

The Fantastics

ORIGIN STORY!

Several years ago a pair of neophyte theatrical producers decided to put on a new production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. With a somewhat limited budget they went with relative unknowns for several significant roles. Set designer Elizabeth Faulkner acquired a striking tapestry depicting a faerie-filled forest from an estate sale and planned to use it as a centerpiece of the backdrop. Unfortunately the tapestry was enchanted. During the first dress rehearsal, some combination of verses from the play and the handling of the tapestry during set up activated an ancient ritual. By Act IV, Scene I, a gateway to the faerie lands was opened in the middle of the stage. Bolts of mystic energy crackled through the air, transforming props and sets into living things. Four members of cast and crew were also transformed by the magical forces into . . . something else. Fortunately when the actor playing Oberon commanded the gateway to close, it did. But the changes that had been wrought remained in place. Among them were the unfortunate individuals whom Fleet Street soon dubbed The Fantastics (after an initial article confused the upcoming production with another show currently running in the same theater space). For John Baker ("Bottom"), Elizabeth Faulkner ("Motif"), Callista Messing ("Robin Goodfellow"), and Tommy Pendleton ("Tommy Shade"), life would never be the same again.

How They Work: The Fantastics are four individuals blessed or cursed with mystic powers they never asked for, basking in the limelight of fame they all wanted, destined to take on the role of champions whether they seek it or not. They may try to put fame and fortune to work for themselves crafting the lives they would have chosen, but inevitably each member is drawn back into the struggle for truth and justice by a combination of their inner conscience and external forces they can't control.

Unlike many superteams, The Fantastics are pretty informal. They don't have a charter or a big headquarters. They socialize together at times but generally lead pretty separate lives until trouble pops up, when they assemble to tackle the challenge. They don't have a specific leader, but Motif is most likely to start giving orders and Tommy Shade is the one everyone is most likely to actually listen to in a crisis. Like Grant Morrison's Doom Patrol they are living weirdness magnets, inexplicably attracting paranormal phenomena and bizarre events and enemies. Such is the life that Bottom, Motif, Robin, and Tommy Shade have had thrust upon them.

Where They Operate: The Fantastics are based primarily in Great Britain and Europe, but they can and do operate worldwide when the situation calls for it. In the British Isles and to a lesser extent the greater Commonwealth they are virtual rock stars who enjoy the double-edged sword of celebrity. In Europe they are well-known and generally admired by the public and feared by the authorities, because they can leave unusual messes behind. In America and Japan they are more of a novelty, and elsewhere they are just an often misunderstood element of western pop culture.

Roster

John Baker, a.k.a. "Bottom"

Background Synopsis: Baker was a struggling actor known as much for his hard-living habits offstage as for his rather pedestrian work on it. His big break as Bottom in a nice new production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was marred by the magical tempest that erupted during dress rehearsal. John was unfortunately wearing Bottom's fake jackass head when he was hit by a magical bolt and transformed into a part man-part jackass-part fictional character creature. Now he had celebrity but not the kind he'd hoped to achieve. Still, John wasn't going to look a gift ass in the mouth, so to speak. Living just as rough as ever, he fights for truth, justice, the common man, and good English beer as Bottom, the strong right arm of the incredible superteam The Fantastics. He also runs a popular pub, *The Golden Ass*.

Motivation: Refusing to let his condition keep him from having a good time, sticking it to snooty types who want to control or hurt regular people

Origin: The Unusual Performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Other Aliases: Union Jack, The Mule

Qualities: Good [+2] Actor, Good [+2] Pub Owner and Patron, Good [+2] Carpenter, Good [+2] Working Class Hero, Good [+2] Sports Fan, Poor [-2] Can't Get a Real Acting Job Anymore

Powers: Good [+2] Faerie Glamour, Average [+0] Can Eat Anything, Average [+0] Immortality, Average [+0] Invulnerability, Average [+0] Super Strength

Stunts: Nothing really polished. Bottom tends to make use of the general Haymaker, I Know a Guy, and Push a Power options for Hero Points.

Location: The Golden Ass (English brewpub. Good [+2] Meeting Place for the Unusual, Expert [+2] Draft Beer Selection, Good [+2] Pub

Grub & Games, Poor [-2] Fights Break Out Too Often, Poor [-2] Fills up Completely on the Weekends)

Hero Point Pool: 5/10

Miscellany: *Pub Owner and Patron* exemplifies the many years John Baker spent carousing in pubs across the British Isles as well as his role as owner of *The Golden Ass*. It's his talent for socializing in certain settings, playing games like darts and snooker competently, consuming large amounts of beer and fried food, and even seeking certain types of information. *Working Class Hero* reflects Bottom's popularity with working-class Brits, who see him as a regular guy who sticks up for the common man and thumbs his nose at snobs. It can help him anytime the assistance of blue collar folk is needed. *Sports Fan* doesn't involve any athletic skills—Bottom doesn't really have any. But he is knowledgeable about a wide range of popular English sports: *real* football, rugby, cricket, and horse racing. He also knows where to find a sports book. *Can't Get a Real Acting Job Anymore* stems from Bottom's unusual appearance. Aside from offers to do comedy commercials, the live musical version of *Shrek*, or guest host *Jackass* on MTV, there's little work out there for a guy with a donkey head. And that really pains Bottom, who loves the theater and keeps trying to get cast in something as more than a publicity stunt.

