

ALTERNITY

# ACTION CHECK

ONLINE + MAGAZINE

STAR\*DRIVE

GAMMA WORLD

STARCRAFT



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## GENCON (or, There and Back Again)

Once again this year I'm going to GENCON. As a member of the RPGA it's commonly thought by the masses that I must attend a convention a month throughout the year to make my membership work, but that's not true. In fact with the odd exception once every two years or so I only attend one other, ShoreCon here in New Jersey. My first GENCON experience was in 1990, and as folks there can attest to, it's the biggest and the best. I've gone every even numbered year since 1994 and it never fails to impress me. So, what about it?

Well, some folks go for the games. Actually, MOST folks go for the games, but then there's my wife and me. We game constantly. We've been playing D&D every Friday since 1989, and on Sundays we have different open Alternity nights. Some might even say we game too much, so we don't look to "game till we die" at GENCON, we go there to learn lore, mingle, and seek treasure.

Learn Lore? Yep. I've been gaming since 1980 and my wife since 1981, but I've never come back from GENCON not learning dozens of new tricks, picking up tons of lore, or even just good old-fashioned advice from the pros. Even up to the time three years back when practically my whole game group went and we attended a gaming seminar by Dragonlance co-author Tracey Hickman who taught us to "Kick the damn door in! Take chances; give your PC the life of a hero. Caution is all well and fine, but sometimes just get up and go!" The lore part comes in when you have a truly charismatic speaker (like Hickman) relate fond tales of his own game experiences which can open your eyes to different play styles. Dawn goes so far as to attend the writing seminars each year hosted by magazine editors to hone her skills (she's a regular contributor to Dragon Magazine).

Seek Treasure? One of my favorite pastimes! Whether it's scrounging through the myriad tomes of old games that lurk within the auction room or visiting the booths of hundreds and hundreds of companies selling their latest wares and handing out free stuff, it's like a trek for lost gold. It's more satisfying than you know to stumble across a missing adventure or sourcebook in an auction for \$5 that you saw on e-bay the week before for \$50. And with distributors being only human (usually) you will find products that your local game store never carried and you would have missed otherwise.

I've also managed to gather my own collection of GENCON stories that will live with me for a lifetime. My wife and I once took our 3 month-old daughter Valerie with us one year when we couldn't find a babysitter to take both kids (we got her a chewy fist-sized d20). My friend Cheryl and I walking for miles and miles from a hotel outside Milwaukee to the Convention Center and the lake, our feet so tired they were smoking. Marveling at the 3D starships and props for the then soon-to-be-released Star\*Drive setting. Arguing with my buddies over if we should leave a waitress in a Chinese Restaurant a tip after she spilled ice water over all of us, and leaving the Copper Penny Diner after the owner complained about how there were too many gamers in town.

In a few years GENCON will move to Indiana, which will cut my drive by over 6 hours, so I'm a happy camper, but it won't be Milwaukee. It's a theory of mine that I might not even visit Milwaukee again after 2003 with GENCON not being there, but something tells me that won't hold through retirement; there's too many good memories there!

At conventions (especially local ones), take the time to volunteer to run Alternity games. If you're like me, you've met folks resistant to the system, but once they play they are hooked! Part of keeping Alternity fresh and current is adding new blood, and what better exposure than on the schedules of game convention calendars all over? Alternity offers infinite possibilities when it comes to designing the type of sci-fi game you want to play from Tangents dimensional travel to post-apocalyptic Gamma World, to home-made conversions of Battlestar Galactica and medieval fantasy...let's show them what Alternity's got!

## Action Check Submissions

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# Mutated Plant Heroes

By Neil Spicer

## Mutated Plants for the Altermity Gamma World Game

The latest rules addendum to the Gamma World role-playing game provided the means for creating mutated animal heroes. Those rules were provided in an effort to expand the choices available to players of the game. Nonetheless, one special class of mutants has been neglected in both the new release of Gamma World (5<sup>th</sup> edition) and the supplemental ruleset (Dragon Magazine #272). Here, then, are guidelines for creating your own mutated plant heroes for the Gamma World campaign setting, according to the Altermity game mechanic.

### Species

There are more varieties of plant life than even animal life in almost any locale of the world. Depending on the type of ecosystem in which your Gamemaster decides to set the campaign, a nearly unlimited array of options exist for mutated plants. In general, all mutated plant heroes should fall into one of the species categories listed below (with examples):

- Brush/Shrub: Holly bushes, Azalea plants, and Hedges.
- Flower: Daffodils, Lilies, and Roses.
- Fungi: Mushrooms of any kind.
- Succulent: Aloe Vera and Cactus plants of any kind.
- Tree: Oaks, Pines, Fruit Trees, and Weeping Willows.
- Vine: Ivy, Kudzu, and Creepers of any kind.
- Weed: Brambles, Dandelions, and Grass plants of any kind.

While other options certainly exist, almost any plant fits into these categories. Sometimes, it can be difficult to decide on one or the other, such as the case of

a flowering shrub or a brush-sized bramble. Always consult your Gamemaster to determine the proper categorization of any plant. He should have the final say in the matter.

Your choice from among the options listed above will limit some of your options for a mutated plant character, but it will also open up many others. The Species Notes section at the end of this article will provide a number of species of plants to work with, but you should always feel free to define something that might be missing. Again, work with your Gamemaster during this process. Please note any special characteristics about your chosen species, both from the Species Notes section as well as **Table 1: Mutated Plant Traits**.

### Size and Shape

Despite the size of the base species, all mutated plant characters are a minimum of 1 meter in height. Those types listed as Small in **Table 1** are approximately 1 meter tall; those listed as Medium are between 1.5 and 2.5 meters tall, while those listed as Large are approximately 3 to 4 meters tall. Appropriate penalties to ability scores and movement rates are already part of each base type's attributes on **Table 1**.

All mutated plant heroes are assumed to be generally bipedal and capable of walking erect, though most species don't move at the full normal rate (because of size and/or difficulty in walking). See "Movement" below for more on this. Mutated plants are also assumed to have eyes, ears, and voices, as well as "hands" capable of grasping objects and using tools. At the player's option, the character can be created without the ability to wield tools easily (see "Drawbacks," below).

Table 1: Mutated Plant Traits

Type	Traits	Size	Movement		
			Ground	Fly	Swim
Brush	Improved Durability, Natural Armor	Medium	¾	None	¾
Flower	Pheromones/Blooms, Toxin Intolerance	Small	½	None	½
Fungi	Empathic Shield, Thermal Vision, Light Sensitivity	Small	½	None	½
Succulent	Natural Attack, Environmental Adaptation (arid)	Medium	¾	None	½
Tree	Improved Durability, Natural Armor, Slow Reflexes	Large	Full	None	¾
Vine	Improved Reflexes, Increased Balance	Medium	¾	None	¾
Weed	Improved Durability, Improved Immunity, Toxin Intolerance	Small	½	None	½

Table 2: Mutated Plant Ability Scores

Type	STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIL	PER
Brush	6-14	4-14	6-15	4-12	6-14	4-14
Flower	4-11	6-15	4-12	4-14	4-14	8-16
Fungi	4-12	4-12	6-14	6-15	8-16	4-11
Succulent	6-14	4-14	6-15	4-12	6-14	4-12
Tree	9-16	4-11	6-16	4-12	4-14	4-13
Vine	4-11	8-16	4-13	4-14	4-13	4-14
Weed	4-11	6-16	6-15	4-13	6-15	4-12

Table 3: Plant Mutation Points

Type	Points
Brush	5
Flower	7
Fungi	5
Succulent	4
Tree	7
Vine	5
Weed	6

### Ability Scores

Divide 60 points among the six Abilities – STR, DEX, CON, INT, WIL, and PER – and assign those Ability Scores to your hero. Make sure to arrange them so that your hero abides by the minimum/maximum figures for Ability Scores for its species base type, as given in **Table 2: Mutated Plant Ability Scores**. (Mutations and drawbacks can raise or lower ability scores beyond the listed limits.)

### Mutations

Each mutated plant character has a number of mutation points as listed for its type in **Table 3: Plant Mutation Points**. In some cases, the plant’s particular species might adjust this number up or down. This cannot reduce the character’s starting pool of mutation points below 1 or increase it above 11. Regardless of the character’s total pool of mutation points, remember that no character can have more than 3 Ordinary mutations, 2 Good mutations, or 1 Amazing mutation. Physical mutations should be chosen from the modified table **GW35a: Plant Physical Mutations** in the appendix of this article. Mental mutations can be chosen from **Table GW36** in the Gamma World rulebook.

### Drawbacks

Mutated plants have only 2 points of drawbacks (2 Slight drawbacks or 1 Moderate drawback). These are selected in the same manner as listed in Chapter 4: Mutations in the Gamma World Roleplaying Game.

You can, with the Gamemaster’s approval, select the slight or moderate Poor Manipulation drawback, which greatly restricts the hero’s ability to use its limbs to manipulate objects. The character suffers a

+2 step penalty (+3 for the moderate drawback) to any skill checks requiring manual dexterity. These skills include (but are not necessarily limited to) Athletics-throw, Heavy Weapons, Melee Weapons, Manipulation, Ranged Weapons, Vehicle Operation, Computer Science, Demolitions, Knowledge-first aid, Medical Science-surgery and treatment, Security-set/disarm traps, and Technical Science-invention, juryrig, and repair. (Mutated vine characters cannot select this option.)

You can also, with the Gamemaster’s approval, select the moderate Photodependency drawback, which greatly restricts your hero’s ability to function in total darkness. The mutant requires constant light to remain conscious, and for each hour spent in lighting conditions of Moonlight or worse, it will suffer 1 point of fatigue damage. This damage can be restored by 30 minutes exposure to Daylight, or 5 minutes in Bright Sunlight. (Mutated fungi characters cannot select this option.)

Lastly, you have one other option that you may select at the beginning of character creation, and it is the equivalent of the slight or moderate Environmental Sensitivity drawback. One of the following environments must be selected: hot, cold, wet, or arid. In that particular environment, the mutant operates with a +2 step penalty (+3 for the moderate drawback) to all actions. This penalty is cumulative with any others that may apply. If the slight Environmental Sensitivity drawback is chosen you and later the slight Environmental Sensitivity mutation is again rolled or selected, you may choose to automatically upgrade the previous Environmental Sensitivity to moderate or choose an additional environment that also induces a penalty to its actions.

In addition, all mutated plants, except for flowers, automatically have the Physical Change (major) drawback. Thus, they suffer a +4 step penalty to Personality-based skill checks, as well as any other skill check made to interact with those who might find such “deformities” distasteful. At the Gamemaster’s discretion, the character can reduce or ignore this penalty when dealing with similar species (for in-

stance, a mutated bramble interacting with a mutated rose/thorn bush). If the mutated plant rolls or selects the Physical Change (minor) drawback, select a different drawback instead.

Mutated flowers automatically have the Highly Susceptible to Damage (low-impact) drawback, reflecting their delicate nature. Thus, they suffer an additional 3 points of primary damage from any attack that inflicts low-impact (LI) damage. Secondary damage is not affected by this drawback.

Lastly, all mutated plants sustain themselves in a different manner than animals or humans. Complete nourishment for a day can be achieved by “taking root” in the soil for an hour, during which the mutant cannot move. In addition, a mutated plant needs three hours of bright sunlight, or six hours of dim sunlight, during which time the plant can be completely active. Most artificial lights cannot substitute for sunlight, but extended periods can be endured, accumulating a +1 step penalty to all actions, as well as 1 point of wound damage, for each day spent without the sun. Prolonged periods of this kind of hardship will result in the death of the plant, just as a human would experience if he starved to death. A mutated plant has the same water needs as humans and animals, although it usually obtains this while taking root in the soil. If the plant doesn’t meet these requirements (due to drought, for example), it suffers the same consequences as a loss of sunlight (+1 step penalty/1 point of wound damage per day). Exceptions to these conditions do exist. The fungi species does not require sunlight at all, and the succulent species requires water at only a rate of once every three days, and even then only half as much as other plants. At the player’s option, and at the cost of 1 mutation point, the mutated plant can be declared a carnivorous variety, thereby enabling it to eat meat to sustain itself (though it would still need water). Such a plant would still have the ability to survive off soil, water, and sunlight, giving it an advantage over most other heroes, but its preferred method of feeding would be that of a carnivore.

### Traits

In addition to the mutation points possessed by a mu-

tated plant hero, the “Traits” column in Table 1 includes a number of naturally appearing traits common to mutated plants of each type. Most correspond to the mutation (or drawback) of the same name and are detailed below.

With the Gamemaster’s permission, you can choose for your character to not have one or more of the standard traits. If so, they should be replaced by additional mutation (or drawback) points as appropriate. For instance, a mutated tree that chooses not to have Slow Reflexes would gain back two drawback points. Or, a mutated succulent plant that chooses not to have the Natural Attack mutation would gain back two mutation points.

### Environmental Adaptation

Most mutated plants have a natural sensitivity to the climate of Gamma Terra in one way or another, although some have adapted to shrug off a few of these effects. In the case of a beneficial mutation, this is equivalent to the Environmental Adaptation mutation, which rules out the selection or random generation of an Environmental Sensitivity for the same climate. If you still wish to take an Environmental Sensitivity drawback, you will have to select a different climate than the Environmental Adaptation. For example, a mutated succulent plant hero automatically begins with Environmental Adaptation (arid) and could not select Environmental Sensitivity (arid) as well.



### Empathic Shield

The minds of sentient plants can be very different from those of animals, and for some this trait manifests as a natural mental shield that makes it more difficult to read their emotions and general attitude. This grants certain plants a +1 bonus to their Intelligence and Will resistance modifiers, and a -1 bonus to Resolve skill checks. In addition, a mutated plant with an Empathic Shield is immune to Empathic Scans of all kinds. Mutated fungi naturally have the Empathic Shield trait, even with respect to other plants.

### Improved Durability

Some plants have a natural ability to absorb more damage than usual granting them the equivalent of

the Improved Durability trait. The character receives 3 extra points to their stun rating. If a mutated plant with this trait rolls or selects the Improved Durability mutation, it automatically becomes the Enhanced Durability mutation at no additional cost. If the mutated plant rolls or selects the Enhanced Durability mutation, it becomes the Hyper Durability mutation at the cost of 1 additional mutation point. If the mutated plant rolls or selects the Hyper Durability mutation, it is upgraded to Hyper Durability and one mutation point is regained. Mutated trees and weeds have the Improved Durability trait.

### Improved Immunity

Some plant-stocks began life with a natural hardiness and ability to survive the worst that the elements could throw at them. For mutated plants that are descended from these species, this ability manifests itself as the Improved Immunity mutation, granting them a -2 step bonus to Constitution feat checks to counter the effects of disease, infection, or biological agents. When being treated to heal damage from these causes, the hero providing the treatment to a mutant with this trait receives the same -2 step bonus. If a mutated plant with this trait rolls or selects the Improved Immunity mutation, it becomes the Enhanced Immunity mutation at no additional cost. If the mutated plant rolls or selects the Enhanced Immunity mutation, it becomes the Hyper Immunity mutation at the cost of 1 additional mutation point. If the mutated plant rolls or selects the Hyper Immunity mutation, it becomes Hyper Immunity and one mutation point is regained. Mutated weeds have the Improved Immunity trait.

### Improved Reflexes

Some mutated plants are naturally more mobile than others, able to react faster than normal, and granting them the equivalent of the Improved Reflexes mutation. This grants a -1 step bonus to all action checks. If a mutated plant with this trait rolls or selects the Improved Reflexes mutation, it becomes the Enhanced Reflexes mutation at no additional cost. If the mutated plant rolls or selects the Enhanced Reflexes mutation, it becomes the Hyper Reflexes mutation at the cost of 1 additional mutation point. If the mutated plant rolls or selects the Hyper Reflexes mutation, it becomes Hyper Reflexes and 1 mutation point is regained. Mutated vines have the Improved Reflexes trait.

### Increased Balance

Some mutated plants have gained a better sense of equilibrium, granting them the equivalent of the Increased Balance mutation. The mutant gains a -2 step bonus to Acrobatics skill checks. Mutated vines

have the Increased Balance trait.

### Light Sensitivity

Although most mutated plants enjoy direct sunlight, some of them are sensitive to bright light granting them the equivalent of the Light Sensitivity drawback. In normal daylight conditions, the mutant suffers a +1 step penalty to any action. In a well-lit room or bright sunlight, the penalty increases to +2 steps, or to +3 steps if silhouetted in a spotlight or other high-intensity beam. Protective goggles can reduce this penalty by one step (but never below a +1 step penalty). Mutated fungi suffer from a Light Sensitivity drawback.

### Natural Armor

A mutated plant with Natural Armor automatically has armor equivalent to the Dermal Reinforcement mutation ( $d4+1/d4/d4-1$ ). If a mutated plant with this trait rolls or selects the Dermal Reinforcement, he replaces it with the Dermal Armor mutation at no additional cost. If the mutated plant starts with Dermal Reinforcement and rolls or selects the Dermal Armor mutation, the Natural Armor upgrades to Dermal Plating at the cost of 1 additional mutation point. Lastly, if the mutated plant starts with Dermal Reinforcement and rolls or selects the Dermal Plating mutation, it upgrades to Dermal Plating and the hero actually gains one bonus mutation point.

Some species of plants might start with this trait as Dermal Armor instead ( $d6+1/d4+1/d4$ ). If this is the case, and the mutated plant rolls or selects the Dermal Armor mutation, it will upgrade to Dermal Plating at no additional cost. If the mutated plant rolls or selects the Dermal Plating mutation, it upgrades to Dermal Plating and the hero actually gains two bonus mutation points.

Mutated brush and trees have the Natural Armor trait.

### Natural Attack

Some mutated plants have developed natural attack forms granting them the equivalent of the Natural Attack mutation ( $d6+2s/d4w/d4+2w$ ). If a mutated plant with Natural Attack rolls the Natural Attack mutation, it is replaced with Improved Natural Attack ( $d4w/dr+2w/d4m$ ) at no additional cost in mutation points. If a mutated plant with Natural Attack rolls or selects the Improved Natural Attack mutation, it upgrades the Natural Attack to Improved Natural Attack and gains one bonus mutation point. Mutated succulent plants have the Natural Attack trait.

### Thermal Vision

Some mutated plants have "eyes" that are abnor-

mally sensitive to light. This is equivalent to the Thermal Vision mutation which grants a -3 step reduction in penalties relating to obscured situations where objects and other characters aren't the same temperature as the surrounding area (even in total darkness). If the mutated plant character rolls or selects the Thermal Vision mutation, re-roll or choose a different Ordinary mutation. Mutated fungi have the Thermal Vision trait.

**Pheromones/Blooms**

Some mutated plants automatically come with flowering blooms or some other feature that produces a "heady" scent. This is equivalent to the Pheromones/Blooms mutation.

**Slow Reflexes**

Some plants still haven't learned to react as quickly as others do, their bodies not quite keeping up with their minds. This manifests as the Slow Reflexes drawback, resulting in a +1 step penalty to the mutant's action checks. Mutated trees have the Slow Reflexes trait.

Profession

Using the Gamma World Roleplaying Game, select a profession - Combat Spec, Diplomat, Free Agent, or Tech Op - that logically encompasses your hero's character concept. Each profession provides special benefits to the heroes who belong to it, as described in the rules.

Most mutated plants will tend toward professions that maximize the utility of their abilities; for instance, mutated trees make better Combat Specs than Free Agents. Mutated flowers make better Diplomats than Combat Specs. Mutated vines excel as Free Agents.

Don't let any of this stop you from making a unique character, though - if you want your mutated flower to be a Combat Spec, give it a try!

Skills

Like other Gamma World heroes, mutated plants get six free broad skills. These are listed in **Table 4: Mutated Plant Broad Skills**. Note that some plant species come with one free rank of a specialty skill that fits their natural abilities. For instance, mutated vine characters are natural climbers and mutated flowers can almost universally charm those with whom they interact.

The number of additional broad skills your mutated plant hero can start with, and the number of points it receives to spend on additional skills, depend on the hero's species and Intelligence score. **Table GW42: Skill List** in Chapter 5: Skills of the Gamma World Roleplaying Game contains complete information on how much skills cost and what each one enables a hero to do.

Attributes

Choose one motivation, one moral attitude, and up to two character traits (found in the Gamma World Roleplaying Game) for your hero. Most mutated plants tend to have traits that match their base species. For instance, mutated fungi are quite often Lazy and Mysterious, while some ancient mutated trees can be Ominous or even Quiet and Confident. However, for a change of pace, it might be fun to try a mutated flower that is Aggressive.

Movement

**Ground**

Though more or less bipedal, mutated plant charac-

Table 4: Mutated Plant Free Broad Skills

Type	STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIL	PER
Brush	Athletics	—	Stamina-endurance Survival	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction
Flower	—	Acrobatics	—	Knowledge	Awareness Resolve	Deception Interaction- charm
Fungi	Athletics	—	Stamina	Knowledge	Awareness Resolve	Interaction
Succulent	Athletics Unarmed Attack	—	Stamina	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction
Tree	Athletics Unarmed Attack	—	Stamina	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction
Vine	Athletics-climb	Acrobatics Manipulation	—	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction
Weed	—	Stealth	Stamina Survival	Knowledge	Awareness Resolve	—



Table GW35a: Plant Physical Mutations

D20	Ordinary	Good	Amazing
1	Biorhythm Control	Acid Touch/Dissolving Juices	Chameleon Flesh
2	Dermal Reinforcement	Dermal Armor	Dermal Plating
3	Environmental Adaptation	Electric Aura	Dual Brain
4	Fruit	Enhanced Durability	Energy Absorption
5	Improved Durability	Enhanced Healing	Energy Metamorphosis
6	Improved Healing	Enhanced Immunity	Energy Reflection
7	Improved Immunity	Enhanced Metabolism	Explosive Seeds
8	Improved Metabolism	Enhanced Physical Ability	Hyper Durability
9	Improved Physical Ability	Enhanced Reflexes	Hyper Healing
10	Improved Reflexes	Enhanced Senses	Hyper Immunity
11	Improved Senses	Extra Body Parts	Hyper Metabolism
12	Increased Balance	Gliding/Gas Bags	Hyper Physical Ability
13	Increased Speed	Increased Precision	Hyper Reflexes
14	Night Vision	Metamorphosis (plants only)	Hyper Senses
15	Oversized Limbs	Natural Attack	Natural Attack, Improved
16	Pheromones/Blooms	New Body Parts	Photogeneration
17	Radiation Tolerance	Redundant Vital Organs	Photosynthetic Skin
18	Spore Cloud	Rejuvenation	Poison Attack
19	Toxin Tolerance	Size Change	Projectile Seeds
20	Vascular Control	Thermal Vision	Skeletal Enhancement

*Note the following mutations were removed from Table GW35 to produce this new table for mutant plant heroes: Gills, Sonar, Radiating Eyes, and Wings*

ters still don't move as quickly as their more evolved comrades. Multiply the character's normal ground movement rates (as determined by **Table GW7: Combat Movement Rates**) by the value listed on Table 1 to find its Sprint, Run, and Walk rates.

At a cost of 1 mutation point, you can choose for your mutated plant character to be fully bipedal. This allows it to move at the full normal rates listed on **Table GW7**.

### Flying

In the normal world, there aren't a lot of airborne plants, but in the Gamma World setting, mutated plants can exist with large flaps of organic material that act like gliders. This provides the equivalent of the Gliding mutation, which would allow the mutant to use the glide movement rate published on **Table GW7**. If a mutated plant rolls or selects the Gliding mutation twice, you may opt to increase the mutant's Glide movement rate by 50%.

Mutated plant heroes are not allowed to select the Wings mutation, however a new plant mutation is available called Gas Bags. This mutation provides a special set of bladders that can be filled with a gas that is lighter than air, similar to a balloon, which grants the Fly movement rate at 75%. See the new Plant Physical Mutation descriptions that follow **Table**

**GW35a** in the appendix of this document for more information on the limitations of this flying method.

### Swimming

Most mutated plants can swim, though with some difficulty. Again, they don't move as quickly through the water as their more-evolved comrades. Normally, mutated plants are only allowed to proceed at the Easy Swim rate (unless it gains ranks in Movement-swim), and even then its movement rate is determined by multiplying the Easy Swim (or Swim) rate by the fractional value listed. Some species of mutated plants (like Kelp, Seaweed, or the Water Lily) might grant a special species trait that increases the movement rate to 100%.

### Species Notes

The following are a variety of mutant plant species with additional inherent traits for use as a template to build upon:

Aloe Vera (succulent): No Natural Attack, Bonus mutation – Fruit (restorative), +2 mutation points.

Apple Tree (tree): No Slow Reflexes, Bonus mutation – Fruit; Bonus Drawback – Attraction Odor; -1 mutation point.

Azalea Shrub (brush): