long as 24 hours. Remote detonators have a range of one mile.

• **Grenade, fragmentation:** A small explosive device that detonates shrapnel in all directions.

• **Grenade, smoke:** Smoke fills the coverage area, obscuring all sight and giving total concealment to anyone within. Smoke grenades are also used as signal devices, with smoke coming in various colors.

• **Grenade, tear gas:** A cloud of irritant causes a target's eyes to fill with tears; a DC 15 Fortitude save is required to avoid being nauseated. This lasts for 1d6 rounds after leaving the cloud. Even if successful, a save is required each round the target remains in the cloud. Wearing a gas mask negates the effect. A wet cloth held over the eyes, nose and mouth provides a +2 bonus on the Fortitude save.

• **Molotov cocktail:** You can make this improvised weapon with a DC 10 Craft (chemical) check or DC 15 Intelligence check. It detonates in 2 rounds or on impact with a solid object, whichever comes first. A target that takes a direct hit suffers an additional 1d6 points of fire damage in the following round and risks catching on fire.

## Armor

Modern body armor uses advanced synthetic fibers and reinforced ceramic plates to offer maximum protection that is both light and minimally cumbersome. See Table 6–3: Armor in this book and Table 5–6 in the *Player's Handbook* for types of armor.

*AC Bonus:* The armor's protective value, added to your Armor Class.

*Nonprof. Bonus:* The maximum AC bonus you can apply if you're wearing armor that you're not proficient in.

*Max. Dex Bonus:* The maximum Dexterity bonus you can apply to your AC when wearing the armor.

## Table 6–3: Armor

| Armor | AC Bonus | Nonprof. Bonus | Max. Dex Bonus | Armor Penalty | Speed | Weight | Purchase DC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Light Armor* | | | | | | | |
| Reinforced | +2 | +1 | +8 | −0 | 30 | 4 lb. | 12+ |
| *Medium Armor* | | | | | | | |
| Flak jacket | +5 | +2 | +4 | −4 | 30 | 10 lb. | 16 |
| *Heavy Armor* | | | | | | | |
| Riot gear | +8 | +3 | +1 | −6 | 20 | 25 lb. | 20 |

*Armor Penalty:* This penalty applies on checks involving Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Swim and Tumble.

*Speed:* Your speed while in this armor.

*Weight:* The armor's weight.

*Purchase DC:* The base purchase DC to acquire the armor.

• **Flak jacket:** A heavy, sleeveless Kevlar vest commonly used by military and law enforcement personnel. Tailoring the outfit adds to the cost, depending on how stylish the wearer wants to appear.

• **Reinforced:** Kevlar armor with rigid ceramic inserts to protect against high-velocity bullets and shrapnel. Increased protection comes with greater weight and bulkiness.

• **Riot gear:** A full-body suit of reinforced armor used by special police units Excellent protection, but hot, bulky and heavy.

# Poisons and Drugs

Nova physiology has opened new doors for scientists. Not only have old ideas of human maximum potential been disproved, but a new species of humanity has emerged. Nova biology produces new hormones never before seen inside the human body — or anywhere else on Earth, for that matter. The medical uses for such chemicals seem limitless when applied to normal human systems.

On the darker side, a new black market has emerged to exploit these new drugs. Drug cartels, still making a tidy profit trafficking in narcotics, realize the vast potential of nova drugs and their derivatives.

There is also a new market demand among novas for drugs powerful enough to overcome their high metabolic rates and enhanced tolerances. Combinations of cocaine and synthetic nova steroids are two examples, but a true narcotic for novas has yet to be perfected.

When ingesting normal, non-nova-specific drugs, a superhuman makes a Fortitude save against its DC. If successful, the nova's heightened metabolism shrugs off the drug with no ill effects. If the roll fails, he suffers the reduced effect.

When subjected to a nova-specific drug (soma, adrenocilin, moxinoquantamine), a superhuman makes two Fortitude saving throws against its DC — the first right after encountering the drug, the second 1 minute later. Each successful save subjects the superhuman to a reduced effect (see descriptions as appropriate). Each failed save applies the drug's full effect. A successful Heal check against the drug's DC makes the nova subject only to the reduced effect.

Unless noted otherwise, each drug's effects wear off after 1d3+2 hours. Multiple applications of the same drug do not stack.

In the following descriptions, "Vector" indicates the common means by which the chemical is delivered. Ingested drugs are eaten, drunk and otherwise consumed; injected drugs are administered with a hypodermic or other needle; inhaled drugs are breathed in with the local air.

• **Alcohol:** This encompasses everything from bootleg booze filled with toxic byproducts and random debris to the finest vintages of wine and champagne.

*Vector:* Ingested (DC 11).

*Reduced Effect:* Mildly intoxicated. You suffer a −1 penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks and ability checks.

*Full Effect:* Intoxicated. You can neither run nor charge, and suffer a −2 penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks and ability checks.

• **Amphetamines and Cocaine:** Highly addictive stimulants, popular at all levels of society despite efforts at regulation or control. Abuse does attract criticism, but no social stigma attaches to moderate use except in puritanical communities.

*Vector:* Inhaled or swallowed (DC 17).

*Reduced Effect:* Mildly excited. You gain a +1 bonus on Strength checks and on skill checks involving concentration, but suffer a −2 penalty to your effective Dexterity score.

*Full Effect:* Agitated. You gain a +2 bonus on Strength checks and suffer a −4 penalty to your effective Dexterity score.

• **Opium and Depressants:** These drugs relax the user. A lot. Some people find that they remove barriers to contemplation and artistic insight, making the drugs common among tormented visionaries. More mundane applications include the treatment of chronic insomnia.

*Vector:* Swallowed or injected (DC 13).

*Reduced Effect:* Mildly sedated. You suffer a −1 penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks and ability checks.

*Full Effect:* Sedated. You can neither run nor charge, and suffer a −4 penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks and ability checks.

• **Hallucinogens:** The subject's perceptions may alter, ranging from mild (fluctuating light levels) through moderate (heightening emotional states) to severe (terrifying monsters). Novas under the influence of powerful hallucinogens have been known to "accidentally" activate their powers, unconsciously tapping their M−R nodes.

*Vector:* Contact, inhaled or injected (DC 15).

*Reduced Effect:* Mildly disoriented. You suffer a −1 penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks and ability checks.

*Full Effect:* Hallucinating. The actual effect depends on the hallucinogen, and can include vertigo, sapping of will, magnifying phobias, full-on hallucinations and so on. Specifics are up to the GM, but all involve sensory distortion to some degree and should, at a minimum, apply a −4 penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks and ability checks.

• **Nerve Gas:** The subject suffers numbness, trembling and weakness in his extremities, followed by dizziness, nausea and loss of consciousness. Large doses are usually fatal.

*Vector:* Contact or inhaled (DC 18).

*Reduced Effect:* Weak and disoriented. You suffer a −4 penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks and ability checks.

*Full Effect:* Nervous system disruption. You suffer 1d8 damage per round of exposure.

• **Mite:** Extracted from nova steroids and developed from nova mitochondria, mite is a controlled substance in the United States and many other nations. Nonetheless, use of the drug to increase muscle mass in athletes has become popular. Unlike many drugs, mite has the same effect on novas as on normal humans. When the drug wears off after 1d6+1 days, make a Fortitude save (add +1 to the DC for each consecutive dose the character has taken, no matter how much time passes between doses). If the roll succeeds, there are no lingering health effects. A nova who fails his save suffers 1 point of permanent Constitution drain. A human who fails her save suffers an immediate cardiac arrest; she falls to −1 hit points and is dying unless she receives medical attention.

*Vector:* Injected (DC 20).

*Reduced Effect:* Growth in muscle mass. The character gains a +4 enhancement bonus to Strength.

*Full Effect:* Growth in muscle mass, feelings of euphoria or invincibility. The character gains the Mega-Strength superhuman feat temporarily.

• **Adrenocilin:** Exclusive to Project Utopia's Rashoud facilities, this drug is used to help newly erupted novas control their powers and to reduce the effects of debilitating headaches and other trauma common to new quantum-channelers. A dose of mox counteracts a dose of adrenocilin.

Adrenocilin is highly addictive. Novas who take the drug must make a Fortitude save at a cumulative +1 DC for each dose after the first. If the roll succeeds, you avoid addiction. If the roll fails, you become addicted; you suffer a −2 penalty on all rolls relating to quantum power use if you are not under the influence of adrenocilin.

This drug is highly poisonous to normal humans.

*Vector:* Ingested (DC 13).

*Reduced Effect:* Nova: Gain a +1 bonus on all quantum power use checks. Human: Suffer 2d6 points of damage.

*Full Effect:* Nova: Gain a +2 bonus on all quantum power use checks; you also treat being exhausted as being fatigued (ignore the effects of merely being fatigued). Human: Suffer 4d6 points of damage.

• **Moxinoquantamine (Mox):** This regulator drug interferes with signals from the M−R node, making it more difficult for a superhuman to use his powers. Mox is used when training novas who have little control over their quantum powers or who wish to exercise and train already existing powers. A dose of adrenocilin counteracts a dose of mox.

Mox is highly poisonous to normal humans.

*Vector:* Ingested (DC 15).

*Reduced Effect:* Nova: Suffer a −2 penalty on all quantum power use checks. Human: Suffer 2d8 points of damage.

*Full Effect:* Nova: Suffer a −4 penalty on all quantum power use checks. Further, you may not perform a quantum power stunt while the drug is in effect. Human: Suffer 4d8 points of damage.

• **Soma:** The normal adrenal gland creates adrenochrome, one of the most powerful chemicals in the human body. Chemicals extracted from a nova's M−R node are many times more potent. A baseline ingesting M−R hormones, whose street name is soma, experiences the most potent high possible — if he survives.

Soma can be produced only through direct extraction from a living nova's M−R node. The process always kills the "donor," making the drug extraordinarily rare — indeed, most people believe it to be nothing more than an urban legend. When cut with cocaine, soma creates the only known narcotic capable of overcoming a nova's enhanced metabolism (treat as amphetamines/cocaine, above).

This drug enhances a nova's power and also gives humans a semblance of nova powers — increased strength, speed and the like.

Soma is highly addictive to both novas and normal humans. Make a Fortitude save at a cumulative +2 DC for each dose after the first (no matter how much time passes between doses). If the roll fails, the subject becomes addicted to soma. A soma addict suffers a −4 penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks and ability checks when not under the influence of the drug.

*Vector:* Ingested or injected (DC 21).

*Reduced Effect:* Nova: Gain a +4 inherent bonus to any three abilities. Human: Make an additional Fortitude save; if successful, gain a +4 inherent bonus to any three abilities. On a failed save, suffer 3d10 points of damage.

*Full Effect:* Nova: Gain a superhuman feat of your choice (plus enhancement) or a 1st-level quantum power. Human: Make an additional Fortitude save; if successful, gain a superhuman feat of your choice (plus enhancement). On a failed save, you die instantly.

# Vehicles

Most of the time, transportation from cars to camels exists to get the PCs from one locale to the next. Measure off time and distance, and there you are, ready for the next dramatic moment. Sometimes, the journey itself is the adventure, and sometimes the vehicle plays an important part once the characters get to where they're going. The *Player's Handbook* covers the basics of travel by horse and wagon; the following material provides a basic framework for vehicle travel, chases and combat.

## The Costs of Travel

Maintaining a vehicle is an ongoing expense; for simplicity's sake, handle it as a monthly Wealth check (purchase DC 7). Actual repairs — say, due to damage — require a Repair check once each day. The check result indicates the amount of damage repaired and the cost to make the repair. If you pay someone else to repair the vehicle, add +5 to the purchase DC for the Wealth check.

| Repair Check | Damage Fixed[1] | Purchase DC |
|---|---|---|
| Up to 9 | 2d4 (1) | 15 |
| 10–14 | 2d6 (2) | 18 |
| 15–19 | 3d6 (3) | 21 |
| 20–24 | 4d6 (4) | 24 |
| 25–29 | 5d6 (5) | 27 |
| 30–34 | 6d6 (6) | 31 |
| Every +5 | +1d6 (+1) | +5 |

[1] The number in parenthesis is the amount of the vehicle's handling modifier repaired that day (if its handling was reduced by damage).

Public transportation ranges from inexpensive to extremely costly, depending on where you're going and what you're taking to get there.

| Transportation | Purchase DC |
|---|---|
| Local public (taxi, subway, bus) | 1 |
| Train (regional, short distance up to 100 miles) | 2 |
| Train (regional, maglev) | 4 |
| Sea passage (steerage) | 2 |
| Sea passage (second class) | 6 |
| Sea passage (first class) | 13 |
| Air fare (short distance up to 250 miles) | 6 |
| Air fare (suborbital) | 11 |

## Vehicle Types

Vehicles have a simple set of statistics that define everything from how well they handle to how tough they are, as noted in Table 6–4. General vehicle categories are covered below.

*Crew:* The standard number of crew. Only one person is needed to drive in most cases; other crew members serve as gunners or co-pilots.

*Pas. (Passengers):* The number of passengers (in addition to the crew) the vehicle is designed to carry. Passenger vehicles with unused passenger space can carry an additional 100 pounds of cargo per slot.

*Cargo (Cargo Capacity):* The amount of cargo the vehicle is designed to carry. Passengers may occupy cargo space, but this is often a cramped, uncomfortable, and even unsafe experience. One additional passenger can be carried for each 250 pounds of unused cargo capacity.

*Init. (Initiative):* The modifier added to the driver's or pilot's initiative check when operating the vehicle.

*Hand. (Handling):* The modifier applied on any Drive or Pilot checks attempted with the vehicle.

*Speed:* The distance the vehicle can move in 1 round.

*MPH:* The vehicle's cruising and maximum speed, separated by a slash.

*AC (Armor Class):* The vehicle's Armor Class.

*Hard. (Hardness):* The vehicle's hardness. Subtract this number from any damage dealt to the vehicle.

*HP (Hit Points):* The vehicle's full normal hit points.

*Size:* Vehicle size categories are defined differently from the size categories for weapons and other objects.

- **Airbike:** Reserved for the rich and the adventurous, the airbike is a one or two-person flying craft that is the vehicle of choice for daredevils and adrenaline junkies.

- **Aircar:** These flying cars are touted as the wave of the future for personal transportation, but as yet their expense keeps them out of the hands of average consumers.

- **Aircraft:** The skies of 2008 buzz with passenger and cargo aircraft, ranging from helicopters to propeller and jet-driven aircraft, to the extremely fast (and expensive) suborbital hyperjets.

- **Car:** Cars are still the personal vehicles of choice for individuals and families in 2008, though many now operate on highly-efficient magneto-hydrodynamic (MHD) and fuel-cell systems.

- **Motorcycle:** Motorcycles remain popular vehicles for individuals and courier services. Motorcycles typically use an internal combustion engine or advanced fuel cell technology.

- **Ship:** The vast bulk of international cargo transport is still handled by seagoing cargo ships, and cruise liners still carry passengers to tourist spots around the world. Cargo ships have crews twice as large as their passenger capacity or more, while passenger ships have about one crew member for every five to ten passengers.

- **Train:** A sizeable fraction of interstate cargo transport is still delivered by rail, and now long-distance, high-speed magrail service is making passenger rail service attractive to consumers who have a distaste for (or outright fear of) flying.

- **Truck:** The vast majority of interstate commerce is handled by trucking companies, transporting everything from foodstuffs to industrial materials across the nations of the Earth, 24 hours a day.

# Pursuit

Much of vehicular combat revolves around some form of pursuit. AEG's *Spycraft* has excellent, intuitive chase rules that are incorporated here to make vehicle encounters in **Aberrant** as dramatic as the rest of the game.

Pursuit is abstract intentionally. This makes it easy to allow chases to erupt at any point, and leaves room for you to elaborate on maneuvers, successes and failures as you see fit. The rules focus on landbound vehicular pursuit, but you can extrapolate them for any form of pursuit, from car chases to running down a guy on foot to a dogfight between a pair of novas who can fly.

## Starting Pursuit

During a chase, one vehicle — the pursuer — is assumed to be trying to catch the other — the target. The distance between vehicles during pursuit is called the lead. This is measured in lengths, adjustable units determined by the vehicles involved in the chase. Unless noted otherwise, one length equals 10 feet.

Either the pursuer or the target initiates a chase in most cases, which also determines the lead (see below). If there is no clear initia-

## Table 6–4: Vehicles

| Vehicle | Crew | Pas. | Cargo | Init. | Hand. | Speed | MPH | AC | Hard. | HP | Size | Purchase DC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Ground Vehicles* | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Car | 1 | 4 | 200 lb. | −2 | +0 | 500 ft. | 75/120 | 8 | 5 | 35 | L | 25 |
| Motorcycle | 1 | 1 | 100 lb. | 0 | +2 | 500 ft. | 75/120 | 9 | 5 | 20 | M | 18 |
| Truck, pick-up | 1 | 2 | 1000 lb. | −3 | −1 | 450 ft. | 75/100 | 6 | 5 | 38 | L | 23 |
| Truck, panel | 1 | 2 | 3000 lb. | −4 | −4 | 400 ft. | 75/100 | 6 | 5 | 54 | H | 28 |
| *Air Vehicles* | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Airplane, small passenger | 2 | 10 | 2 tons | −4 | −4 | 1,500 ft. | 250/450 | 6 | 5 | 68 | G | 35 |
| Airplane, cargo | 2 | 4 | 15 tons | −4 | −4 | 1,200 ft. | 250/350 | 6 | 5 | 74 | G | 39 |
| Airbike | 1 | 1 | 1 ton | 0 | +2 | 500 ft. | 150/250 | 12 | 2 | 25 | M | 37 |
| Aircar, small | 1 | 2 | 2 tons | −2 | 0 | 350 ft. | 80/140 | 8 | 4 | 30 | M | 34 |
| Aircar, medium | 1 | 4 | 3 tons | −2 | −2 | 350 ft. | 70/100 | 8 | 4 | 70 | L | 38 |
| Hyperjet | 2 | 30 | 25 tons | −4 | −4 | 2,000 ft. | 3,500/4,200 | 15 | 10 | 70 | G | 45 |
| *Water Vehicles* | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cargo ship | 20 | 20 | 3600 tons | −4 | −12 | 80 ft. | 8/16 | 2 | 5 | 280 | C | 48 |
| Luxury liner | 50–70 | 400–800 | 1000 tons | −4 | −8 | 100 ft. | 10/20 | 2 | 5 | 250 | C | 56 |
| Speedboat | 1 | 5 | 500 lb. | −2 | −2 | 150 ft. | 15/30 | 9 | 7 | 25 | L | 28 |
| Tramp steamer | 10 | 10 | 2000 tons | −4 | −10 | 80 ft. | 8/16 | 6 | 5 | 100 | G | 31 |

## Novas and Three-Dimensional Pursuit

Unlike air- or seacraft, a flying or swimming nova has no separate handling rating. Use the following for basics on a nova's maneuverability in three dimensions during pursuit (see *DMG*, Chapter 2: Using the Rules, "Moving in Three Dimensions," *Tactical Aerial Movement* for more information).

| Maneuverability | Modifier |
|---|---|
| Perfect | +4 |
| Good | +2 |
| Average | +0 |
| Poor | −2 |
| Clumsy | −4 |

Reduce a nova's maneuverability by one step each if he uses *hypermovement* and/or the Enhanced Movement enhancement. The GM may increase the pursuit's length increment to reflect the greater distances involved with novas moving at enhanced top speeds.

A flying or swimming nova suffers nonlethal damage as listed in any situation when a maneuver or excessive speed during pursuit would cause damage to a vehicle (including a crash, unless a 1 is rolled on a crash check).

A flying or swimming nova makes Swim or Tumble checks instead of Drive or Pilot checks for pursuit maneuvers, as appropriate.

tor, both sides roll initiative and the highest result is considered to have started pursuit.

| Initiates Pursuit | Initial Lead (typical) |
|---|---|
| Pursuer | 2d6+3 (50–150 feet) |
| Target | 2d6+8 (100–200 feet) |

The lead may never be less than 0 or greater than 30. If any maneuver result would put the lead past one of these limits, adjust the lead to the closest appropriate number.

The pursuer wants to decrease the lead enough to perform a finishing maneuver and catch the target, while the target wants to increase the lead enough to get away with his own finishing move. Pursuit continues until either one performs a successful finishing maneuver, a crash occurs, or one of the vehicles is disabled.

## Pursuit Speed

Vehicle speeds are in miles per hour (mph), determined by terrain at the start of pursuit (see "Terrain," below). Speed changes throughout pursuit according to the maneuvers that each driver selects (see "Pursuit Steps," below). Whenever the pursuit speed exceeds one or more vehicles' maximum speed, those vehicles take 2 points of damage. This damage bypasses hardness.

## Pursuit Steps

### 1. Choose Maneuvers

Each driver chooses a maneuver secretly from those available to him (see "Maneuvers," below).

### 2. Maneuver Checks

Drivers reveal their maneuvers and make any resulting changes to the chase speed. Each then makes an opposed maneuver check with his respective vehicle skill, including any modifiers from vehicle handling, terrain speed bonus, maneuvers, feats or vehicle damage.

If one driver succeeds, his maneuver's effects are applied during the next step. If neither succeeds or if the results are a tie, the chase continues, ignoring all maneuver effects except for speed. If both drivers succeed, the GM applies the maneuver effect from the higher result.

### 3. Resolve Maneuvers and Adjust Lead

Apply the winning driver's maneuver to the chase and adjust the number of lengths between vehicles as necessary.

### 4. Obstacles

Obstacles may crop up during a chase — say an overturned truck or a washed-out road for ground chases, a dirigible or a fire-

works display for air chases, a low bridge or a whale for water chases, or a crowd or a locked door for foot chases. Obstacles are intended as spice, not the main focus of pursuit, with frequency dependent on the terrain (see "Terrain"). The GM may decide not to apply random obstacle rolls if the drivers are keeping things dynamic.

If an obstacle is encountered, first the target and then the pursuer makes an obstacle check. This may be a Reflex save or a vehicle skill check, as appropriate, against the obstacle's DC. The GM may further apply up to a +2 bonus or a −2 penalty depending on the circumstance. On a failed roll, the driver must make a crash check (see below).

## 5. Other Actions

Whether pursuit has ended due to a finishing maneuver or not, the drivers and passengers now perform any actions open to them. See "Vehicle Combat" for differences from normal combat.

## 6. Resolve Damage, Make Crash Checks

Apply any damage inflicted to each vehicle (see "Vehicle Damage"), and see if the driver must make a crash check (see below). This occurs if an unsuccessful maneuver calls for one, if the vehicle has suffered enough damage to require one, or if a tire bursts.

## Terrain

Terrain falls into three basic categories: open, close and tight. Each applies certain conditions to a chase, including how often obstacles can crop up and the average DC for any checks made in that terrain.

• **Open Terrain:** Easy to traverse, with only slight changes in elevation and few imposing obstacles (see examples below). A vehicle suffering a crash on open terrain usually overruns what it hits with little or no damage, unless the obstacle is too big or too solid for the vehicle to go over or through it.

*Pursuit Speed:* Begin at three-quarters of the fastest vehicle's maximum mph (round down). The vehicle with highest maximum mph receives a +2 speed modifier on all maneuver checks. If only one vehicle is considered to be in open terrain (either due to two or more terrain types, feats or mixed vehicle types), that vehicle receives the +2 speed bonus.

*Obstacle Chance:* 1 on a d10.
*Obstacle DC:* 12.

| Terrain Type | Open Terrain Example |
| --- | --- |
| Ground | Empty highways, racetracks, salt flats. |
| Water | Lakes, empty marinas, open seas with fair to excellent weather. |
| Air | Clear skies at 1,000 ft. or higher. |
| On foot | Wide, flat plains and large paved areas with few structures, fences or obstructions. |

• **Close Terrain:** Close terrain is generally narrow and filled with things to run into, sideswipe and burst through (see examples below). Vehicles are often still going fast enough to overrun most obstacles in these conditions.

*Pursuit Speed:* Begin at one-half of the fastest vehicle's maximum mph (round down).
*Obstacle Chance:* 1 on a d6.
*Obstacle DC:* 18.

| Terrain Type | Close Terrain Example |
| --- | --- |
| Ground | City streets, winding dirt roads. |
| Water | Narrow rivers with many rocks, busy docks, choppy seas. |
| Air | Cloudy mountaintops, fields with occasional power lines, light to medium rain. |
| On foot | Narrow alleys and open areas with many obstructions (stairways, hospital corridors). |

• **Tight Terrain:** The most dangerous of all terrain, this is filled with sharp drops and large, dense obstacles (see examples below). Tight terrain is unstable; drivers should be prepared for anything.

*Pursuit Speed:* Begin at one-quarter of the fastest vehicle's maximum mph (round down). If pursuer and target are both in tight terrain, the driver whose vehicle has the highest handling gains an additional +1 speed bonus on all maneuver checks.

*Obstacle Chance:* 1 on a d4.
*Obstacle DC:* 24.

| Terrain Type | Tight Terrain Example |
| --- | --- |
| Ground | Congested highways, steep downhill inclines, battlegrounds, debris-riddled areas. |
| Water | Whitewater rapids, crowded marinas. |
| Air | Ground level (*under* obstacles!), antenna clusters, bad weather. |
| On foot | Staircases, corridors, indoor parking garages, hedge mazes. |

# Maneuvers

Since pursuit is left abstract, the distance covered and specific locations of each vehicle are left to your imagination. What's important is the lead — the distance between pursuer and target at any given time. Many maneuvers require a certain minimum or maximum lead, so make sure to update the lead at the start of each round.

Maneuvers are split into pursuer and target categories. They focus on ground vehicle pursuit, but apply with few changes to air, water and foot chases.

*Air Pursuit:* "Driver" becomes "pilot" and maneuvers are based on the Pilot skill. Air collisions can easily be fatal, and most pursuits end with one of the vehicles being forced down by damage.

*Water Pursuit:* Terrain depends on the weather and the room the boats have to maneuver; otherwise, techniques are similar to ground pursuit. (Underwater pursuit uses the Pilot skill in place of Drive for maneuvers.)

*Foot Pursuit:* This may involve pedestrians or riding animals — for obstacle checks use Balance, Jump or Tumble as appropriate for the former, and Ride for the latter. Lengths are standard 5-foot squares.

## Maneuver Descriptions

Each maneuver has a general description that you can modify to fit the particulars of each pursuit. Refer to Table 6–5: Pursuit Maneuvers for maneuver modifiers. Remember that each driver may choose his maneuver secretly to surprise his opponent.

*Finishing:* A finishing maneuver has prerequisites that must be met before it can be attempted, but ends the chase if performed successfully.

*Lead:* The minimum or maximum distance required between pursuer and target to perform the maneuver.

*Speed:* Some maneuvers may modify the current pursuit speed. If both pursuer and target choose maneuvers that alter the speed, only the highest modifier (positive or negative) applies.

*Success:* The maneuver's effect, applied when a driver who chooses it wins the opposed maneuver check for the pursuit round.

*Special:* Any additional information relevant about the maneuver.

*Air Equivalent:* The term used for the maneuver in an air pursuit.

## Table 6–5: Pursuit Maneuvers

| Target Maneuvers | Pursuer Maneuvers | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Box In | Crowd | Cut Off | Gun It | Herd | Jockey | Ram | Redline | Shortcut |
| Barnstorm | — | — | — | −6/0 | — | — | — | −8/0 | 0/−6 |
| Bootleg Reverse | 0/−6 | 0/−4 | −8/0 | 0/−6 | 0/0 | 0/−2 | −4/0 | −4/0 | −6/0 |
| Hairpin Turn | — | — | — | 0/−4 | — | — | — | −2/0 | 0/−4 |
| Lure | 0/−4 | −4/0 | 0/−4 | −2/0 | −2/0 | 0/0 | 0/−2 | 0/−2 | 0/−6 |
| Pull Ahead | −6/0 | 0/−4 | −2/0 | 0/0 | −6/0 | −2/0 | −2/0 | 0/−4 | 0/−4 |
| Set Up | −2/0 | −4/0 | 0/−4 | 0/−4 | 0/−2 | −2/0 | 0/−4 | 0/0 | −4/0 |
| Stunt | — | — | — | −2/0 | — | — | — | −4/0 | 0/−2 |
| Vanish | — | — | — | 0/−4 | — | — | — | 0/−6 | −4/0 |
| Zig-Zag | −2/0 | 0/−6 | −2/0 | −6/0 | 0/−6 | 0/−2 | −4/0 | −2/0 | 0/0 |

Cross-reference the pursuer and target maneuvers chosen to find the modifier for each vehicle for the round. Apply the modifier before the slash to the pursuer's maneuver check, and the modifier after the slash to the target's maneuver check.

## Pursuer Maneuvers

All pursuer maneuvers are geared toward slowing down or catching the target.

### Box In [Finishing]

It takes skill to trap an opponent with minimal damage, but sometimes it's essential to take the target intact.

*Lead:* 5 lengths or less.

*Success:* The pursuer wins the chase, forcing the target into a corner from which there is nowhere to run.

### Crowd [Finishing]

Crowding, or "tailgating," involves getting up against the target's backside to force him into a crash. This option is safer for the pursuer than ramming, but is less likely to work.

*Lead:* 2 lengths or less.

*Success:* The pursuer wins the chase. If the pursuer's maneuver check result exceeds the target's by 5 or more, the target collides with an obstacle (a tree, storefront, debris). The target is assumed to have failed a crash check, and the pursuer comes to a safe stop.

*Air Equivalent:* Force down.

### Cut Off [Finishing]

The pursuer surges forward and pulls in front of the target, with the pursuer's own vehicle becoming a barrier to cut off the target.

*Lead:* 0 lengths.

*Speed:* Reduce the pursuit speed by one-third (round down) this round.

*Success:* The pursuer wins the chase, cutting off the target. If the target fails his maneuver check, he collides with the pursuer's vehicle with no crash check rolled (see "Vehicle Damage"). The pursuer may make a Jump check to leap from a stationary vehicle and avoid crash damage.

*Air Equivalent:* Collision.

### Gun It

The pursuer tries to catch up in a straightforward manner by putting on a brief burst of speed.

*Lead:* Any distance.

*Speed:* Increase the pursuit speed by one-quarter (round down) this round.

*Success:* Reduce the lead by a number of lengths equal to the difference between maneuver check results.

### Herd

By keeping the pressure on and cutting off the target's options, the pursuer uses strategy and brute force to drive the target into dangerous situations.

*Lead:* 10 lengths or less.

*Success:* Reduce the lead by 1 length. Each driver must make a crash check, but the target's DC is increased by the difference between the maneuver check results.

*Special:* If the pursuer's maneuver check result exceeds the target's by 5 or more, the pursuer may shift the terrain by one step at the end of the round (open or tight becomes close, and vice versa); this also reduces or increases each driver's crash check DC by 5.

### Jockey

The pursuer matches the target's movements, forcing the vehicles' relative speeds down to almost zero and stabilizing the chase so that others in the vehicle can attack.

*Lead:* 10 lengths or less.

*Success:* Reduce the lead by 1 length. The driver and all passengers in the pursuer vehicle gain the benefit of the aid another maneuver for that round (see the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 8: Combat, "Special Attacks," *Aid Another*).

### Ram [Finishing]

The pursuer speeds up and slams into the target, forcing him off the road, into the ground, or onto the shore (as appropriate). It's dirty, but it gets the job done faster than crowding.

*Lead:* 5 lengths or less.

*Success:* The pursuer wins the chase, colliding with the target. Both are assumed to have failed a crash check; the vehicles come to a stop after resolving the collision.

### Redline

The pursuer guns it, but then maintains the vehicle's top speed. This isn't good for the vehicle, as the engine literally burns up in the process.

*Feat:* Any distance.

*Speed:* Increase the pursuit speed by one-third (round down) this round.

*Success:* Reduce the lead by a number of lengths equal to twice the difference between maneuver check results. The pursuer's engine suffers 4 points of damage.

### Shortcut

Though useful for catching up with the target, a shortcut often involves losing line of sight and can result in a nasty spill for the pursuer.

*Lead:* Any distance.

*Speed:* Reduce the lead by a number of lengths equal to twice the difference between maneuver check results. The pursuer must also make a crash check.

*Air Equivalent:* Intercept.

## Target Maneuvers

All target maneuvers are geared toward escaping the pursuer.

### Barnstorm [Finishing]

Though associated with planes, any vehicle may "barnstorm" — a car could storm a warehouse, while a boat may storm the wreckage of a burning oil tanker.

*Lead:* 25 lengths or more.

*Success:* The target wins the chase, barreling through a cluttered area. Both drivers must make crash checks, and the target's vehicle suffers 10 points of damage regardless of hardness.

### Bootleg Reverse

When the pursuer gets close, the target brakes and turns hard to one side to slew around — pointing suddenly in the opposite direction!

*Lead:* 10 lengths or less.

*Speed:* Reduce the pursuit speed by one-quarter (round down) this round.

*Success:* Increase the lead by a number of lengths equal to twice the difference between maneuver check results. The target's tires suffer 4 points of damage (2 points for daring characters with the requisite feat).

*Air Equivalent:* Roll-out.

### Hairpin Turn [Finishing]

The target leads the pursuer at high speed around blind curves until one falls out of the race. This involves longer and far sharper turns than the zig-zag maneuver, resulting in a greater chance of a crash.

*Lead:* 20 lengths or more.

*Speed:* Reduce the pursuit speed by one-third (round down) this round.

*Success:* The target wins the chase, taking one or more turns that the pursuer can't manage. Both drivers must also make crash checks.

*Air Equivalent:* Veer off.

### Lure

The target controls the direction of pursuit, leading the pursuer into all kinds of trouble.

*Lead:* Any distance.

*Success:* Increase the lead by 1 length. Each driver must make a crash check, but the pursuer's DC is increased by the difference between the maneuver check results.

*Special:* If the target's maneuver check result exceeds the pursuer's by 4 or more, she may reverse the vehicles' positions, becoming the pursuer until the end of the round (this lets the target use any forward-mounted weapons on the pursuer).

If the target's maneuver check result exceeds the pursuer's by 5 or more, the target may shift the terrain by one step at the end of the round (open or tight becomes close, and vice versa); this also reduces or increases each driver's crash check DC by 5.

### Pull Ahead

A straightforward maneuver, where the target tries to get as far ahead of the pursuer as possible.

*Lead:* Any distance.

*Speed:* Increase the pursuit speed by one-quarter (round down) this round.

*Success:* Increase the lead by a number of lengths equal to the difference between maneuver check results.

### Set Up

Instead of running, the target leads the pursuer on a merry chase — usually to the tune of gunfire.

*Lead:* 10 lengths or less.

*Success:* Increase the lead by 1 length. The driver and all passengers in the target vehicle gain the benefit of the aid another maneuver for that round (see the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 8: Combat, "Special Attacks," *Aid Another*).

Also, if the target's maneuver check result exceeds the pursuer's by 4 or more, she may reverse the vehicles' positions, becoming the pursuer until the end of the round.

### Stunt [Finishing]

This is a finishing maneuver that's just short of suicidal — leaping a car across a rising toll bridge, skipping a boat across a pier, exploding a convenient line of oil drums, and the like.

*Lead:* 20 lengths or more.

*Success:* The target wins the chase, performing a stunt that the pursuer can't manage. If the target's maneuver check result exceeds the pursuer's by 5 or more, the pursuer must make a crash check.

### Vanish [Finishing]

The target leaves all pursuit choking on her dust in a display of driving virtuosity and pure velocity.

*Lead:* 30 lengths.

*Speed:* Increase the pursuit speed by one-third (round down) this round.

*Success:* The target wins the chase.

### Zig-Zag

The target clips obstacles, terrain and even other vehicles in an attempt to send them into the pursuer's path. This also increases the chance that the target may actually collide with, rather than merely sideswipe, an obstacle.

*Lead:* Any distance.

*Success:* Increase the lead by a number of lengths equal to twice the difference between maneuver check results. The target must also make a crash check.

*Air Equivalent:* Break right/left.

# Vehicle Combat

Vehicle combat differs in some ways from what's described in Chapter 8 of the *Player's Handbook*. Rather than list actions that you can or cannot perform in a vehicle, this section covers general modifiers and leaves specifics to your feel of what's appropriate to the game. For instance, a charge doesn't work in most instances, but you could make a leaping charge from the top of one careening panel truck to another. When in doubt, use common sense.

• **Passenger Actions:** A passenger in a moving vehicle suffers a −2 penalty on any attack roll. Move actions are possible, but the GM may require a Balance check. A Jump check is required to leap from a moving vehicle, with a Tumble check applied as appropriate.

• **Driver Actions:** In addition to the maneuver options covered above, the driver of a moving vehicle may take one standard action each round. Doing so applies a −4 penalty on his next maneuver check, however.

• **Vehicle Speed:** The faster a vehicle goes, the harder it is to attack accurately. All characters suffer an additional −2 penalty on attack rolls for every 50 mph the vehicle is traveling (round down).

• **Melee Attacks in a Vehicle:** You can only make a melee attack if the lead is 0 lengths and/or if the attacker is in or on the same vehicle as his target.

• **Falling From a Vehicle:** Falling from a moving vehicle inflicts 1d6 points of damage for every 10 mph of the vehicle's current speed above 10 mph (round down). A successful Jump or Tumble check reduces this damage by 1d6.

## Attacking Vehicles

Attacks during pursuit are assumed to hit an opposing vehicle unless you confirm a critical hit or the driver tries to ram bystanders (see below). A vehicle's Armor Class rating is equal to its listed Armor Class plus the driver's Dexterity modifier, if any. Remember to subtract the vehicle's hardness from any damage applied (except if noted otherwise).

Characters in vehicles may fire hand weapons — pistols, shotguns, etc. — in any direction. This may first require shooting out their own vehicle's window, hanging onto the side of the vehicle or some other move.

Most vehicle weapons fire only in a forward arc, giving the pursuer a distinct advantage in many cases. The target can use the lure or set up maneuvers to turn the tables for a round, and can even become the pursuer in a new chase if the original pursuer ever breaks off the chase.

## Critical Hits Against Vehicles

When you confirm a critical against a vehicle, roll on the appropriate section of Table 6–6. The following entries note special results in addition to the critical hit damage rolled. Bear in mind that some maneuvers may apply damage to the vehicle.

### Table 6–6: Vehicle Critical Hit Locations

| Enclosed Ground Vehicle (auto, truck, van) | | Open Ground Vehicle (motorcycle, convertible) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| d10 | Group/Location | d10 | Group/Location |
| 1 | Engine | 1 | Engine |
| 2–3 | Steering | 2–3 | Steering |
| 4–7 | Tires | 4–6 | Tires/Holed |
| 8–9 | Weapon | 7 | Weapon |
| 10 | Window | 8–10 | Window |
| Water Vehicle (speedboat, submersible) | | Air Vehicle (aeroplane, dirigible) | |
| d10 | Group/Location | d10 | Group/Location |
| 1–2 | Engine | 1–3 | Engine |
| 3–5 | Holed | 4–6 | Steering |
| 6–7 | Weapon | 7 | Flaps |
| 8–10 | Window | 8–9 | Weapon |
| | | 10 | Window |

• **Engine:** Do not subtract hardness from the critical hit damage. Also, the vehicle loses a cumulative 10% of its top speed with each engine critical suffered. Thus, a vehicle that suffers three critical hits to its engine loses 30% of its top speed.
• **Flaps:** Apply the same rules as for tires, including taking damage from a bootleg reverse/roll-out maneuver.
• **Holed:** The watercraft is damaged below the waterline and is taking on water. This mirrors the effects of the "steering" critical hit.
• **Steering:** Every 10% of the vehicle's maximum hit points that the critical hit inflicts (round down) reduces the vehicle's handling by −1. So, a vehicle with 35 hit points loses 1 point from its handling modifier for every 3 points of critical hit damage it suffers.
• **Tires:** A normal tire can take 5 hit points of damage before being rendered useless. When a tire bursts, the driver must make a crash check. The driver suffers a −2 cumulative penalty for each tire that blows (if the vehicle has 9 or fewer tires), or for every two tires that burst (if it has 10 or more), to a maximum −10 penalty. If all the tires are blown, or if the vehicle has no tires, the critical hit strikes the steering instead.
• **Weapon:** Apply damage to one of the vehicle's mounted weapons (see the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 9: Adventuring, "Exploration," *Breaking and Entering* for details on smashing an object). The attack may strike one of the vehicle's communications or sensor systems instead, at the GM's discretion. If the target has no mounted weapons or equipment, the critical hit strikes the tires instead.
• **Window:** The attack smashes through a window or other "soft spot." Select one of the occupants at random or determine the most likely target in the line of fire; that character is hit if his flat-footed Armor Class is less than or equal to the critical's confirming result. If the attack misses, repeat the process for any occupants in line behind him. If there are none, the attack passes through the vehicle harmlessly.

## Bystanders

The driver can use her Drive skill to attack bystanders with a vehicle, applying any relevant attack modifiers. On a successful hit, the vehicle inflicts 1d6 points of damage for every 10 mph of its current speed. Critical hits are applied as normal.

Bystanders can target vehicles and their occupants as well, following the rules above.

# Vehicle Damage

A vehicle is in one of four conditions after suffering damage:

**Operational:** A moving vehicle with at least half its maximum hit points operates normally.

**Crippled:** A moving vehicle reduced to less than half its hit point total loses −5 points from its handling modifier. The driver must also make an immediate crash check with a +5 DC.

**Disabled:** A moving vehicle reduced to 0 hit points or lower stalls and comes to a halt. The driver must also make an immediate crash check with a +10 DC.

**Destroyed:** A moving vehicle that suffers more than twice its hit point total is destroyed. It rolls, skids or plummets to a halt and then explodes as per a base failed crash check (see below). The vehicle's occupants may try to escape as with a crash (DC 20 + 2 for every full 25 mph of speed).

## Crash Checks

Crash checks are required in the following circumstances:
• The vehicle's tire bursts.
• The driver makes a critical failure on a maneuver check.
• A successful maneuver calls for a crash check.
• The vehicle suffers damage that calls for a crash check.

This is rolled like a maneuver check against DC 15 for ground and water vehicles, DC 10 for air and submersible vehicles. You make only one crash check in a round even if more than one is called for; just apply +5 to the DC for every additional check required. Other modifiers may also apply, as indicated below.

| DC Modifier | Circumstance |
|---|---|
| −5 | Open terrain |
| 0 | Close terrain |
| +5 | Tight terrain |
| +2 | Per full 25 mph of speed |

On a failed check, the vehicle crashes into an obstacle (or the other vehicle, if the maneuver calls for it). The vehicle and the obstacle (and any occupants) suffer base crash damage of 1d6 per 10 mph of vehicle speed, +1 for each point by which the driver failed his crash check. Each occupant may make a Jump or Tumble check to suffer half damage from the crash (DC equal to the failed crash check).

An air vehicle may stall out instead if there is no hard terrain or other obstacle to collide with logically. The pilot may restart the vehicle with a single successful Repair check (DC equal to the crash check). Aerial crash damage is 1d10 per 30 mph of vehicle speed, and is considered a rough landing rather than a cataclysmic collision. On a critical failure of the crash check, the air vehicle comes in for a hard crash and suffers the standard 1d6 per 10 mph points of damage.

After the crash is resolved, roll d%. If the result is higher than the speed that the vehicle was traveling (in mph) at the time of the crash, it remains upright. The vehicle still runs as long as it has 1 hit point left.

With a failed crash check on foot, the character takes a spill, collides with a wall, etc. He suffers 1d6 points of damage and has a −4 penalty on his next maneuver check. Double the damage for a character on an animal mount or bicycle.

# CHAPTER SEVEN: PLAYING THE GAME

This chapter discusses aspects of roleplaying on both sides — player and GM — and offers suggestions that may improve your game.

# The World of Aberrant

Fundamentally, the world of **Aberrant** is much like our own. It diverges from our reality to an obvious degree in 1998, but the world as a whole is still largely recognizable. People still look and act much as they do now, most of the countries and political divisions remain true to their current parameters, and technology has not advanced beyond what modern science can conceive at present.

There are two important differences between the **Aberrant** world and our own. The first is the presence of superhumans. These beings are referred to in the setting as "new humans," or "novas." Novas have a piece of genetic coding enabling them to control the fundamental forces of the universe, thus granting them vast power over their surroundings. Although there are only 6,000 or so novas in the world as of 2008, their coming has had a tremendous impact on culture, politics and scientific theory.

The second important difference is the presence of a powerful global organization, Project Utopia. Founded in 1998 through the efforts of the Æon Society and the United Nations, Project Utopia's mission is to foster harmonious relations between humans and novas while bettering the world as a whole. In its 10-year history, the Project has had great success, saving countless lives, curing diseases, and ending famine in vast areas of the world. So important has it become that Utopia now occupies an advisory seat on the UN Security Council.

While Æon owns and directs Utopia on paper, the two organizations actually have little interaction on a practical level. Æon's structure bestows on the members of the Æon Council a great deal of influence, but even that pales in comparison to the power that Director Lavielle commands. The current director of the Æon Society, Phillipa Lavielle, handles all decisions relating to Utopia (and, by extension, Project Proteus). Even Maxwell Mercer — Æon's founder and a member of the council, who begins active involvement with the Society in 2008 — lacks the direct authority to displace the director.

The Nova Age dawns in 1998, but the campaign setting begins "officially" in July 2008. A few months previously, the popular nova Jennifer "Slider" Landers was murdered. Evidence points to André Corbin, a friend and fellow Team Tomorrow member. Corbin fled from the public eye at Landers' funeral, an act which confirms his guilt in the eyes of many.

Since that event, Corbin founded (or perhaps simply joined) a renegade group of novas calling themselves the Aberrants. This group has disseminated information suggesting that elements within Project Utopia murdered Slider. The faction alleges that Slider discovered incriminating information relating to Utopia in some way and was silenced, permanently. Utopia scoffs publicly at the claims, labeling them the desperate defense of a fugitive murderer. Internally, Justin Laragione, the Director of Project Utopia, has called for an investigation on the matter independent from Project Proteus. Other groups have begun investigations of their own, including Margaret Mercer, granddaughter of Æon's founder and head of the Society's special projects.

Truth be told, while the majority of Utopia members (including its director) hold to its altruistic goals, there are those who walk a different road — most notably Director Thetis (in charge of Project Proteus) and Director Ozaki (head of Proteus' nova-related activities). They believe it is of paramount importance to maintain a close watch — and control — over all novas. Though not a sinister agenda in and of itself, their efforts at security and secrecy send them and those loyal to them further and further afield from the organization's original tenets. This is a contributing factor to the eventual worsening of human–nova affairs in the late Nova Age (see below); the exact extent is up to the GM.

Regardless of the truth that lies hidden at present, the Slider scandal has shaken novas' confidence in the benevolent Project Utopia, and fallout from the event is polarizing novas worldwide. The balance of power between individual novas and nova factions is shifting.

As a nova, you are one of the most important beings in the world. Possessed of enough quantum power to change the fate of entire nations, you cannot help but leave an impact on the world around you. You can make the difference between absolute power and destruction. History beckons, and you alone can make the choices that could affect millions.

## Past and Future

Each Trinity Universe game — the shared setting of **Adventure!**, **Aberrant** and **Trinity** — represents one of three thematic aspects, set in different points in time. **Adventure!**, a pulp game set in the early 20th century, represents Hope; **Aberrant**, a super powers game set in the early 21st century, represents Sacrifice; and **Trinity**, a science fiction game set in the early 22nd century, represents Unity.

In the "official" Trinity Universe, relations in the Nova Age between novas and humans worsen over time, culminating in the Aberrant War of 2049–2061. Certain characters and groups introduced here or in the prequel game, **Adventure!**, have some influence on events that lead to — and follow — the Aberrant War.

The Storyteller versions of the Trinity Universe have hundreds of thousands of words in print in addition to the new d20 core books. You don't need any of it. The only thing you really need is this book (and the *Player's Handbook*). Even then, don't take any of it as biblical canon. If a GM reads something in **Aberrant** that just doesn't fit with her conception of the game, she should take a minute and figure out what the implications of throwing that thing out will be. If doing so doesn't appear to cause further problems, she should feel free to toss it. Likewise, **Aberrant** can be played as a stand-alone game without need of **Adventure!** or **Trinity**, or the PCs' actions may forever alter the setting's future to change (or outright ignore) the **Trinity** time frame. The other Trinity Universe games are only *possible* timelines for **Aberrant**. No

GM or player should feel constrained by material found in those books when it comes to the PCs' 21st-century exploits.

# The Adventuring Team

The majority of novas in 2008 are solitary, focusing on their own lives and goals. Sure, they come together to socialize, and novas' titanic egos often lead to highly publicized (and ratings-drawing) clashes, but by and large, each nova is an island unto herself. Therefore, the team that your characters are to form is a rarity, one sure to turn heads in governments, corporations and international organizations alike.

Because novas are so individualistic, a functional team is an entity of great power. It is thus desirable that the PCs trust and support each other. Much like a family, the team may not always get along — individuals could even have distinctly opposing philosophies — but there should remain a foundation of respect and reliance on one another that can weather almost any storm.

## Common Bonds

It's worth asking: Why are your characters together? Not just because that's the setup of your typical roleplaying game — *why* are they a group within a setting context?

It's easy enough to say, "We were all recruited by the Directive and assigned to a single unit." This isn't necessarily the best approach, though. If the characters are thrown together at random, you'll miss out on a lot of potential group dynamics. TV shows with ensemble casts have always been popular to varying degrees since, if done well, they offer a greater variety of storyline options. Players and the GM can use a similar approach in setting up a nova team — a group of equals, each with their own character and story hooks.

Talk before the game begins; get a feel for what sort of characters everyone wants to play, the general focus of campaign and theme, and extrapolate connections from there. This doesn't have to mean soap-operatic clunkers like having everyone be estranged siblings, ex-lovers or shady characters from each other's pasts — instead, figure out relationships that could provide interesting drama even if the PCs never met before in their lives. If your character is a world-weary type whose eruption has given him a newfound vigor, the GM might arrange an interesting first meeting with another player's youthful nova who's now having to learn responsibility. Your older nova may be a terrible role model for the younger one, but that dynamic can be a lot of fun to explore in roleplay — not just for you and the other player, but possibly for the entire group.

Consider the example of Team Tomorrow — they weren't all friends from the same college, or relatives, or anything of the sort. They didn't have much in common at all, save their powers, but the dynamics that formed were the core of everything interesting that happened later. Who would have thought that Slider would have befriended, of all people, the libertine Corbin? Yet, because she did, the group's history developed in a fascinating fashion. If she'd warmed to the authoritative Caestus Pax, there might never have been an Aberrant movement at all.

Group dynamics encourages more than just focusing on your own character. Get interested in your fellow players' PCs. You don't all have to share every detail, but you should all have some idea of the personalities you'll deal with. This can only encourage exploring interesting potential links both at character inception and in the course of the game.

The alternative is winding up with a situation where everyone has "moody loners" who do nothing but hang around, act taciturn and wait for the other characters to become fascinated with their mystique. Everyone takes the passive road, no bonds are formed and the series loses all its energy into a black hole of self-absorbed entropy.

It happens *all the time*. But you won't let it happen to you, right? Great!

## Team Focus

So what sort of actual group do you and your friends want? **Aberrant** offers hundreds of possibilities, but the roles the characters play in the world should help you narrow down the field.

It's important to realize that it's unusual for novas to gather in numbers. To be frank, your average nova (although that's as oxymoronic a term as ever was) just doesn't *need* anybody else; he can get what he wants on his own. These are possibly the most important (and rarest — approximately one in one million) people in the world; as such, a gathering of like-minded novas will attract a tremendous amount of attention, as well as paranoia. Everyone from Joe Civilian to the Directive command will want to know what this group's going to be up to; after all, four to six like-minded novas is a force equal to a small country.

You should also know the type of game the GM plans to run. If he wants a series steeped in intrigue and geopolitical machinations, he should make sure that you know this before you create a group of combat-hungry elites. In the end, the story revolves around the team (and, therefore, the characters).

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## Baselines

The GM and/or players may want to start a campaign as normal humans with no superhuman powers at all. A GM could have all the characters begin the chronicle as baseline humans, playing through one or even several stories before being given their nova points and erupting. Or, for a real challenge, try playing unenhanced, "inert" baselines in the Nova Age — Æon Society members, government agents, Utopia support staff, cartel operatives or other baselines whose duties force them to interact with novas, often far too close to ground zero.

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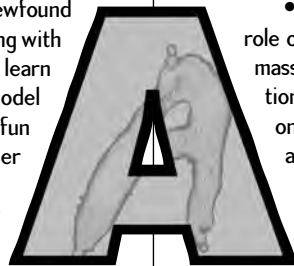
• **Aberrants:** This is a good choice for players who like the role of the underdog, with characters set against the doubly massive forces of Project Utopia and disapproving conventional authorities. The characters will find powerful enemies on all sides, and few allies to turn to. Perhaps they can get assistance from the Teragen — but would they want it? Perhaps they receive an overture of understanding from someone in Utopia or the associated Æon Society — but can they trust it?

This isn't a series about glamour and fame; still, the characters' deeds are thrown into sharper relief as they struggle on without expecting a reward. An Aberrants series is good for players who like a great deal of say in how their organization is run — as of mid-2008, there are only a couple dozen aberrants in the entire world. The PCs would therefore constitute a considerable percentage of the entire group!

• **Æon Members:** This is a rare choice for novas, but it nonetheless offers interesting potential. The Æon Society has little direct influence in the Nova Age. The majority of its authority was spun off into Project Utopia when that group went public. As such, Æon is much closer in 2008 to its roots than ever before. It is once more a

small, loose-knit organization whose members investigate mysterious matters outside the public eye. Few novas are part of this, since its founder, Maxwell Mercer, left orders that such beings were to fall under the aegis of Project Utopia. In the wake of the Slider scandal, however, some within Æon wonder if Utopia still follows its original tenets. This provides the opening for novas who, like Æon, are interested in exploring the truth. Such superhumans would be rare indeed among the ranks of Æon, and would be recipients of both great respect and a healthy degree of caution.

• **Corporate Novas:** The characters may be a collection of novas in the employ of one very wealthy megacorporation, employed individually by various corporations, or even the founders and top brass of a corporation they've started themselves. A nova employee is of tremendous value, so the characters will command excellent salaries and significant benefits (characters should have background feats as appropriate). Many stories will involve the PCs protecting their employers' interests, whether it's undertaking high-profile charity work for PR purposes, using their powers to speed up industrial processes, or playing security guard for important projects and personnel. In time, PCs may even achieve such heights of influence that they have a say in corporate policy — CEO sure sounds nice, doesn't it? Alternatively, the characters can have a falling-out with their benefactors (possibly over ethical issues, possibly as a side effect of personality conflicts), and either try to pursue new employment with their old corp's rivals or find some other use for their abilities. Either way, the corporation probably won't respond well to such ingratitude — and the corporation that can afford to hire a nova (or novas) can afford to make life very miserable for its enemies.

• **Criminals:** No, not "supervillains." One of the major differences between the **Aberrant** setting and, say, the Marvel Universe, is that there are few costumed super-criminals in the Nova Age. Most novas can parlay their powers into all the wealth, fame and gratification they require through entirely legal channels. Why bother knocking over First National when you can make more money as a contracted "consultant," on the talk-show circuit, or even through licensing fees? (Besides, when seeking to attract lovely young companions, a tuxedo is much more practical than a set of purple tights with a skull on the chest.) Antisocial types do exist, though, and
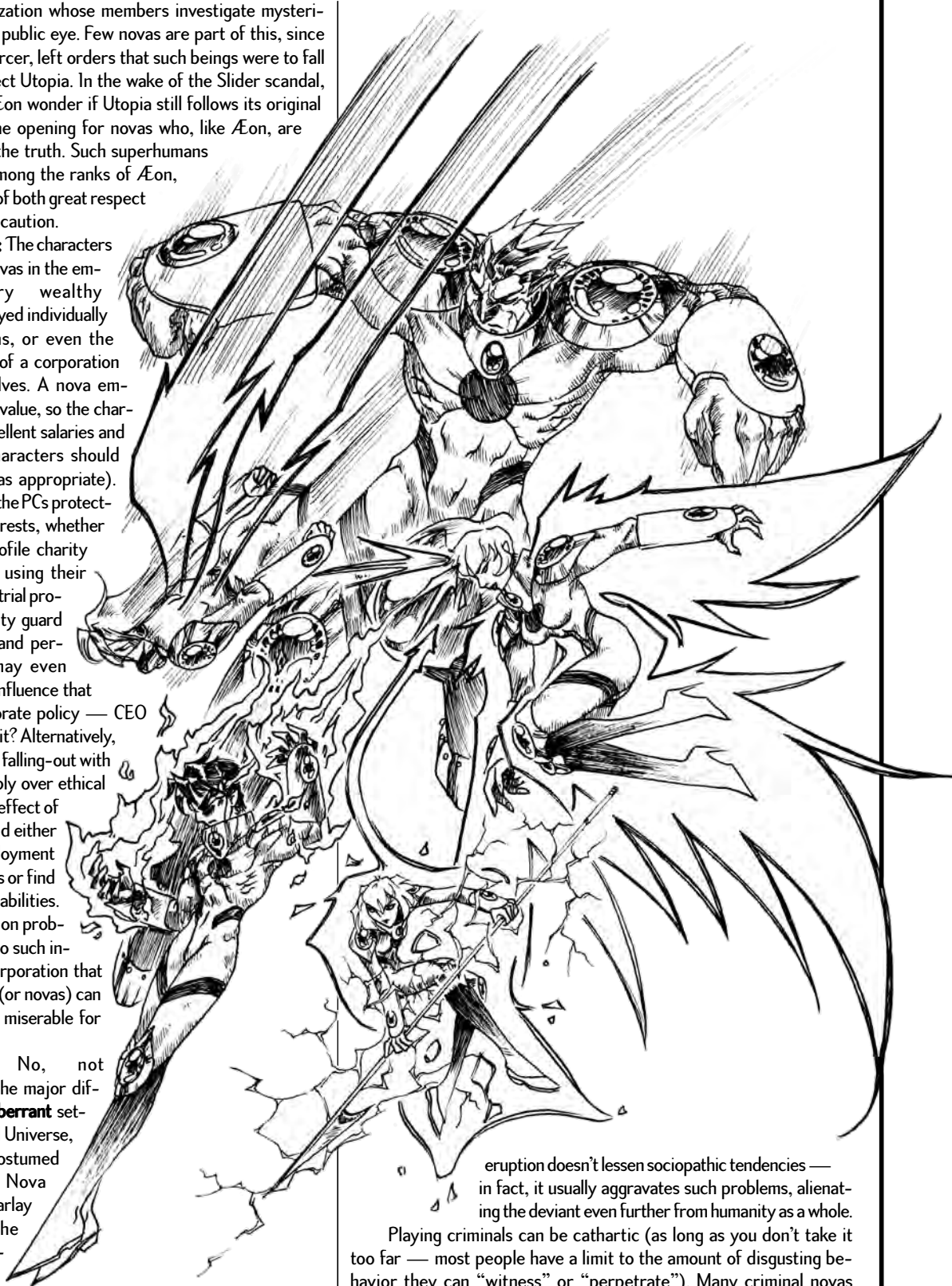
eruption doesn't lessen sociopathic tendencies — in fact, it usually aggravates such problems, alienating the deviant even further from humanity as a whole.

Playing criminals can be cathartic (as long as you don't take it too far — most people have a limit to the amount of disgusting behavior they can "witness" or "perpetrate"). Many criminal novas eventually drift into positions as enforcers and bosses of criminal cartels, but certain elites also specialize in terrorist work and enforcement. Mental powers are perfect for blackmail, espionage or worse. A few nova criminals have even become quite popular among the young, bored and rebellious; black-market merchandise and convenient N! interviews can prove as lucrative for charismatic hoodlums

as the initial acts that imparted their notoriety. Of course, a whole group of affiliated nova criminals can become Public Enemy Number One on most governments' hit lists. Worse, they're sure to bring the attention of Team Tomorrow or some other group that seeks to keep negative displays of nova ability to a minimum. What's more, if rogue novas harm other novas in the course of their criminal activities, they can also be targeted by the Teragen. What's that — hunted by Utopia *and* the Teragen? Yep. Welcome to a very interesting life....

• **Defenders of the City:** In the United States, certain large cities retain one or more novas as highly paid public servants and franchised PR reps, in the manner of a sports team. This job tends to be cushy (and thus not overly suitable for a group that likes to strike out on adventures), but it still provides opportunity for stories. Franchised novas are expected to supplement the local police/ fire department in times of crisis (especially when the cameras are rolling) and represent the city in publicized "athletic" and power competitions with rival cities' novas. Competition among novas for these plum positions is high, and watch out for the sleazy agent who signs novas to a "sweet" contract that includes some unforeseen fine print....

• **Elites:** There's a fair amount of romance in playing characters who can clear out dissidents in Thailand in the morning and clean up in time for dinner and dancing in Tokyo. Considering that novas can go anywhere and do virtually anything for the right fee, some outlandish stories can result. If you want a lighter version of this series, take the James Bond route — the characters are no angels, but they're usually pitted against properly despicable people with sociopathic agendas. A darker version can involve dirty jobs, double-crossing employers, ethical dilemmas — there are many ways to add spice to the pot. Source material isn't hard to come by, either; there are plenty of books, movies, television shows, comic books and manga or animé series that address the subject of guns for hire. You will want to adjust some factors if you start borrowing plots, though — *Ronin* didn't account for people who could bounce bullets and melt steel — but inspiration is everywhere.

• **Government Agents:** The characters are all members of a specific government agency (likely the Directive), or perhaps members of a variety of government agencies, assigned to work together on nova-level cases. The PCs can be agents of everything from the CIA to the EPA, depending on their personalities and powers. The series' conflicts can come from a number of directions, from dissident novas intent on weakening the government's power structure, to agents of hostile foreign powers, to the internal threats and conspiracies popularized by *The X-Files* and similar sources. The characters will probably have their loyalties tested along the way; and they will find that as novas and government agents, they're on a lot of hit lists. Still, there's plenty of inspiration for such a series. Picture *Clear and Present Danger* or *The Silence of the Lambs* with novas in the central roles....

• **Media Icons:** The most common version of this series is the music band. There's no denying that an all-nova act, whether a novox sideshow or a psychedelic retro band, would draw crowds that would make Elvis spin in his grave. Still, that's far from the only option. Movie stars, performance artists, solo musicians — even XWF contenders and *real* supermodels are all possibilities. It's not even much of a stretch to have them all know one another — look how incestuous the lives of our own media icons are. This series focuses on fame and its price, and it is likely to bring its own strange look at heroism to the table; when you're both a nova and a household name, you'll *always* be a role model of some sort,

whether you like it or not. Some conflict will arise from the demands of the public, agents and studios; more hazardous conflict is available in the role of criminal cartels and similar threats. After all, a media icon nova is worth *billions* — and you can bet that someone will want a piece of that pie. And don't forget all the people who want to plug *their* cause, whether it's cloning the snow leopard or "liberating" Egypt. Some of them just won't take no for an answer.

• **Slackers:** This sort of series may seem directionless, but it can also have a lot of potential. This can be the classic "road trip" series, with the characters in a new location every week and almost invariably stumbling into trouble. If you can fly around the world in under an hour, what's to stop you from hanging out in Monaco whenever the itch strikes you? The only trouble with such a series is that there's no long-running source of conflict endemic to the ongoing story — if the PCs don't have anything better to do than wander around and amuse themselves, they won't be pursuing some vital goal. Still, there's no shortage of recurring antagonists and possible hunters for even a motley crew of slacker novas; remember, novas are just so damn important that nobody in their right mind will pass up a chance to bring an unaligned nova over to their side.

• **Teragen Members:** Sometimes it's relaxing to play the bad guys for a change. A series in which the players take the roles of various Teragen members will be a particularly interesting kettle of fish. Divis Mal's "children" are more than just a hodgepodge of supremacist novas — they're philosophers, and some of their views hold a certain degree of logic. To be sure, the Teragen harbors a few mindless nihilists and heedless buffoons — blunt weapons are useful, after all — but the important members, and thus the PCs, should be something more. A Teragen series can be played as lightly as a "what city shall we wreck today?" beer and pretzels game, or it can delve into the ethics of strength and species, encouraging roleplay through a series of interesting moral choices. As for conflict, this series won't disappoint — when your organization's leader is Public Enemy Number One on most governments' lists, there's no shortage of people lining up to take you down. DeVries bounty hunters, Directive agents, criminal cartels and Utopia's soldiers — there are plenty of antagonists to go around, and not one person outside the Teragen is going to stand up for you. Good luck.

• **Utopians:** This is one of the most "black-and-white" options at first glance, and it can be played several ways. There's the straightforward approach of playing true heroes in a tarnished world, backed by the benevolent Utopia in your efforts to make a better place. Another, more cynical (or realistic) approach is one of a more-or-less idealistic band of novas doing their best to live up to Utopia's ideals, even as they become involved in intrigues and gradually discover that certain elements within Utopia aren't quite so dedicated. There's even the option of roleplaying a band of cynical, Proteus-affiliated novas who are willing to do the dirty work necessary to improve the world as a whole (and their bank accounts in the process). Perhaps the most dynamic option is to have individual PCs who each comprise one of these types. This'll likely make for a paranoid mix, though, as conflicts arise and the players try to figure out who's in the right.

As series options go, this is one with lots of latitude; the characters can be as well-known or covert as you like, and the game can take on any sort of theme, from "shining armor" to "dark and grim." You can switch from pitched battles with nova dissidents to ethical dilemmas over keeping too-nosy journalists quiet to careful intrigues at the heart of the organization. Project Utopia is a big place, with a lot of room to play.

P R O J E C T
U T O P I A

## The Ensemble Cast

Sometimes players can't make every game. In such cases, the GM may play the absent player's PC or give it to someone else to play. This is seldom desirable, since this may result in an absent player's PC having "died heroically saving the group from certain doom" or simply behaving in an inconsistent manner. You can work around this a few different ways.

• **Personality Profile:** Each player writes a short personality description for his PC — enough to give basics on how the character would behave. If inconsistencies are unavoidable, perhaps that could be worked into the story — "He was under the influence of Traitor Vic's mind control powers!" or "Clearly that was a convincing illusion created by the Harlequin to sow confusion among the team!"

• **Character Stable:** A stable of characters can have two tiers; primary characters specific to players who can make every session, and a secondary supporting cast for players who know they won't make each game. The secondary tier can include allies, contacts, followers or mentors from primary characters' background feats. As above, each should have a brief personality description. Keep in mind that "secondary" doesn't have to mean "inferior." For an ensemble game, the GM should keep primary and secondary characters on a relatively even footing, so that the former don't lord it over the rest.

An ensemble game can make cliffhangers tricky, though not impossible. Say a player misses the next game after a cliffhanger where the team falls from a suborbital jet above the ocean. The other characters continue on their mission, while their comrade's fate is a mystery. The GM then has the lost PC find his way back in time to show up for the player's next appearance.

Just *how* the PC gets back can be covered in anything from simple "blue-booking" to full roleplay. The GM might offer up a few hundred experience points if the player writes a brief narrative of his exploit and/or has his character relate his daring adventure in the next session. Alternatively, the GM might develop an entire episode around the PC, with the other players taking on brief roles as secondary characters for the duration.

## Leaping into Action!

A well-created team can offer helpful plot hooks to give the GM scads of ideas for stories. Some examples follow.

• **Shared History:** You can all outline historical issues that the PCs want to follow up on — whether a common "shadowy enemy" or a shared experience in the past. This is a big part of superhero teams — even if the PCs haven't spent a lot of time together, having elements of history in common can be a unifying force. It's harder to deal with a coherent series if every character has a different archenemy upon whom he's sworn undying vengeance.

Leaving "blank spots" to fill in later is also valid. Some players are more comfortable adding to character history — or letting the GM do so — during play rather than mapping it all out before the first session.

• **Connections:** It's often easier to have a group with a reason to know/like/trust one another than to grab a random sampling of folks. Having so many exceptional people know each other can be chalked up to coincidence — a common theme in comics or graphic novels.

The PCs don't have to be old friends or long-lost pals. They might be former enemies who band together against a threat greater than that they see in each other, such as the menace of an organization like Teragen or the danger of aberrants in general.

## In the End

The more you bring to your character and to the team as a whole, the more fun the experience is for everyone. Also, keep in mind that it doesn't have to be perfect right off the bat. Character creation can

be an ongoing process — a character's history, or the team's, need not be set in stone with the first session. What if, five sessions in, the players start "reminiscing" in-character about something their characters did before the game even started? That can be great stuff that the GM can pull into play later. Use the characters — and their team — to add depth and texture to the game world.

# Heroism

There's no way to tell a story about "superheroes" without touching on heroism. Even if your series is of the sort where the characters are in it for the money, fame and luxuries, you can't ignore the basic premise that superhuman power can indeed create superhuman responsibility. **Aberrant** doesn't require that the PCs wear white hats and dedicate their lives to stopping injustice; indeed, most novas do not. Ultimately, novas are just like the rest of us; heroism comes from the individual, not the powers she has. Nonetheless, in a world where the characters' every action can have grave or even world-shattering consequences, it's vital to have a strong idea of just how heroism applies to the game.

## One Person

The fundamental tenet to heroism is that one person can make a difference. This holds just as true in **Aberrant**. Even the nova who withdraws from the world and spends the rest of his days fishing for bass will have some impact on his environment, like it or not. Maybe he doesn't want to use his power, but what happens when the Teragen shows up on a membership drive? What if Proteus operatives decide they don't like the thought of a nova with no obvious allegiances, and begin investigating him? Certainly the remaining criminal cartels aren't above threatening family and friends to compel cooperation. After all, every last nova in the world may be the one to tip the scales, the one that is the difference between a project's success or failure. These individuals are *that important*.

This doesn't mean that a PC should accomplish every goal he sets out after — changing the world shouldn't be like using a vending machine. The finest heroes — and antiheroes — bust their asses to get what they want. That's the immutable law of reality: Nothing is free. But with a little effort, a person can change things significantly. The greater the forces that align against him, the more dramatic his eventual success — or failure. And even failure can work a lasting effect on the character's environment. After all, the Alamo fell — and that made all the difference.

## Icons and Archetypes

It's no coincidence that a good portion of recent superhero literature compares superheroes to gods. In many ways, they are. Spider-Man really is the mortal turned demigod, the Everyman gifted with sudden power and responsibility. Batman is a Plutonian king of the underworld who struggles to keep his damned subjects in line (the same could be said of Spawn). The shining young sun-god archetype is visible in characters from Captain Marvel to the Human Torch. The same should hold true of novas. They stand for something — whether they like it or not.

There are ways that players and GMs alike can use this to their advantage. Plenty of writers are retelling various myths with modern superbeings in the place of demigods and legendary heroes — why ignore such a fine source of ideas? Consider the underworld ruler who abdicates his throne for a while and sets up a mortal in his place. What if your character were to find himself taking over a corporate nova's position for a while? Then there's the trickster who steals the sun for the benefit of humanity. Perhaps your PC or that of a friend might see an opportunity to liberate some strange new science from

Project Utopia. What about a solar-system-wide version of Jason and the Argonauts? If the players are open to the idea, the GM can indulge in truly cosmic adventures.

Consider the roles that the PCs can play in epic stories. Think big.

## Antiheroes

The antihero achieved heretofore unknown popularity in superhero fiction a few decades back, with *The Dark Knight Returns* and *Watchmen*. Led by those compelling graphic novels, the "grim warrior who doesn't give a damn about anything but destroying his enemies" started cropping up in a lot more comics. Like any other archetype, the antihero is a strong character only when he is a *character*, not a cardboard stand-up. Batman hasn't lasted as long as he has just by treating readers to tales of one guy beating up crooks, after all. The myriad of complications in his life — his aversion to guns, being haunted by the ghosts of his parents, the struggle between his desire for justice and his obvious sexual attraction to certain criminals, the gradual loss of touch with "Bruce Wayne" — is what keeps *Batman* comics still selling today.

The real problem with antihero characters is that their lax approach toward ethics can work against the game. It can be hard to make a story dramatic when the PCs (and sometimes, the players) are jaded toward death and suffering in all but the most extreme circumstances. How can a GM get them involved emotionally in a bystander's death if the PCs have just snuffed out every last tattooed, missing-a-pinky hatchetman inside the Nakato gambling den?

Playing an antihero requires work for yourself and the GM — you to make sure your character doesn't devolve into a stereotype or a parody, while the GM must develop a stable of antagonists without getting attached to any one. Explore your character's personality traits, hangups and weaknesses, perhaps even more so than usual — you can bet the GM will be digging into them.

An antihero-focused game is an intense endeavor, and it *should* be — otherwise, it's just a bunch of shallow kill-em-where-they-stand scenes, and you can get *that* from Hollywood.

## Realism

It's vital that you think about how "realistic" you want the game to be. If the GM wants a gritty, *Watchmen*-esque story where there are no real heroes or villains — but the players generate four-color characters based on the '70s *Legion of Super-Heroes*, you have a problem.

So, talk it over — how outrageous do you want things to get? Do you want an over-the-top game reminiscent of animé superheroics, or a world without costumes and codenames? It's important to find a happy medium, a style that GM and the players will both enjoy — otherwise, why play the game?

*Aberrant*'s default realism level can be summed up as "mostly realistic" — there are some people who dress up in uniforms, adopt *noms du guerre* and try to save the world from itself. However, most

novas use their powers to achieve fame and fortune through more "normal" channels (show business, industry, academia), and there isn't much of a tradition of supercriminals dressing up in tights and knocking over jewelry stores.

More "four-color" games (named after the days when color comic books got their coloration from combinations of tiny dots in four colors) can have "villains" with codenames and agendas, as well as "heroes" who stop them. In this setup, Team Tomorrow becomes more like the Justice League and spends more time fighting supercriminals; similarly, the GM might introduce archetypal antagonists, either by putting a more four-color spin on groups like the Teragen or by debuting actual teams of supercriminals. A good source for four-color themes while still maintaining some plausibility is the *Astro City* comic — it's hard to find a better example of a classic superhero setting where the superheroes, villains and supporting cast act like real people.

Conversely, more "realistic" games might have a gritty approach, one where superpowers are treated like the deadly weapons they are. This is applied more easily at lower levels — in fact, the GM might restrict novas to a single superhuman level to have a less epic scale of conflict. In such a setting, novas don't have near the amount of influence they do in mainstream **Aberrant** games, and they can't change the world as readily. There are plenty of sources for such games, from *Watchmen* to the *Wild Cards* series of novels (although the latter gets bogged down in shock-value scenes and themes pretty fast).

It's impossible to chart all the different degrees of realism an **Aberrant** series might take. The best thing for it is for everyone to think about what they'd like to do, then discuss your various ideas. Odds are, you'll strike a level of realism that's not quite like anybody else's game — but that suits your group perfectly.

# The GM's Toolkit

The rest of this chapter has tips for the GM on running **Aberrant** games. Players can read it; just know that the information is focused for GM use.

## Theme

Each Trinity Universe game represents one of three thematic aspects. **Adventure!** represents Hope, **Aberrant** represents Sacrifice, and **Trinity** represents Unity.

Sacrifice can mean any number of things. On the whole, **Aberrant** deals with making hard choices. The world isn't the innocent, black-and-white place of the Inspired Age. It's a world where some individuals streak through the sky in the fight for truth and justice while others work behind closed doors to subjugate the unwitting for their own ends. It's a world where donning a flashy costume doesn't automatically label you a hero, just as hewing to the shadows doesn't brand you a villain.

So where does sacrifice come in? In a world like this, with countless groups pushing their own agendas, it's impossible to stay neutral. Novas are rare and powerful beings. You can't help but be drawn into the machinations of others like you — not to mention companies and governments and social groups. Sooner or later, you must make a choice — between hiding your identity or going public, between taking corporate sponsorship or working as a vigilante, between pushing your powers to the utmost or developing them with caution, or even between whether or not to indulge in the lure of your powers to begin with!

When you make a choice, you sacrifice something. If it's making your persona public, you sacrifice any hope of a private life — and you may even sacrifice the safety of your friends and loved ones,

should another nova or some group wish to get at you in some way. Likewise, taking on a separate nova identity requires living a double life, sacrificing intimacy with those around you as you work to keep the secret.

It can be easy to make some sacrifices, while it may not be clear how much of a sacrifice is involved with other choices. You could say it's a foolish nova who doesn't develop his powers as best he can. But is it worth pushing the quantum envelope if you end up a tainted freak? Okay, so use caution. But even though you haven't succumbed to taint, can you still call yourself human when you can fly to Jupiter in a day?

That's what it comes down to on the most basic level: sacrificing humanity for power. There are novas of tremendous ability who work hard to retain the core of what it means to be human — just as there are baselines who are so corrupt as to be overwhelmed with their own kind of taint. Every nova character should face this issue at least once in his career.

While most of the story's events and characters should somehow relate to the story's theme, the theme needn't be painted in mile-high, glowing letters. It doesn't have to be blatant to provide internal consistency. Even if the players don't pick up on the connection between the emotionless Teragen "emancipator" and the difficulties they're experiencing with their home lives, they'll still perceive subconsciously the sacrifices they're experiencing.

## Mood

If a theme is an intellectual hook into the story, a mood is an emotional hook. Different moods lead to different kinds of stories. A sinister story about Project Proteus is different from a wild story about going on a musical world tour. Don't limit yourself to just one kind of mood; sure, you may find that you're talented at creating a mood of paranoia in your stories, but you shouldn't limit your series by maintaining that mood exclusively.

Start early. If you want to establish a mood of dread, begin with a nightmare that one of the characters is experiencing. If you want a mood of awe, begin by describing wondering masses far below, shading their eyes and pointing up to the characters flying by overhead. First impressions are as vital in storytelling as they are anywhere else. Once you've got them hooked, remember to reinforce the mood whenever you can; before long, they'll be helping you out by anxiously checking every corner of their penthouse or firing off even more impressive displays of power, just because such actions seem appropriate.

If **Aberrant** has a common mood, it's probably that of awe. The novas are like unto gods. Everything they do is much larger than life. While the novas hollow out asteroids for their summer retreats and catch solar flares in their hands, humanity stares up at them slack-jawed. There's fear there as well — but the novas are so much more than humanity that they cannot help but inspire awe. Again, this shouldn't be the mood of every story you run (or even most stories), but it should be a consideration.

## Setting

Theme and mood aren't always tangible elements of a story, but the setting is. Working out a believable, vivid setting makes the rest of the story flow smoothly. If described properly, it may inspire your players to interact all the more enthusiastically with their surroundings.

The setting for a story may require several different "backdrops" — an **Aberrant** story could well have separate scenes set in India, on the Eiffel Tower, on a luxury cruise liner and finally on the moon's surface! It's your duty to describe these settings as vividly as you can, so that the players don't start lagging and losing interest. Bear in mind that you don't want to use too much detail, either! Keep your descriptions brief, but make every word count. The players don't need

to know all the different beers advertised in the bar's neon signs — but mentioning that the neon throws an unhealthy blue light over everything is a detail they'll remember.

Describe things accurately and completely. Take into account things like temperature, weather, open space (or the lack thereof), physical objects, sights, smells, sounds — all the details that make a place come alive. You can even use the setting to reinforce theme or mood — horror writers do this all the time. The world of **Aberrant** is a vibrant, colorful place. Help your players experience it.

## Conflict

The core of every story is conflict — not *combat* (although that's certainly one aspect of it), but *conflict*. The characters should always face some level of opposition in pursuing their goals, or else there's really no point in bothering to tell a story at all. A Proteus op refusing an order to turn his powers on human soldiers, a Teragen member trying to convince another nova to come over to the Teragen's way of thinking and a Directive agent discovering that his brother is somehow entrenched in the cartel he's investigating are all examples of conflict. Each one has the potential to break out in a battle at some point, but the real conflict comes between the Proteus op and his superiors or between the Teragen member and his "recruit." In fact, these situations could even result in multiple conflicts; consider the Directive agent, who will be pitted not only against the cartel, but who will have to work against the Directive in order to somehow "go easy" on his brother — or against his conscience to bring his brother to justice in the first place.

The actual conflicts in a story vary widely, depending on the PC roles. For instance, a Team Tomorrow cell will have fewer clashes with public opinion than a group of Aberrants would. For the most part, the conflict will boil down to nova vs. human or nova vs. nova. If the conflict is one of novas versus humans, it will usually pit novas against human society or an organization, something that is bigger than any one person. Struggles against other novas can involve anything from a *mano y mano* struggle with the local bruiser to a convoluted struggle against the peer pressure of nova society as a whole.

Of course, there are plenty of other potential sources of conflict — the characters might have to struggle against a hostile environment, against their own inner taint, or against the unknown. It all depends on what sort of story you want to tell.

## Plot

Every story has a beginning, middle and end. A story is composed of a series of events that come together — the opening scene usually attracts the players' interest and sets the stage, the middle scenes expand and develop the conflict, and the final scene is a chance for a resolution. The plot, plain and simple, is the order in which these events occur.

A plot can be highly complicated and layered in mystery, but this complexity isn't necessary. It can also be pretty simplistic, but simplicity isn't necessarily desirable, either. A good plot allows the characters some free will, yet retains an overall sense of progression. It's paced well, with simple plot advances balanced by the occasional twist or subplot just to keep things interesting.

Think of a good plot as a roller coaster. Start out by setting things in motion. You can either have them climb the first hill slowly, learning to anticipate the first plot twist, or you can drop them without warning into the thick of things with the first scene. In either case, it's vital that you set the scene — make sure they understand where they are and what's going on.

Then you go into the scenes in the middle, the series of ups, downs, spirals and loops, that allow the characters to enjoy the ride as a whole but are still a buildup for the final stretch. Throw in subplots and plot twists here and there (just as a roller-coaster designer adds the occasional spiral or loop) to keep things interesting.

Finally, you hit the climax — the biggest spiral or the steepest drop. Now the players have the final conflict ahead of them.

## Climax and Resolution

Every good story has a climax — the point where all the building tension hits the fan. The climax is the penultimate moment of the story — do or die time — the point where the characters succeed or fail, fight or compromise. It's the pivotal point of the story, so important that it can overshadow or color everything else that's happened along the way. The actual nature of the climax may have changed entirely from your plans, but you should still play it up — after all, this is what everything else has been leading up to.

A common thing to do is to continue play for one final scene after the climax, letting the players wind down. This allows them to look back over the story and wrap up any loose ends. Of course, they probably shouldn't take care of *all* the loose ends — those are the stuff that future stories are made of.

# The Series

Creating a series can be a fair amount of work, but it's a lot less arduous than it might seem. After all, the comic-book industry was built on the concept of ongoing chronicles; limited series are nice, but the ongoing titles keep the fans coming back. An **Aberrant** series can continue for years — theoretically, one might even last until the Nova Age ends and the Unity Age begins in AD 2120. You never know.

In order to make your series worthwhile, it should have a life of its own. A good series is more than just a string of scenes featuring the protagonists goofing around — it's a story with a plotline of its own. As it progresses, the players and characters alike share in the overarching themes and moods that link story to story. There's a sense of continuity, of belonging. One story influences the next; things change around the characters. The stories grow bigger and grander; the antagonists more fierce and awe-inspiring. The characters start planning for the future, and they work their changes on the world. By the time you're done with the series (if indeed you ever end it at all), you and the players alike should be well and rightly satisfied by what you've accomplished.

# Sample Story Hooks

There are hundreds of possible story hooks for an **Aberrant** series, and the characters' backgrounds and personalities should lend themselves to dozens more. From stories that take place before the characters' eruptions (as a sort of prologue) to the final conflict between the characters and their worst rivals, the possibilities are virtually endless. The following ideas are only the tip of the iceberg.

• **Disaster Relief:** Whether floods in the American Midwest, a hurricane in the tropics or earthquakes battering Japan, the world offers plenty of opportunities for novas to help their fellow man. Most powers can be useful in these situations — telekinesis to rescue people caught in floodwaters, superhuman strength to support a bridge for a few minutes more, and even plasma generation to burn firebreaks with incredible speed. Give the PCs a personal reason to involve themselves — their conscience, excellent PR, family members in trouble, patriotism, loyalty to the Utopian ideal or what have you. Then throw in a couple of monkeywrenches. What if a new nova erupts in the confusion — how do the PCs contain him as well as the disaster, and where will they guide him afterward? What if a Teragen member arrives and heaps scorn on the PCs' efforts, trying to coerce them
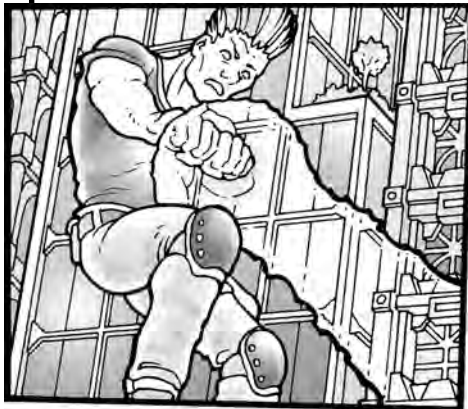
into "not being such suckers"? The characters will certainly earn new admirers for their help — are there possible romantic interests, political contacts or rivals to be gained? This story seed can be a good introduction for new PCs, allowing them to test their powers in creative fashions and find ways to make even the most destructive powers do some good.

• **Publicity Stunts:** The world may all but worship novas, but nobody is immune to bad publicity. No matter what sort of series you're running, the PCs can run afoul of the media easily. And when you're a nova, it's virtually impossible to hide. So what do you do when the global media wonders if you're on the take, or criticizes your employers' policies? What about the vocal anti-nova groups? What if some teenager kills himself in a half-baked attempt to emulate his role model, and someone suggests that the nova himself is to blame? In **Aberrant**, critics of nova behavior are in the minority (at present, anyway), so this sort of story can serve as a sharp relief to the hero-worship to which even Teragen characters might have grown accustomed. Do the PCs' accusers have an ulterior motive, or is this a sign of things to come?

• **Young Novas in Love:** Although romantic interests are usually relegated to the status of subplot, there's no reason that *amour* can't be the focus of an entire story. The romance in question doesn't even have to focus on one of the PCs, although it tends to be a little more immediate when the players are more directly involved. What if one of the characters is being stalked by an obsessive nova, someone who's convinced that they'd make the perfect genetic match? How about a

genuine story of love (or at least genuine attraction) from the opposite sides — say, between a Utopian and a Teragen member? The chemistry between lovers from opposite sides of the fence is pretty damned potent. Love triangles and the usual amount of soap-opera clichés can add to the tension, but one of the most distinct problems is that even if all goes well, the couple can't expect much privacy — an individual nova doesn't quite get the media attention that the President of the United States does, but they get a lot more than the occasional mention in *People*. Can a relationship last in the bright lights of global attention?

• **Mob War:** Only four crime syndicates survived Utopia's purges to prosper in **Aberrant**'s criminal underground — and to many in each syndicate, that's three syndicates too many. Although the international crime market is mostly divided up at this point, there are still plenty of areas — such as the United States — where the territorial lines shift constantly. What happens when the PCs are caught between two (or more) warring underworld factions, some of which may have brought along nova enforcers? What if the PCs and their resources or contacts are part of the "stakes" in the war? How can the characters act to preserve their interests without bringing down the wrath of the syndicates on their loved ones' heads?

• **Exploration:** To novas, there may well not be a final frontier. If the characters are capable of exploring the solar system without benefit of a ship, wouldn't someone pay them quite a bit of money to see what's *really* on Mars? Even if the characters need a space shuttle or the like, the heightened survivability of novas (to say nothing of

complementary powers) are a valuable asset in exploration. The deep seas would be a similarly appropriate venue for exploration, possibly even more so (easier for novas to survive, and rather more convenient). Of course, who's to say that other novas haven't beaten them to the punch? A resource war could result from a particularly rich find, or Utopia might try to keep the characters from disclosing any unusual scientific discoveries. The sky's the limit — well, not really, but you get the idea.

# Antagonists and Supporting Cast

You're only as good as what you know — or in this case, *who* you know. No hero ever amounted to anything without proper enemies. Similarly, it's damn rare to find an interesting story with only one character. Just as every comic-book character who's managed to last more than a couple of years has his or her own vibrant supporting cast, your series should be stocked with intriguing people who seem *real*. It's no coincidence that the world is more familiar with Lois Lane than it is with the latest faddish bad girl or muscleboy.

When designing an NPC, the first thing you should consider is the character's motive. You probably know what they're going to be doing in the series, but you also need to know *why*. If you know that the scientist is driven by intense jealousy of nova powers, you can better judge how he'll react to the PCs when they show up at his lab. Figuring out whether the hitman is in it for the money, family loyalty or desperation can help you refine his tactics, to say nothing of his

personality. Even the most avaricious criminal has some idea of what he'll do with all that money he's trying to steal. Treat your important characters as if they're actors who just asked what their motivations are in this scene — they'll be much more vivid for the trouble.

It can't be stressed too highly that motivation is *very* important for antagonists. If your antagonists don't have believable goals, hopes and dreams, they won't be very effective. Many of the best antagonists are people who aren't "evil" — they simply have goals that are at odds with those of the heroes. And even if you do bring in a sadistic monster with only one redeeming value to his name, you have the option of making him a recurring threat in the series. Nothing gets the players into the game better than some bastard that they love to hate and can't wait to catch.

After motivation, make sure that the character is distinctive. A detailed physical description is a great place to start. Stress details that give away the character's personality; pretty, red-haired reporters are a dime a dozen, but if you give the local journalist a habit of showing up in rumpled skirts and jackets, you've established something about her personality — maybe she's too busy to keep up with her ironing, or maybe she's just a slob. Either way, it's a hook.

Mannerisms are also important. Does the Utopia agent polish his glasses constantly during debriefings? Does the Interpol detective munch on withered carrot sticks that he keeps in his jacket pocket? Is the up-and-coming starlet trying to tone down her strong Southern accent? It helps if you can come up with at least one distinctive feature for each NPC; this keeps the stain of generica out of your series and gives you a head start on creating a supporting cast with a collective personality all its own.

# APPENDIX ONE: ALLEGIANCES AND ANTAGONISTS

Ultimately, each nova stands alone. In the early 21st century, novas are among the prime movers and shakers; each is of potentially global significance. There are few "organization men" among their ranks; novas are courted as allies rather than recruited as minions.

Nonetheless, certain global organizations deal with novas more than the ruck and run of humanity, and novas have congregated to groups with the power and resources to play at something approximating the novas' own level. The GM may have players pick an allegiance for their characters, defining the organization or philosophy to which the nova adheres, if any. The GM can influence this — for instance, noting that the series is about a cadre of Team Tomorrow members, so all characters have allegiance to Utopia.

Many allegiances can suggest or even dictate background feat choices. For example, rank in organizations such as Utopia requires Backing, and a member of Team Tomorrow will have Allies, Backing, Resources and Influence. For double-agents or fugitives, Cipher is essential.

Though many games will require PCs to have the same allegiance, there's nothing stopping you from building a team of characters with mixed allegiances. An "all-Utopian" group could consist of one true Utopian, an Aberrant masquerading as a Utopian, an Individualist who's working with Utopia on a case-by-case basis, and a Teragen member masquerading as an Aberrant masquerading as a Utopian! Likewise, an Aberrant series could feature two Aberrants, two Individualists (friends of the Aberrants who are not convinced of the Utopia conspiracy, though they are standing by their pals for now) and a Teragen member (helping out her fellow novas against Utopia's duplicity in an effort to recruit the Aberrants to the Teragen cause). It is even possible to have Utopian and Aberrant members in the same series; after all, many Aberrants once belonged to Utopia, and two friends or lovers may maintain their relationship, each refusing to betray the other while trying to talk some sense into their "misguided" companion.

As a player, you do not have to broadcast your PC's true allegiance, or even let your fellow players know it. Indeed, all Proteus novas, and many Teragen, Aberrant and Directive novas, do not reveal their allegiances. In theory, a character can have many allegiances, open and secret. For example, some Utopians are actually moles for Project Proteus, making sure that Utopia remains focused on what it needs to be doing. A Directive agent could be a spy for the Teragen, or vice versa. Some novas might be triple or even quadruple agents, though these characters play a dangerous game indeed.

This appendix contains profiles on major organizations that compete for character loyalties in the Nova Age, as well as profiles of key superhumans who count themselves in their ranks.

## Aberrants

The Aberrants are a very new faction (having appeared in May 2008). The group's name is an ironic adoption of a common anti-nova epithet. There are only a few dozen Aberrant members in the world initially; most work alone, though a few cells exist. Few Aberrants identify themselves as such publicly, since the group's founders, André Corbin and Sophia Rousseau, are sought by Utopia and world authorities. Indeed, many novas who claim affiliation with Project Utopia become secret Aberrants and work to discover the truth behind Utopia's agenda.

Aberrants believe that Project Utopia is corrupted by a conspiracy that intends to enslave or destroy novas — possibly the entire human race — through a variety of subversive operations. The Aberrants' primary goals are to expose the corrupting influences and to recruit other novas to their banner. A minority of Aberrant members believe Utopia is wholly corrupt; the majority points out the Project's many good works and hopes to fix the problems within the organization rather than destroy it. The group has learned of Project Proteus, although it has not yet uncovered the scope of its agenda or its membership.

The Aberrants' task has proven tricky — not only is Utopia a tough nut to crack, but the Aberrants have come to realize that public exposure could cause tremendous damage to the Project and all its positive endeavors, and might well cause a negative backlash toward novas.

Many feel that their best chance lies in convincing as many novas of the hidden corruption as possible. If the issue can be addressed among their kind, away from the public eye, the corruption may be purged and the Aberrants (and other novas) can work toward the common good that Utopia espouses — all with the public none the wiser.

They have been furtive in their efforts to communicate with other novas, mostly Utopians and Individualists. Most Aberrants consider the Teragen a band of radicals and terrorists, possibly even the root behind the corruption in Utopia. Aberrants know of a shadowy agency called the Directive, but they know little of its nature; the Aberrant stance is that the Directive could be a front for Project Proteus.

Suggested background feats for Aberrant members: Ally, Cipher, Contact, Dormancy (useful for hiding from pursuers).

### André Corbin

Born 13 years before N-Day, Corbin went from working class origins in Leith to become a world-class football player in London. He dominated the sports world to an extent that many pinned their hopes on him to save baseline sports from obscurity… if he didn't tear them down in a spectacular crash-and-burn catastrophe typical for his life. Though many respected his talent, his cocky manner alienated a great many people, including his team's fans. His eruption, during the World Cup playoffs between the UK and Nigeria, sparked a nasty riot in which several fans suffered serious injuries.

Corbin was soon invited to join Team Tomorrow — to help bolster the group's public image, some claimed. He accepted, but his mockery of his teammates, his lack of respect for authority and his participation in "extracurricular affairs" led to his suspension and retirement from T2M. He maintained social ties only with Jennifer "Slider" Landers. She was murdered shortly after she came to him with her Utopia conspiracy theory. This sparked Corbin's own curiosity (and sense of revenge). He went into hiding, and Sophia Rousseau tracked him down thereafter.

As one of the founders of the Aberrants, Corbin is in a position of real responsibility. Though he still has some ways to go before he

becomes a skilled leader (or even organized), the experience and current circumstances are maturing him rapidly. He's concluded that the only way to see justice for Landers' death is to bring the truth out where everyone has to see it.

**Traits:** Corbin is not the sharpest knife in the drawer, but he is cunning and charismatic. He's parlayed his social confidence into a kind of layperson's investigative ability — focusing on gleaning information from others rather than mucking about with physical clues and boring science stuff.

An accomplished athlete prior to his eruption, Corbin has become even stronger, tougher and faster since — thanks to Mega-Strength (Crush), Mega-Dexterity (Physical Prodigy) and Mega-Stamina (Durability). He also has Mega-Wisdom (Electromagnetic Vision) and Mega-Charisma (Persuader).

Corbin has Allies, Connections and Influence as well as the Node and Eufiber background feats. His only quantum power is *empathic manipulation*.



## Sophia Rousseau

A handsome, elegant woman with short, auburn hair and sharp features, Sophia Rousseau is a walking enigma. The co-founder and leader of the Aberrants is a powerful and influential woman who seems to know everyone in the nova community. She is known to many as well, although some can't recall where or when they met her for the first time. Rousseau moves among social circles of every level with equal ease and grace. Of late, she has spent much of her time working with the Aberrants to expose the conspiracy within Project Utopia.

**Traits:** Like her past, Sophia Rousseau's full abilities remain a mystery. She possesses some social superhuman feats and some energy projection abilities (which she used to literally vaporize an Australian XWF fighter who had the temerity to assault her). She also exhibits a kind of "psychic static" that makes it impossible for telepaths to sense her true thoughts or feelings.

## Æon Society

Æon has little direct influence on the Nova Age. It leaves specific involvement with novas to Project Utopia (and, by extension, Project Proteus) until the very latter stages of this time period. For most of the early 21st century, Æon researches those things that can't be explained by quantum force — most notably, the rare "pyschs," people who use the power of their minds to affect the world in some way that remains beyond the ability of science to perceive. The few documented psychs have no M–R nodes, nor do they attain the tremendous scale of power that even average novas can reach. There's no doubting that they exist, though — aside from a few known to Æon, the Society also has documentation from the early days of their organization.

These investigations occur behind the scenes of the **Aberrant** game. This particular setting focuses on novas; psychs get their turn in the future setting of **Trinity** (where they are known more properly as psions). Still, you may wish to incorporate this detail into a larger **Aberrant** game, mixing different types of "super-humans" in much the same way that the previous era setting of **Adventure!** handles mesmerists and stalwarts.

## Phillipa Lavielle

The current director of the Æon Society is a French-Canadian with a pleasant demeanor that masks a steely resolve. She is credited with establishing Project Utopia as a public organization charged with helping novas develop their powers and integrate into society... and with Project Proteus, which some in later generations claim precipitated the rise in baseline–nova conflicts that ultimately leads to the Aberrant War of the mid-21st century.

**Traits:** Lavielle's capabilities and the reasons behind her support of Utopia's altruistic goals — and Proteus's often sinister ones — are left open intentionally. Æon isn't a corrupt organization full of anti-nova paranoids, but neither is it the fresh-faced champion of justice from the Inspired Age of the early 20th century. The motivations of individuals and groups is not always easy to parse; many people with the best of intentions end up doing awful things — while others are driven by selfish desires that just happen to benefit others. It's not the purpose of this game to dictate whether the Æon Director — or Caestus Pax or Divis Mal or anyone else — is ultimately right or wrong in the choices they make. (Though, granted, we have our own opinions on the matter.) Instead, Lavielle is left as a cipher for you to use as you see fit — and, perhaps, as the lynchpin upon which the entire course of the Nova Age rests. Is Phillipa Lavielle an optimistic soul who supports Æon's goals with the best of intentions, or is she a Machiavellian manipulator who seeks the ultimate destruction of all novas?

It's entirely up to you.

## Margaret Mercer

Margaret Mercer didn't seek to follow in the footsteps of her grandfather, Maxwell Mercer — the founder of Æon — and take the organization's helm. She is a scientist, not a politician or an administrator. Maggie inherited Max's thirst for knowledge, but not his managerial skills. She can get by in that arena well enough to run Æon's Special Projects Division, though she does get frustrated that she can't just dash out on a field investigation whenever she feels like it.

Maggie oversaw Project Utopia (among other special projects, including Argonaut, Cyclops, Pandora, Tantalus and others) for only a few months before the decision was made to spin it off as a separate, public entity (a choice that she supported). The change soon prompted the dispersal of all existing projects under different directors. Maggie kept only two under her direct supervision — Pandora (the study of psychs), and the little-known Babel Dossier. This last was established in the early 1940s by one of Æon's founding members, Whitley Styles, as a storehouse of the eclectic and abstruse. The information within the Babel Dossier has proven useful in researching bizarre events and has led to establishing more than one Æon project (including Utopia).

Despite pressure from Director Lavielle, Maggie maintains control of Babel until the quiet return of her grandfather in 2008.

**Traits:** Margaret Mercer is a baseline with an exceptional analytical mind. She has sufficient social savvy to get by in Æon's often-competitive administrative arena (though her lineage and striking looks don't hurt). Though edging into her 40s in 2008, she shows no sign of slowing down in either of her two loves — Æon research and extreme sports.
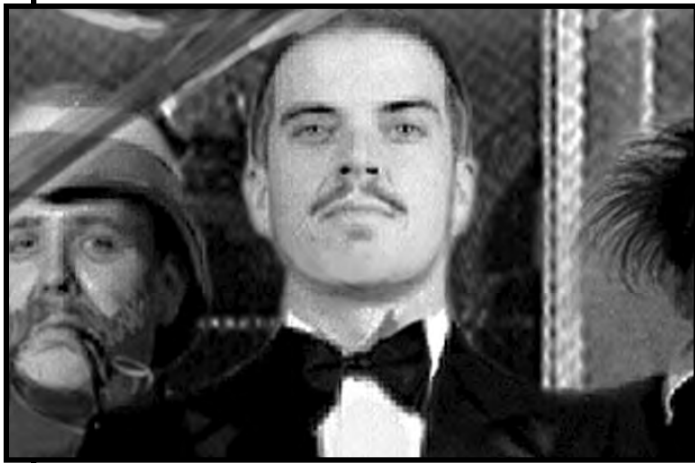
## Maxwell Anderson Mercer

The famed explorer, scientist and founder of the Æon Society had faded from view decades before the *Galatea* explosion in 1998 — indeed, few believe Mercer to still be alive more than 60 years after the Society's inception. He becomes involved in the Nova Age in 2008, when he begins an effort to defuse increasing conflict between baselines and novas. His efforts remain hidden from public eyes throughout the time period, however.

See **Adventure!** for full details on Max Mercer's history and abilities.

## Corporate/Other

There is no shortage of employers, sponsors and other backers all too willing to have a nova sign on the dotted line. In the United States, some large cities franchise one or more novas as PR reps and "public defenders"; residents hold these novas in the same reverence that they once held their 20th-century sports teams. Several corporations, including the DeVries Agency, the Hong Kong-based Novelty consulting firm, Exxon-Mobil, the N! network, ViaSoft, Third Millennium Motors and various Japanese technological firms, employ novas in various capacities. It is rumored that the global criminal cartels also retain one or more novas as "specialists."

Novas who work for a government or corporation by and large adopt their backers' views on global issues. Most novas view Utopia with equal parts fascination and suspicion. While many novas utilized Utopia's Rashoud facilities upon first erupting, many corporations hate Utopia's UN-granted authority to regulate potentially dangerous technology. Most government and corporate novas know little of the Teragen beyond gossip and what they view in the media; only a few have even heard of the Aberrants, and none of them knows about Project Proteus. Novas working for a government or criminal cartel have likely heard of the Directive, but have only spotty information; corporate novas may or may not know about the Directive.

Suggested background feats for those in the corporate arena or similar fields: Allies, Backing, Influence, Resources.

## The Directive

The Directive is an international security, police and espionage agency founded jointly by the United States, the U.K., the Russian Confederation and Japan. Most members are baseline, but nova operatives fill out its ranks. The Directive's goals are to advance its member nations' interests and to act as a check against Utopia's growing power. Although the Directive has an "official" paper trail, its organizational structure and agenda are classified, and it takes pains to stay out of the public eye. Thus, few know of it except as a name, and its activities and purpose are shrouded in rumor.

The typical Directive agent distrusts Project Utopia and is interested in the recent turmoil within the Project's ranks. The Directive also polices potentially dangerous international situations (terrorist factions, aggressive dictators, powerful novas), and keeps a careful watch over China's large nova populace. The Directive shares Utopia's opinion that the Teragen is a dangerous movement. A few Directive higher-ups have heard rumors of a "shadow cabal" within Utopia; certainly, such a group would explain many unusual occurrences over the past decade. The Directive knows that certain former members of Utopia have defected, and agents are authorized to seek out and learn what they can about this situation.

Suggested background feats for Directive members: Backing, Cipher, Contacts, Resources.

## Lucas Barrows

Lucas grew up used to being above the norm, in a close-knit neighborhood in the suburbs of Houston, Texas. He was the tallest and best-looking kid in the neighborhood, and was at the top of his class throughout school. He even lettered in basketball, football and track for three consecutive years. After high school, Lucas went through the Criminal Justice program on scholarship at the University of Georgia, and was accepted in the FBI as a criminal profiler upon graduation.

Lucas learned his M–R node was active in the course of the FBI's initial physical and psychological screening. The psychological stress of a demanding academic and athletic career had evidently triggered a low-key eruption. After only two years of exemplary service to the FBI, Arnold Harris of the Directive offered Barrows the chance to be the first of his kind to join the multinational intelligence effort.

**Traits:** Barrows possesses Mega-Dexterity (Physical Prodigy), Mega-Intelligence (Analyze Weakness), Mega-Wisdom (Lie Detec-

tor), and *intuition*, *luck* and *psychic shield*. He also has the Contacts, Dormancy, Influence, Node and Resources background feats.

# Individualists

Most novas have no defined allegiance to anything save their own goals and ends. A nova with individualist "allegiance" is motivated by self-interest, tempered with the agenda of whatever cause or organization she's currently espousing. Individualists range from media icons and youth-culture heroes to mercenary elites and would-be Third World dictators. If a generalization must be made, Individualist novas take a tolerant but wary view toward Utopia, regard the Aberrant movement with burgeoning interest (if they've heard of it at all) and regard the Teragen as simultaneously disturbing and intriguing. Most individualist novas have never heard of Project Proteus; if they know of the Directive, it is through rumor. An individualist may become involved with any or all of these groups during the course of play, of course.

Suggested background feats: Any.



### Klaus "Totentanz" Kleisner

There was a time when the man named Klaus Kleisner was a happy and well-adjusted engineer designing automobile chassis for Daimler-Benz. As Totentanz, he is a shark in nova skin, swimming through the carnage and violence of combat. Elites who have fought beside Totentanz have heard his mantra and know it well: "*Ich bin der Hammer, der Dolch, die Sichel, die alles niedermäht,*" which, roughly translated, means "I am the hammer, the dagger, the sickle that reaps."

Through a combination of guerilla tactics and sheer physical superiority, Totentanz has racked up a score card of more nova kills than anyone else on the planet, making him the object of a great deal of fear... and the most expensive elite in the world.

**Traits:** Totentanz possesses Mega-Strength (Quantum Leap), Mega-Dexterity (Accuracy, Cat-Footed, Rapid Strikes) Mega-Constitution (Adaptability, Durability), Mega-Intelligence (Analyze Weakness, Mental Prodigy: Tactical) and Mega-Wisdom (Bloodhound, Lie Detector, Ultraperipheral Vision). His quantum powers are *disorient*, *force field*, *healing*, *invisibility*, *psychic shield*, *quantum leech (range)* and *quantum regeneration*.

As a very highly-paid elite, Totentanz has the Attunement, Contacts, Eufiber, Node and Resources background feats.

### Randel "The Fireman" Portman

In 1998, only a few minutes after the *Galatea* explosion, firefighter Randel Portman responded to a traffic accident. On the scene, he found a burning school bus full of children. His desperate need to save them caused the very first publicized eruption — transforming Portman into a nova and



granting him the ability to absorb energy. His power saved the children from the inferno and made him an instant celebrity. That was 10 years ago.

Portman found continuing as a firefighter more or less impossible; the people of New York would ring alarms or even set fires in the hopes he would respond. This hit him hard — he defined himself by his ability to save people, directly and by his own hand. While his powers made that much easier, his fame made it impossible. After a month of trying to maintain a normal life, Portman shifted unhappily into a career of public activism, supporting himself financially with media appearances, endorsements and Fireman action figures. Now he fights disasters when he can, allying with Project Utopia and (when an opportunity arises) with local emergency services.

**Traits:** Portman possesses Mega-Constitution (Adaptability, Durability, Hardbody) and *absorption (energy)*, *elemental anima (fire)*, *intuition* and *luck*. Additionally, Portman has the Attunement, Influence, Reputation and Resources background feats.

# Project Proteus

Proteus exists so deep within the heart of Project Utopia that few Utopians have ever heard rumors of it. Information relating to it is rare, and kept encrypted and classified. Indeed, most Proteus "members" are unaware of their allegiance; Proteus often uses mercenary elites, Utopians or other unaffiliated individuals through blinds, sending them on missions that advance the project's goals without ever letting the agents in question know for whom they're really working.

Proteus is committed to secrecy and will do anything to maintain it, including terminating agents or entire branches. Proteus operatives aware of their affiliation believe that the organization is necessary to advancing Utopia's less telegenic goals. Their role is that of the gardener, pruning the Project, pulling up any weeds and spraying destructive pests when necessary. Most Proteus ops believe Aberrants to be traitors, perhaps dupes of the Teragen; and they scoff at the Aberrants' claims of anti-nova sentiment permeating Utopia. After all, most Proteus agents are themselves novas.

Many Proteus operatives hold "official" positions in Utopia or even Team Tomorrow; some maintain covers as international celebrities or act as spies in government and corporate enterprises. No Proteus op ever admits to being one except in absolute secrecy (and often not even then).

Suggested background feats for Proteus operatives: Cipher, Resources. "Official" Proteus ops have Allies and Backing (Proteus). Other background feats depend on the operative's cover identity.

## Director Thetis

Born into the middle class in the late 1940s, the brilliance of the woman who calls herself Thetis was revealed at an early age. She blazed through college by 15 and gained dual doctorates in political

science and psychology by the age of 21. Thetis worked with the National Security Agency after college. At the age of 59, she initiated contact with the Æon Society and arranged an interview for a role within the newly launched Project Utopia. Within the year, she was working in the organization's Internal Affairs Division, where she came to feel that the Project's vast potential was not being realized. Utopia was too "soft," afraid to take risks or harsh steps necessary to advance its mandate.

She presented to Laragione her concerns and a program that would address them. As a result, Thetis was placed in charge of the covert group titled Project Proteus, though she would answer to Laragione and the Æon Council.

Proteus gives Thetis a challenge sufficient to her ceaseless drive and somewhat fluid morals. She focuses almost all her time on the job, directing Proteus from behind her IAD post. Her control over Project Proteus is absolute. No operation occurs without her authorization; no operative is inducted into the organization without her express approval; she reads every mission report, no matter how trivial it may be.

**Traits:** Although Thetis has a developed Mazarin–Rashoud node, she has never erupted. Her accomplishments and abilities remain due to "normal" drive and brilliance, rather than through any application of quantum power.

# Project Utopia

Many novas are affiliated with this Æon Society-founded international organization, filling roles from the luminaries of Team Tomorrow to the support members who handle Utopia's more pragmatic (and less glamorous) concerns. Most novas experience Utopia's hospitality at least once, as they are invited to a Rashoud facility for tutoring in controlling their powers.

Utopia's stated goal is to employ novas' vast power to better the world for nova and baseline alike. Less overtly, Utopia also takes great pains to cultivate a good public image for novas as a whole. The typical Utopian nova knows nothing of the existence of Project Proteus and views the Aberrants' claims of a "shadow project" as seditious propaganda. Most Utopians are disturbed by the recent "Slider scandal" and the rise of the Aberrants, viewing the Aberrants as everything from troublemakers to murderous traitors — even possible allies of the Teragen, a group considered a band of selfish and destructive radicals. Utopians feel that Aberrant and Teragen behavior could turn the tide of public opinion against novas, and so monitor these groups' sympathizers and take action where necessary. From what little Utopia knows of the Directive's existence, it considers the agency a hostile, reactionary cabal combining the worst aspects of J. Edgar Hoover and the Illuminati.

Utopia takes a benevolent public stance toward unaffiliated novas. In practice, it makes an attempt to monitor and otherwise keep tabs on nova elements not tied to it directly.

Suggested background feats for Utopia members: Allies, Backing, Contacts, Influence, Mentor (experienced novas), Resources. Team Tomorrow Members *must* take the Backing, Influence and Resources feats.



## Justin J. Laragione

Laragione has been Utopia's director since the organization's inception, and his enthusiasm and drive remain undiminished. Still, recent events — the death of his friend Hiram "Slag" Goldberg in combat with the elite Totentanz, the murder of Slider, the infiltration of Utopia by Teragen sympathizers, the often secretive and suspect behavior of Project Proteus, the mixed signals from the Æon Council — have shaken him. He knows that not even a Utopia can be perfect, but he is starting to wonder just where the organization is headed and what it might mean for the planet in the long run.

**Traits:** Laragione is a baseline, but there is no question that he is very talented and capable. His keen intellect, attentive eye and warm relationship with almost every member of Utopia's senior staff grant him an almost encyclopedic knowledge of what transpires within the organization. He has a vast institutional memory, recalling with ease how past challenges were met, who is dependable and what various novas in the organization are capable of.
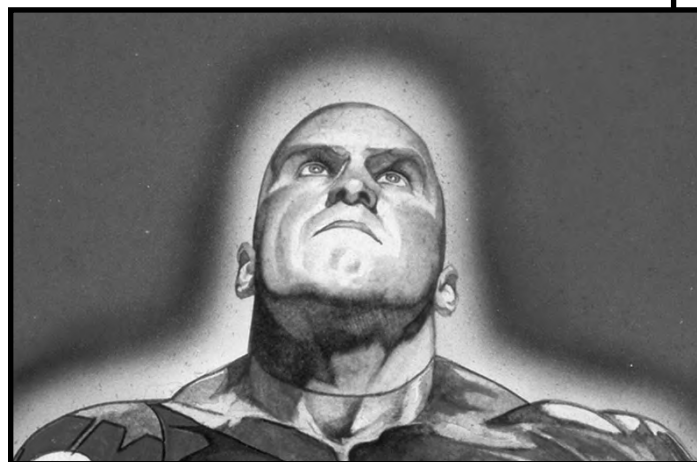


## Caestus Pax

Caestus Pax has earth-shaking power and is not afraid to use it. He's the terror of baseline and nova tyrants worldwide, and a nightmare to those who would stand against Team Tomorrow. He's the living symbol of Utopia's intent for nova and baseline to live safely side by side.

Caestus Pax loves the attention he gets. As a result, he is almost inhumanly obsessed with his image. To him, nothing is more important than boosting his franchise or being seen as the toughest nova on planet Earth. He sees his position as Team Tomorrow leader as one of the best ways to do this — he can kick ass and get paid for it (and receive the admiration of millions).

**Traits:** Pax is one of the most powerful novas on Earth, with Allies, Backing, Contacts, Eufiber, Influence, Nemesis, Node and Reputation. He also has Mega-Strength (Lifter, Shockwave and Thunderclap), Mega-Dexterity (Rapid Strikes), Mega-Constitution (Adaptibility, Durability, Hardbody, Regeneration), Mega-Wisdom (Electromagnetic Vision, Ultraperipheral Vision), and Mega-Charisma (Commanding Presence).

His full range of powers are a mystery, possibly even to Pax himself. He has demonstrated the use of *elemental anima, flight, force field, hypermovement (flight), invulnerability (bludgeoning, piercing), quantum bolt* and *telekinesis*. His Quantum score is at least 9, if not higher.

### Pratima "Splash" Basham

Pratima grew up in a small community on the banks of the Mari River in India. She erupted on her wedding day when the boat her new husband was driving hit a rock in the river and sank. Pratima's husband drowned, but she was washed ashore. She sensed her remarkable control over water as soon as she regained consciousness.

Intelligent, driven, attractive and powerful, Pratima made a perfect addition to the ranks of Team Tomorrow.

**Traits:** Pratima possesses Mega-Dexterity (Physical Prodigy, Rapid Strikes), and *bodymorph (water)*, *elemental anima (water)* and *weather manipulation*. She also has the Allies, Attunement, Backing (Team Tomorrow), Eufiber and Influence background feats.

### Peter "Thorn" Knorr

Peter was the leader of the Wolfpack, a cadre of eight baseline mercenaries. On an assignment in the Kashmir Conflict, fighting alongside nova elites on behalf of Pakistan, Peter was the only one of his team to survive. As a nova approached Peter to deliver a death blow, Peter reached out reflexively — and enormous thorny vines shot up from the soil, entangling the elite long enough for Peter to rip the nova apart with his bare hands.

Peter heard about Project Utopia after his return to the U.K. He visited the Rashoud facility in London and learned to control his abilities. He was eventually invited to join Team Tomorrow, taking the codename "Thorn."

**Traits:** Peter Knorr has Mega-Strength, Mega-Constitution and Mega-Charisma (Commanding Presence), and *immobilize* and *plant mastery*. Additionally, the ex-mercenary has the Allies, Attunement, Backing (Team Tomorrow) and Eufiber background feats.

# The Teragen

The Teragen movement is a philosophy particular to a few radical novas, a credo that novas are a separate species from the rest of humanity — thus the laws, conventions, history and morality of *Homo sapiens* do not apply to them. The Teragen's stated goals are to "liberate" novas worldwide and help them realize their potential "by any means necessary." Though brought to the forefront by the shadowy nova called Divis Mal, the Teragen claims him as its inspiration, not its leader.

The Teragen does not call for separation from or aggression toward the rest of humanity per se, but many of its members display supremacist contempt toward baseline humans. Acts of revolutionary violence against "baseline fascism" are not unknown; and some have displayed callousness toward baseline "playthings," tarnishing the movement's image in the process. The Teragen claims to be merely a collection of like-minded individuals rather than a formal organization, so radical acts by one sympathizer have not been linked to other members yet; thus, for now, the Teragen as a whole has avoided massive retaliation. Nonetheless, the Teragen maintains a great deal of secrecy, and it is rumored to have hidden members and bases of operations worldwide.

The typical Teragen member (or Terat) hates Project Utopia and seeks the Project's destruction, believing it has the worst of intentions for novas. The Teragen views the Directive with similar loathing, as a baseline agency attempting to suppress novas' rightful destiny. It has heard rumors of Project Proteus, but has not adopted a unified stance toward the Aberrants (not that the Teragen enacts "policy" anyway). Most Teragen feel that, with time, the Aberrants will come to them. The Teragen takes a helpful, sometimes nurturing stance toward corporate, government and individualist novas, attempting to emancipate them from slavery to baseline concerns and help them realize their true place in the world to come.

Suggested background feats for Teragen adherents: Allies (other Teragen), Cipher, Mentor, Node. Many Teragen spurn human society and the Influence and Followers that come with it (though there are exceptions, such as Count Orzaiz).

### Divis Mal

Divis Mal is Caestus Pax's opposite in more ways than one. As Pax is the iconic representative of Team Tomorrow and Project Utopia, Mal is the same for the Teragen.

He is not a monster in intent or action, despite his bad press. He's charming, compassionate and committed to his vision. He treats baselines

well, in a noblesse oblige manner. He believes that novas are no longer human, and have no business associating with humanity or responsibility for aiding in its collective endeavors. He's philosophical on this point, but isn't interested in forcing the other Teragen members to think in the same way. In Mal's opinion, *The Null Manifesto* represents a starting point: Where each Teragen takes it from there is her own choice.

**Traits:** In an age of quantum-powered superheroes, Divis Mal stands above all others. He is a literal demigod, capable of almost anything his mind can conceive.

He is the most powerful nova on Earth. Ever.

Divis Mal can manifest any quantum power you feel is appropriate for your game. The following are a general set of guidelines to give you an idea of his capabilities: He has every superhuman feat and all available enhancements. His powers focus on the control, creation and use of plasma (handle as acid and fire). The short list includes *armor (impervious), disintegration, disrupt (persistent), elemental anima (plasma) (elemental mastery), flight, force field (impervious), hypermovement (flight), immolate (plasma), invulnerability (bludgeoning, plasma), psychic shield, quantum bolt (plasma) (armor piercing, supercharge), quantum leech, quantum regeneration, sensory shield (sight, hearing), strobe, stun attack* and *temporal manipulation.* Apply whatever else seems appropriate.

## The Mathematician

Pedro Santiago claims to have had dealings with Divis Mal before the Teragen came together. Some believe that the native of Chile erupted long before *Galatea* lit up the night sky. In 1999, he helped organize the first Teragen meetings; and his corporate empire, centered on CORE International, continues to be the movement's major source of funding.

Santiago's critics say that he is overly conservative, and that he opposed the Teragen's move into the public arena after the release of the *Null Manifesto*. In fact, Santiago's understanding of global trends has shown him that a bloody war between nova and baseline is coming within the next quarter- to half-century; he simply wishes the Teragen to be ready for the conflict.

**Traits:** The Mathematician possesses Mega-Intelligence (Analyze Weakness, Eidetic Memory, Mental Prodigy, Speed Reader) and Mega-Wisdom (Lie Detector). He has no known quantum powers. As



a high-ranking member of the Teragen, Pedro has the Allies, Contacts, Influence and Resources background feats.



## Scripture

Those who respect Jeremiah Scripture say that he erupted while in a state of calm contemplation when *Galatea* lit the heavens. Scripture's role as Mal's mouthpiece earned him an early following dubbed the Cult of Mal, but he has taken an active hand in directing the Teragen only recently. Scripture espouses a wholly religious focus for Terats, calling novas the newest avatars of God — angels with souls. This unbending stance has caused no end of friction with other members of the Teragen, including the pragmatic Mathematician. The conflict distracts both leaders from the true threat growing within the Teragen. Still, Scripture bears no malice toward any Terat. He understands all differing points of view, even though he follows his own path, and often mediates inner-group conflicts.

**Traits:** Scripture possesses Mega-Intelligence (Linguistic Genius, Mental Prodigy), Mega-Wisdom (Hyperenhanced Hearing, Lie Detector), and Mega-Charisma (Awe-Inspiring, Persuader).

As a member of the Teragen (and the group's spokesman), Scripture also has the Allies, Backing (Teragen), Influence and Resources background feats.

# ABERRANT™

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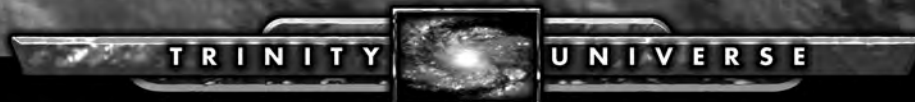THE d20 GAME OF PULP ACTION!

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