Faerie Glamour is the leftover energy from the curse Oberon put on Bottom and Titania in the play. Basically it allows Bottom to get a more positive reaction than he should when trying to con, influence, seduce, or trick people. Plus it constantly offsets the negative reaction that should accompany Bottom's having the head of a large ass on his shoulders. *Can Eat Anything* reflects his modified man-donkey-magical creature physiology. By burning a few hero points he can even do things like chew up a knife or gun. *Immortality* is tied to Bottom's unusual origin: as long as the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* continues to exist and be performed somewhere in the world, John Baker, as a living personification of Bottom, cannot die. *Invulnerability* is a side effect of Bottom being an enchanted mix of real man and fictional character.

A side effect (that Bottom often rues) is that he just doesn't get as drunk on mortal beer, wine, or spirits as he once could. *Super-Strength* comes from Bottom being half-man, half-jackass. He has a punch like a donkey's kick and is stronger than your average out-of-work thespian. (Hey, it's not exactly the Minotaur, but you take what you get.)

How to Use Bottom in Your Game

Aside from serving as a member of The Fantastics, Bottom can come into play in a variety of settings. Any action taking place in a pub anywhere in the British Isles (or anywhere Arsenal or the English national cricket team are playing) can feature Bottom as a face in the crowd. And naturally if the characters decide to visit the Golden Ass, Bottom might be about. He'll also take a personal interest in getting involved in stopping hooliganism or gang activity in poorer London neighborhoods if asked by the residents, much to the irritation of the local constabulary.

Elizabeth Faulkner, a.k.a. "Motif"

Background Synopsis: The silver spoon she was born with couldn't satisfy Elizabeth's desire to see her design dreams on display for all the world to see. Unfortunately the process was taking longer than she expected, even with family connections and a modicum of talent at putting her ideas into form. While her interior design business struggled she took a job as a set designer for a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, hoping to impress potential clients with her dazzling vision. When mystic hijinks broke out at the first dress rehearsal, Elizabeth was hit by a magical beam while trying to save people from the collapsing backdrop. She gained the power to transform objects with the power of her mind. She sees her participation in The Fantastics as part noblesse oblige for the privileges of her upbringing and part continuous public relations campaign promoting her unique artistic vision.

Motivation: Being a champion of justice while showing off her design talents and sense of style for all the world to see

Origin: The Unusual Performance of A Midsummer Night's Dream

Other Aliases: None

Qualities: Good [+2] Set Designer, Good [+2] Interior Designer, Good [+2] Fencer, Good [+2] School Ties from Cambridge, Good [+2] Inherited Family Wealth, Poor [-2] Tries to be a Trendsetter

Powers: Expert [+4] Transformation, Good [+2] Super-Senses

Stunts: *Disarming Style* [Signature Stunt of Transformation, Turns Guns or other Weapons into Something Else, Good [+2], 1 HP], *Aesthetic Super-Sense* (Spin-off stunt of Super-Senses, Average [+0]), *That's a Wrap*, (Signature Stunt of Transformation, Entangles Target in bonds with Good [+2] bonus to Transformation, 1 HP), *Wall of Wonder*, (Signature Stunt of Transformation, Creates Large Wall that acts as Super Armor, Good [+2], 1 HP)

Hero Point Pool: 5/10

Miscellany: *School Ties from Cambridge* deals with the good social connections Elizabeth made during her college days. She's on good terms with several dons at the university and a range of talented people, mainly from the upper class social set or the humanities. *Inherited Family Wealth* reflects her status as a member of the landed gentry, with an uncle once serving in the House of Lords. She's not filthy rich (well, she is now, but not from family funds) but she knows how and where to spend money.

Transformation is the realization of Motif's deepest dream: the ability to create and shape matter to exactly the image she has in her mind. It only works on objects, not living beings, with one exception; plants are included as objects *unless* they are sentient, in which case they count as animals. Motif never creates anything mundane with this power. If the situation calls for a large barrier, she creates a backdrop straight out of some blockbuster Broadway play or a high-end restaurant. She binds people with chains wrapped in fine satin and silks in a color scheme that sets off their costumes. This is basically just a

special effect that encourages entertaining description *unless* the GM or player decides that a simple creation is the goal. Then Motif suffers at least one downshift (and cannot use any Stunts) as she struggles to create something plain and *boring*. *Super Senses* reflect Motif's heightened normal senses, which give her excellent perception of her environment and cause her to send back every other meal she orders at the finest restaurants in Europe. *Aesthetic Super Sense* is a stunt that allows Motif to perceive the aesthetic qualities of a person, object or environment. Any flaws in the design will stand out. This is sometimes useful for finding hidden doorways or spotting the doppelganger in the crowd.

How to Use Motif in Your Game

When not working directly with the other members of The Fantastics, Motif is a regular at museum shows, art galleries, and architectural unveilings around the world. She could play a role as an NPC if dastardly deeds take place at any of those venues (as if *that* would ever happen). She also has a profitable sideline designing superhero costumes in Europe and is eager to expand to America, particularly Hollywood.

Callista Messing, a.k.a. "Robin Goodfellow"

Background Synopsis: Callista was always pretty in an androgynous, waifish sort of way. Her sharp wit and sarcasm arose in part as a reaction to always being treated as cute. She had a critically praised but not popularly successful career as an angry standup comedian before being cast out of the blue by a smitten producer as Robin in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The mystic storm that took place during dress rehearsal changed Callista into a living version of her faerie character. But in the process she became an androgynous, waifish male . . . capable of shapechanging into female form (or male for that matter) that didn't have to be waifish. . . . As a result

Callista was more confused (and confusing to others) than ever before. Robin's unique appearance and ability to change himself/herself to match the look desired by fashion photographers for any shoot soon gained the new star a modeling contract, which he/she routinely mocks. (But having money versus being poor is nice.) Robin also does limited one man/woman standup shows now to packed audiences. Whether he/she wants to or not, simply being a human-faerie-fictional character hybrid makes Robin a weirdness magnet, and thus his/her participation in The Fantastics is part necessity, part satisfaction at being able to do more than just make fun of the people who piss him/her off.

Motivation: Figuring out her own identity, being mischievous and witty, taking advantage of fame, protecting people too stupid to know any better from bullies too arrogant or evil to know any better

Origin: The Unusual Rehearsal of A Midsummer Night's Dream

Other Aliases: The Faerie

Qualities: Expert [+4] Clever Wit, Good [+2] Supermodel, Good [+2] Gay Rights Activist, Good [+2] Hanging with the Jet Set, Poor [-2] Unsure of Own Gender Identity

Powers: Good [+2] Shapeshifting, Good [+2] Dream Magick, Average [+0] Immortality, Average [+0] Invulnerability

Stunts: See **Miscellany** for more details.

Hero Point Pool: 5/10

Miscellany: *Clever Wit* is Robin's standup comedy talent as well as a general off-the-cuff ability to make shrewd, penetrating observations on life. *Supermodel* is, as Robin would be the first to admit, entirely a byproduct of his/her powers; the hero spends half the time at any shoot openly mocking the fashion industry. *Gay Rights Activist* comes from Robin's own confused gender identity and the realization that fame provides a platform to speak out for others who don't fit in. *Hanging with the Jet Set* is a perk of fame and the inexplicable desire of the rich and famous to be insulted by someone equally rich and famous. It's a guilty pleasure that has given Robin some insight on the

hot spots to be seen in, what to wear, and who to talk to about acquiring the finer things in life.

Shapeshifting is just what it sounds like, Robin's ability to transform into different living creatures. All the shapes he/she assumes have violet eyes and are bound by the following limitations: can only assume a shape once per day and can only maintain an animal shape for two scenes before suffering downshifts to all qualities involving the mind or social skills. He/she can also assume male or female human forms. *Dream Magick* is a limited Meta-Power whose use typically involves burning Hero Points and/or some ritual restrictions to bring the power to a useful level. Robin can put people to sleep, see into people's dreams, pull objects *out* of someone's dreams, and even enter people's dreams. *Immortality* and *Invulnerability* have the same basis for Robin as for Bottom: he/she is a quasi-fictional character who cannot die as long as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is being performed somewhere in the world and who is immune to mundane damage. In Robin's case, however, the *Invulnerability* does not extend to attacks made with cold iron in any form.

How to Use Robin in Your Game

Outside of the ranks of the Fantastics, Robin can play a part in any character's social subplots. His/her unusual gender status and supermodel role can lead to humorous confusion and hijinks in the hands of the right GM and players. Robin is also gaining a growing role as a supporter of gay rights. Otherwise Robin is likely to become inadvertently drawn to mystical events involving the faerie on Earth.

Tommy Pendleton, a.k.a. "Tommy Shade"

Background Synopsis: A quiet, struggling puppeteer working as a stagehand at a new production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Tommy Pendleton was struck by mystic energies as he hid in his all-black outfit in the shadows of the curtain. He was transformed into

a magical Master of Shadows, able to bend shadow stuff to his will and even become a living shadow. Thus he became Tommy Shade, political satirist and hero who fights weird enemies alongside the others transformed on that fateful day into The Fantastics.

Motivation: Coming out of his shell while championing the cause of the underdog and the helpless

Origin: The Unusual Rehearsal of A Midsummer Night's Dream

Other Aliases: Slim Shady, The Puppeteer

Qualities: Expert [+4] Puppeteer, Good [+2] Stagehand, Good [+2] Political Science, Good [+2] In Love with Lakshmi Chakravorty, Poor [-2] Tempted by the Darkness

Powers: Master [+6] of Shadows

Stunts: Bring the Gang (Signature Stunt of Master of Shadows, lets Tommy teleport several other people with him when Stepping Between Shadows at Good [+2] Rank, 2 HP); Afraid of the Dark (Spin Off Stunt of Master of Shadows that surrounds targets in inky shadows that cause panic attacks, Good [+2] Rank, 1 HP)

Hero Point Pool: 5/10

Miscellany: *Puppeteer* is just what it sounds like. It helps Tommy when animating shadow creatures as well as with more mundane aspects of the puppeteer's craft. Combined with his *Political Science* degree, it also makes his popular political satire shadow plays possible. *Stagehand* reflects Tommy's knowledge of stagecraft, the ins and outs of setting up and tearing down sets, the basics of blocking and positioning, and the ability to deal with the demands of prima donnas. *In Love with Lakshmi Chakravorty* is Tommy's mutual infatuation with the superhero also known as Bri. It grounds him and can motivate him to get out of a funk. Such bouts of depression or introspection are part and parcel of his *Tempted by Shadows* weakness, which comes from the lure that the simple, pure, peaceful darkness of the shadow realm holds in comparison to the crazy, bright, loud everyday world.

Master of Shadows is Tommy's Meta-Power, which allows him to manipulate the stuff of shadows and even transform himself into a

living shadow being. It allows a variety of stunts at Good [+2] rank. *Shadow Form* turns Tommy into a living shadow, a two-dimensional being that can twist itself around incoming attacks (treat as Good [+2] Super Armor), slip through narrow openings, and move along walls and ceilings with ease. At the same time he gains a *Vulnerability to Intense Light* (more than a flashlight, but a stage spotlight or signal flare would count, for example) while in Shadow Form. Tommy can use his other stunts whether in Shadow Form or not. *Call the Darkness* blacks out an area of variable size within sight of Tommy with a supernatural darkness that blocks sight on the super scale. *Step Between Shadows* allows Tommy to teleport himself between patches of shadow. *Shadow Puppets* lets Tommy animate shadows into tangible beings that obey his commands. As a result of his mystic powers, Tommy has an aversion to bright light and regularly wears dark sunglasses. He has also attracted the attention of certain nefarious *Supernatural Enemies* who want to steal or otherwise abuse his shadow powers for their own dark ends.

How to Use Tommy Shade in Your Game

Individually, Tommy can be drawn into any sort of plot involving politics and protest, as he regularly performs his shadow plays at rallies around the world. He's a strong supporter of both Amnesty International and the anti-globalization movement. In the past he's helped liberate political radicals from oppressive regimes, sometimes with the help of his girlfriend, Bri. Though not a superhuman supremacist, he's also sympathetic to any mistreatment of superhumans by bigots or governments.

Lakshmi Chakravorty, a.k.a. "Bri"

Background Synopsis: While not formally a member of the team, Lakshmi's close personal relationship with Tommy Shade means that she often shows up to assist The Fantastics with challenges. A former medical researcher and astronaut, she's one of the survivors of the

infamous Saratoga international space station disaster. During that crisis Lakshmi found herself pulled in a dozen directions at once, trying to preserve experiments, secure floating debris, and tend to the minor injuries of her crewmembers. Suddenly multiple glowing arms burst from her body and began putting everything in order. Like the other crewmembers she found herself lauded as a hero upon her arrival home. With typical dry wit she adopted the moniker "Bri," short for Briareus, one of the hundred-handed monsters who battled the Olympians in Greek myth. Changed by her near-death experience and ensuing empowerment, Bri shrugged off offers to join Canada's national superhuman team or shill for international pharmaceutical companies. Instead she began traveling the world, seeking enlightenment while helping the helpless. Along the way she met Tommy Shade and fell in love. The other members of The Fantastics have learned to appreciate her blend of philosophical and scientific input into the unusual events they often face.

Motivation: Seeking spiritual enlightenment and new experiences while using her powers responsibly to help the less fortunate

Origin: The Saratoga Seven Incident

Other Aliases: Doctor Handy, The Octopus

Qualities: Expert [+4] Medical Researcher, Good [+2] Philosopher, Good [+2] Genius, Good [+2] In Love with Tommy Shade, Poor [-2] Still Too Critical of Herself

Powers: Master [+6] "100 Psychic Hands"

Stunts: See **Miscellany** for more details.

Hero Point Pool: 5/10

Miscellany: *In Love with Tommy Shade* reflects her serious relationship with the quiet heartthrob of the Fantastics. Although not an "official" member of the team in terms of its charter and legal documents, Bri is essentially on permanent retainer with the group and accompanies it (and Tommy) on most serious adventures.

100 Psychic Hands is Bri's Meta-Power; it's an unusual manifestation of telekinesis. She literally manifests arms and hands

made of glowing, translucent psychic energy when she wants to move objects around her. Typically she produces at least half a dozen of these psychic limbs at a time—those that aren't immediately occupied wave about in a hypnotic sort of dance. The more limbs she brings to bear, the greater their physical strength. She can elongate all of these psychic arms to anywhere within visual distance. Bri has developed a variety of stunts with her power, all at a Rank of Good [+2]. These include *Super-Strength*, *Super-Armor* (she interposes one or more arms in the path of an attack—they often seem to shatter into glowing shards, only to be immediately replaced), *Super-Reflexes* (which acts just as the Extra Actions element of Superspeed), and a form of *Super-Movement* in which she crawls, jumps, and swings along using multiple limbs. Recently she has developed a stunt allowing her to reach her psychic hands "through" transparent barriers to manipulate objects on the other side. *Limitations* to her power include *Random Manifestations* when she is emotionally distraught, which take the form of phantom limbs materializing around her and fidgeting or cleaning up the area she's in. Also, for unknown reasons her power is more susceptible to disruption than it should be: the Master Power [+6] defends against Power neutralizing effects as if it were of Expert [+4] Rank.

How to Use Bri in Your Game

Outside of The Fantastics, Bri can come into play whenever the heroes might need to encounter a wandering do-gooder. She's particularly likely to appear along the Pacific Rim, specifically Southeast Asia or Latin America. Bri is also likely to question the hero's motives and plans in a friendly but persistent manner if they aren't looking at the big picture.

Relationship Chart for the Fantastics					
PERSON	How they Feel About				
	Bottom	Motif	Robin	Tommy	Bri
Bottom		Full of herself; Powers not too reliable; Tries too hard; Good heart.	Strange bloke; wicked funny; Dislikes the right people; Unafraid to speak mind; Creepy shapechanging; Got some anger control issues	Nice kid; Bit too quiet; Little naïve, idealistic; Nerves of steel; Reliable; Powers a bit scary to watch	Smart; Spacey; Decent; Good in a fight
Motif	Often crude & boorish; Unexpectedly charming; Very tough; Has potential; need to listen more		Should enjoy fame more; Doesn't appreciate fine style; Blunt; Wears heart on sleeve; Can trust with a secret	Passive aggressive; Noble; Wants to be Galahad	Lives in a world I've never been to; Nice; Good listener
Robin	Tough guy with heart of gold; Makes me laugh; A rock	Annoying; Wants to impress the wrong people; Under-estimates her true potential		Hides his anger behind art; Has good instincts; Won't let you down	A real person; A nice change of pace; A trustworthy human being
Tommy	Doesn't try hard enough to make a difference; Will never let his friends down	So much mis-directed effort; So much talent hidden inside	Anger is sometimes the easy way out; Fiery and full of life		The wisest person I've ever met; A soul-mate
Bri	Funny and bawdy	Needs to look for her own answers	Trying so hard to find his/her way	A gentle and beautiful soul in a violent world	

Rogue's Gallery

You can't have a credible superteam without a cast of foes ready to make repeat appearances. Here are a few bad guys and girls to give The Fantastics or your own super heroes a bit of grief.

Solo Villains

These bad guys tend to operate all on their lonesome or as leaders or villains-for-hire in teams that have rotating memberships.

Maurice Idle, a.k.a. "Richard Iago Macbeth"

Background Synopsis: Maurice Idle was a bitter and effete orphaned bookworm whose love of English literature, Shakespeare's histories and tragedies in particular, was balanced only by his disgust for popular culture. Still working on his magnum opus thesis on Shakespearean villainy, the graduate student happened to be in the seats at the rehearsal of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (his soon-to-be ex-girlfriend with a bit part had invited him there for the breakup) when the mystic tempest was unleashed. Maurice was infused with the spirits of the Shakespearean villains he had long not-so-secretly admired for their ruthlessness, brilliance, and evil cunning. On the surface nothing seemed to change at first. But suddenly all his wealthy, elderly relatives died off and to everyone's shock left their considerable belongings to Maurice. Soon he was moving with increasing confidence through the dinner rooms of polite society and the halls of power. As Macbeth he could finally make his mark on the world, destroying the symbols of pop culture he despised, undermining the annoyingly noble people he could never live up to, and demonstrating his own brilliance while accumulating power. Life is good.

Motivation: Amassing power in style while exposing the banality of pop culture and tormenting the good and noble for being so insufferable

Origin: The Unusual Rehearsal of A Midsummer Night's Dream

Other Aliases: Richard, Iago, Mr. Black

Qualities: Master [+6] Evil Mastermind, Expert [+4] Manipulator, Expert [+4] Rich Bastard, Good [+2] Minions, Good [+2] English Literature, Poor [-2] Obsessed with Humiliating the Fantastics, Poor [-2] Given to Monologuing

Powers: Average [+0] Immortality, Good [+2] Invulnerability, Intense Training [Replaces 3 Average Powers, 12 Extra Quality points to spend]

Stunts: *Mesmerize Fools* (Signature Stunt of Manipulator Quality, Acts as limited Mind Control [Must have eye contact and target must be able to hear his voice], Good [+2] Rank, 1 HP), *I Know Your Achilles Heel* (Signature Stunt of Evil Macbeth Quality, acts as limited Power or Quality Neutralization [One use per scene *except against The Fantastics*, where there is no limit on uses per scene], Expert [+4] Rank, 2 HP)

Hero Point Pool: 5/10

Miscellany: *Evil Mastermind* is a catch-all quality that sums up Macbeth's overall brilliance at being an evil leader and strategic plotter against the forces of truth and justice. It helps with things like acquiring illegal technology, brokering for the services of other supervillains, keeping minions in line, always having a convenient backup/escape plan a Hero Point or two away, and generally ensuring that people pay attention to his threats, by damn. *Master Manipulator* is his gift for twisting people around his finger, even those who by all rights should find him repulsive. It's great for facilitating blackmail, duping the weak-minded, and convincing the stronger willed that they are really serving their own interests when they are really acting as his pawns. *Rich Bastard* shows that Macbeth has money, knows how to spend, and more importantly, knows how to spend it in such a way to maximize screwing over other people. *Minions* are his lackeys and lieutenants, all of whom are kept in his thrall using his Manipulation power rather than through simple brute-force threats or fear. Though

fear is involved as well—best to be loved and feared, after all. They help carry out his plans, but for heavy assignments he often brings in outside supervillain help. If they end up in jail, so be it. Note that so far Macbeth has used his talents to keep any of his former super employees from coming after him for revenge. So far. *English Literature* is left over from Macbeth's former life and personality, but still influences him to some degree in his choice of quotes (and he uses a lot) and in his large rare book collection. Macbeth's *Obsession* with the Fantastics means that given the choice between causing them misery and carrying out a perfectly good plan uninterrupted, he's got to struggle mightily to avoid giving them the grief. *Monologuing* simply means that Macbeth has an inner need for people to know how damn smart he is, even if it means giving away valuable information at times.

Macbeth is *Immortal* and *Invulnerable* for the same reason Bottom and Robin are: he's part fictional character, and as long as the Shakespearean villains who are a part of him still live on in the theater, he can't be killed. He's a bit more robust as he's a composite of multiple characters that tend to generate a lot of passion in actors and audiences. *Mesmerize Fools* is Macbeth's potent hypnotic talent, limited by the need to be close enough for direct eye contact and spoken words to be clearly heard. *Achilles Heel* reflects his gift for collecting and analyzing knowledge about potential enemies and brainstorming creative ways to screw them over.

How to Use Macbeth in Your Game

The most important thing to remember about Richard Iago Macbeth is that he isn't Doctor Doom. He's not even really Lex Luthor, although that's closer. And monologuing accepted, he's not a camp villain (though you can play him that way). When you play Macbeth, you should ideally think Ian McKellan playing Richard III or Bob Hopkins playing Iago—arrogant, bold, devious, and determined. He delights in the chaos and suffering he causes. He doesn't build super gadgets—if he needs those he buys them or steals them or blackmails someone else into making

them for him. His methods are similar to those of Ozymandias in *The Watchmen* or The Mist (the female version) in *Starman*—he attacks targets from every angle, plans ahead, doesn't fight fair if he can help it, and doesn't question his own motivations or goals very much. He enjoys being who and what he is for the simple sake of proving it can be done.

Your players could cross paths with Macbeth by stumbling across one aspect of a larger plot, usually involving thefts of rare items of some sort. Or a friend (or a player character) could be on the end of a blackmail scheme designed to enlist their help to complete a difficult challenge. The thing to remember is, when Macbeth gets directly involved, it always becomes personal, at least to his targets, who will find themselves assaulted from all angles. Nothing and no one is off limits. That being said, Macbeth takes much more pleasure in tormenting heroes than in simply killing them, because suffering creates passion and tragedy and ultimately greater stories, and Macbeth is all about becoming the most important—at the very least the most memorable—character in the greatest epic his mind can devise. He was just made that way.

Bernie “Horrowshow” Capp

Background Synopsis: Small-time hood Bernie Capp stumbled across a collection of old horror movie film reels in a storage bin beneath the alchemical stash of sorcerous villain Mr. Mercury. Mystic chemicals had leaked onto the celluloid and an old projector, making it possible to bring the monsters in the films to life in the real world when played on that projector. Bernie soon turned the London crime scene upside-down with his superhuman black and white musclemen who left no understandable forensic evidence behind, gaining his moniker “Horrowshow” in the process.

Motivation: Be the biggest mobster in London, take no crap from anybody, protect the secret of the film reels

Qualities: Expert [+4] Mobster, Good [+2] Occult Lore, Good [+2] Scary Bastard, Good [+2] Football Fan, Poor [-2] Overreacts if He Thinks People Aren't Taking Him Seriously

Powers: Master [+6] Summoning Film Reel Monsters

Stunts: *See Miscellany below for more Details*

Hero Point Pool: 5/10

Miscellany: *Mobster* reflects Bernie's growing skill at running his territory and expanding his business interests. *Occult Lore* involves his recent efforts to understand the process that animates his monsters so he can apply the effect to more films. *Scary Bastard* and *Overreacts* tie together—Bernie is more than a little nuts. Think of him as a Cockney Joe Pesci from *Goodfellas*.

Summoning Film Reel Monsters is a Meta-Power. Currently Bernie has four film monsters available: Dracula, the Frankenstein Monster, the Mummy, and the Wolfman. Each of these is treated as a separate *Super-Sidekick* with appropriate super-powers and limitations/vulnerabilities. In addition, none of them can exist for longer than 8 hours or two scenes with characters, whichever is less, and all can be destroyed if their original film reel is destroyed. Bernie tends not to activate more than one at a time because his control slips the more there are. He relies most heavily on the Frankenstein Monster and The Wolfman—Dracula and the Mummy are a little too smart and independent-minded for his tastes.

Wallace "Wordsmith" Russell

Background Synopsis: Russell delved deep into the dead Gothic tongues as part of his degree studies in classical languages. Unfortunately for him, he came across a few scraps of text copied from the Gothic Necronomicon and went slowly insane as he deciphered them. At the same time he gained a startling insight into the secrets of rune magic. His first crimes were little more than real world experiments to test his theories. The death and mayhem that resulted was simply a necessary side effect in his view. Sadly

the ignorant masses and authorities didn't see things that way. Prison didn't hold him for long and he soon became a fixture in the supercriminal underworld, where at least people didn't judge him for his strange obsessions, one of which is getting revenge on Motif for besting him in public with her silly parlor tricks. He's also desperate to capture and experiment upon Bottom and Robin Goodfellow in the hopes of learning the secrets of their literary-based immortality. If he can solve that, he can offer his own text-based immortality to powerful figures in exchange for their plaudits and fortunes.

Motivation: Test new words and arcane grammatical structures on an unappreciative world, accumulate more occult lore, get revenge on anyone who has slighted him

Qualities: Master [+6] Linguist, Expert [+4] Occult Lore, Poor [-2]
Deals with Secrets Man Was Not Meant to Know

Powers: Master [+6] Runic Transformations

Stunts: *See Miscellany below for more Details*

Hero Point Pool: 5/10

Miscellany: *Linguist* is Wordsmith's innate and learned mastery of language in its many forms. He knows many languages and is a master grammarian—so watch out! *Occult Lore* is his study of Secrets Man Was Not Meant to Know, an area of knowledge that leads directly to his weakness—he's lost a significant chunk of his sanity and with it the innate sense of when he's going too far in his pursuit of arcane knowledge that normal people possess. He's unlikely to learn from any mistakes that arise as a result of his obsessions, no matter how dangerous those errors are to himself or others.

Runic Transformations is a Meta-Power. Wordsmith can transform any object or being into any other object or being with some restrictions. First, he has to know the proper letters, words, or phrases for the target's original state and its intended form. Second, he has to somehow inscribe those necessary symbols onto the target—in the past he's used ink, paint, acid, an unfortunately dull knife, and so on. This second restriction can be eased slightly by downshifting the

power at the GM's discretion. Getting a person to don a garment bearing the necessary symbols would work at a downshift of 1, for example, while projecting the necessary symbols onto the target via a laser hologram (which Wordsmith once did to a bank) would downshift by 2, etc. The duration of transformations can be increased by spending Hero Points. One of Wordsmith's dreams to derive or discover the conjugation that will make his transformations permanent. The exact affect of any given transformation should be worked out by the GM based on the Intensity of the power level used and the needs of plot and drama.

Danse Macabre

This team of French supervillains has made a name for themselves across Europe and are just waiting for a breakout "performance" in the States. They are natural rivals of The Fantastics and have serious axes to grind with that British superteam. The reasons why Danse Macabre exists can be summed up thusly: arrogance, boredom, and a love of cruel humor. The core of the team—i.e., the brains and drive—are Madame Noir and the Gargoyle. These two share a relationship much like that of Valmont and the Marquise de Merteuil in *Dangerous Liaisons*. They love to manipulate other people and indulge their own sense of superiority. Le Fantom is a bit less wantonly cruel but even more obsessed with his own status as the best in his field. The group engages in a wide variety of criminal activities, foremost being burglary, blackmail, kidnapping, robbery, and vandalism. They love to steal or deface valuable pieces of artwork and rare relics. Equally popular is the kidnapping and humiliation of people, typically political or business leaders, whom they don't like. If they can cause chaos in style while drawing attention to themselves, they do so. Their acts of vandalism and mayhem often include pieces of "performance art" with references so obscure that French intellectuals argue about them for weeks afterwards. Danse Macabre is extremely good at what they do

and can be very frustrating opponents. At the same time the fact that they clearly aren't out to destroy the world or even rule it can put them on the back burner of threats faced by experienced super teams, which leaves the second tier or neophyte heroes to clean up the mess.

Marie Moncey, a.k.a. "Madame Noir"

Background Synopsis: Marie Moncey belonged to that class of old French aristocracy long on class and culture but increasingly short on money. She grew up well-educated, polished, and bored. Her frustrations were fueled by her lack of respect for the crass people around her who seemed to be getting ahead and her own embarrassment at her family's growing struggles to keep up with the luxury lifestyles of their peers. In college she became the lover of a brilliant intellectual who also dabbled in the occult. The exact details of what followed are murky at best, but suffice it to say that he changed his will to make her the sole beneficiary and died soon afterward under suspicious circumstances. The officials handling the case cleared young Marie of any involvement in spite of a cursory investigation. Thus did Ms. Moncey step out of her staid upper crust existence and into the role she was born to play, Madame Noir, mistress of lesser mortals and master of the dark places inside every person's soul. At first she rarely acted in public, content to manipulate people and events behind the scenes. But life was once again becoming dangerously boring. When Jean Luc Rousseau ran across one of her little extortion schemes, the two hit it off immediately. Why not combine their abilities and their interests to make a spectacular impact on Europe? Thus was the Danse Macabre born.

Motivation: Test new words and arcane grammatical structures on an unappreciative world, accumulate more occult lore, get revenge on anyone who has slighted him

Qualities: Expert [+4] Minions, Expert [+4] One of the European Jet Set, Good [+2] Strategic Planning, Poor [-2] Singer

Powers: Master [+6] Mind Control

Stunts: *Clouding Weak Minds*, [Spin-Off Stunt of Mind Control, provides Good [+2] Invisibility against living beings only, 0 HP], *Don't Fight Your Dark Side*, [Signature Stunt for Mind Control, Causes a Person to act on their most sordid or unsavory desires, Good [+2], 1 HP], *Just Sign This Document*, [Signature Stunt of Mind Control/Jet Set Quality, allows a Good [+2] bonus to any *Jet Set* roll to acquire money, services, or goods, 1 HP], *Thralls to Me!* [Spin-off Stunt for Mind Control, allows a Good [+2] Armor-style roll to avoid attacks by interposing mind-controlled subjects, 0 HP]

Hero Point Pool: 5/10

Miscellany: *Minions* reflects the many toadies and servants that Noir always surrounds herself with, the better to live the lifestyle to which she is accustomed. These people can help carrying out the mundane aspects of plans and inadvertently assist in combat (see below), but they aren't trained mercenaries. People like that typically don't know how to keep a household in proper running order. *One of the European Jet Set* describes Noir's close ties with the rich and famous in European social circles. Even some people who know or suspect her criminal activity understand that she is someone *important* to be seen with and make a point of inviting her. She repays this kindness by only stealing from them without their knowledge. *Strategic Planning* reflects Noir's willingness to think long term when it comes to getting what she wants. *Poor Singer* is an unfortunate reality—Noir has an awful voice despite years of schooling. She is still bitter about this and sometimes forces people to listen to her serenade them and then shower her with applause.

Mind Control is Noir's potent core power. While she can command a target to do anything, Noir excels at unleashing the base instincts and desires within a person, hence her signature stunt *Don't Fight Your Dark Side*. With *Thralls to Me!* Noir can also defend herself or nearby

allies with her power as long as she has sufficient Minions or mind-controlled subjects nearby—she simply commands them to interpose themselves between her and any attacks. (GM fiat—based on campaign tone—as to whether these pawns get blown to bits or simply throw off other's aim and such.) *Noir* routinely uses her combination of social connections and mental powers to acquire loads of cash, property, and luxury items “on loan” from unwitting acquaintances via *Just Sign This Document*.

Jean Luc Rousseau, a.k.a. “Gargoyle”

Background Synopsis: Jean Luc was a brilliant and abrasive cultural critic whose often brutal reviews of art shows or restaurant openings sidetracked many careers. He built a dual reputation as an incorrigible playboy whose charm was matched only by his vanity. So it wasn't surprising when one spring evening a cuckolded husband and a bankrupted chef both decided to kill Jean Luc at the opening of a new art show. The husband was a gadget maker for the criminal black market who intended to petrify Jean Luc with an experimental ray gun and smash him to pieces. The chef planned to beat him to death with one of his restaurant decorations, a small Medieval gargoyle figurine. In the ensuing melee, Jean Luc was hit with the beam while holding the inscribed statuette and turned into a living man of stone. Once he regained his senses he promptly beat both men silly and proclaimed the art show “a pompous disaster,” wrecking the gallery and disappearing into the night. He took the name *Gargoyle* as a mocking commentary on his condition (he's still as handsome as ever, perhaps more so with his smooth marble finish). At first the *Gargoyle* tried his hand in the criminal underworld, but he was aghast at the gross materialism and poor taste of the people he had to work with. Encountering *Madame Noir* was the answer to

his secret prayers, the inspiration to do something truly innovative and bold in the world of crime.

Motivation: Teach the art world that you still know best, humiliate uncultured peons and superhumans, accumulate power while basking the fear of those less worthy than you, regain full sensory impressions

Qualities: Expert [+4] Climber, Expert [+4] Feared Art & Food Critic, Good [+2] Stealth, Poor [-2] Can't Swim, Poor [-2] Limited Sense of Smell, Taste, and Touch

Powers: Good [+2] Super-Armor, Good [+2] Transformation, Average [+0] Super-Strength, Average [+0] Adaptability

Stunts: *Hideous Disfigurement* [Signature Stunt of Transformation, Twists a person's physical form in some fashion that leaves them ugly and partially disabled, Good [+2], 2 HP], "*You Look Just Like . . .*" [Signature Stunt of Transformation, Make someone look just like someone else, Good [+2], 2HP],

Hero Point Pool: 5/10

Miscellany: *Climber* is just that—great skill at scaling any sort of landmarks. *Feared Art Critic* is left over from Gargoyle's past as a feared tastemaker and career breaker in the world of art. It is maintained by his diligent efforts to stay abreast of current trends and his tendency to wreak terrible havoc on artists, galleries, and museums he does not respect. For a man made of stone, Gargoyle is very light on his feet, hence the *Stealth* quality. Unfortunately he also sinks like a, er, a stone. Plus his marble-smooth exterior dulls his senses of taste, touch, and smell. This is a kind of living hell for an elitist Frenchman and former gourmand.

Super-Armor is a side effect of being made out of living stone. So are *Super-Strength* and *Adaptability*. *Transformation* is Gargoyle's ability to warp the flesh of living beings with his touch. His two main stunts with this power are to disfigure and cripple an opponent or to create temporary doppelgangers. He uses the first power as a means of humiliating and punishing his enemies or those he simply wants to

torment. He uses the second to assist the Danse Macabre with the insertion of spies into various locations and to provide himself with a parade of celebrity look-alike lovers.

Vicomte Sebastien Poirrot, a.k.a. "Le Fantom"

Background Synopsis: The Vicomte was wealthy, bored, and talented.

First he turned his interests to competition, becoming a gifted pentathlete in the tradition of a true courtier. But those victories rang hollow, for he knew the best athletes were not choosing that sport and there was little recognition. So he chose a more dangerous pursuit, studying the arts of the thief. He became quite good at his chosen vocation, until the day when he robbed a supercriminal whose strange technologies were too much for Sebastien's skill to overcome. The villain thought he had a potential recruit, and subjected Sebastien to experiments designed to heighten his criminal talents to superhuman levels. But the man didn't take into account Sebastien's pride. He was furious that his would-be "benefactor" had made things too easy. With his new talents he easily escaped, destroyed the villain's facility, and returned home to mope. Even when he returned to crime, word had gotten out that he now had powers, and no one believed that he was committing his crimes without using them. He began to drink and gamble heavily, letting himself go. It was in this state that Madame Noir, a member of his social circle, contacted him with an offer to return to the game in glorious fashion.

Motivation: Be the best, do it in style, make sure everyone knows it but can't prove it or can't make it stick (think the obnoxious French cat-burglar played by Vincent Cassell in *Ocean's Twelve*)

Qualities: Master [+6] Cat Burglar, Expert [+4] Pentathlete, Expert [+2] Rich Dilettante, Good [+2] Taunting, Poor [-2] Obsessed with Being the World's Best Thief

Powers: Good [+2] Invisibility, Good [+2] Phasing, Intensive Training [1 Good Power adds +6 Quality Points]

Stunts: *Feel My Blade* [Signature Stunt of Phasing/Pentathlete, Good [+2], 2 HP], *Snatch the Pebble* [Spin Off Stunt of Phasing, Average [+0], 1 HP], *Watch Your Step* [Signature Stunt of Phasing/Taunting, Good [+2], 2 HP]

Hero Point Pool: 5/10

Miscellany: *Cat Burglar* is a catch-all Quality that covers all the elements of being a master second-story man—the acrobatics, climbing, planning, and knowledge of security systems. *Fencer* covers all the skills—running, swimming, riding, shooting, and fencing—that a gifted pentathlete must master. *Rich Dilettante* deals with Sebastien's experience with wealth and his wide-ranging knowledge of useless trivia that a bored rich guy might pick up on his travels.

Downshifts here and there for plausible activities are appropriate. For example, Sebastien is a decent gambler but thinks he's better than he is—of course, he can just rob the house later if he feels he's been cheated. Just for the principle of the thing. *Taunting* is his knack for getting under people's skin.

Le Fantom can assume a ghostly form via his *Invisibility* and his *Phasing* powers. In combination the two make him aggravatingly hard to hit and hurt, a fact he uses to good effect alongside his *Taunting* with his *Watch Your Step* stunt. This basically involves him making someone look silly and driving them nuts in the process (in game terms it adds to his Taunting roll). He can also phase a sword or knife, stick it into an opponent, and release it to let it phase back into reality, causing serious damage. This is his *Feel My Blade* stunt, and it adds to the fencing aspect of his Pentathlete Quality and converts the normal blade damage to super scale damage. Note that he has to lose the weapon in the process to perform the stunt. Finally, *Snatch the Pebble* allows him to phase through a barrier, partially solidify his fingers, grab something, and then phase it back through the barrier. This is obviously a challenging feat. Note that *Le Fantom* is loathe to use any

of his powers when dealing with mundane opposition, to the point that he has been (briefly) apprehended in the past by the police because he was sure he could get away with his skills alone.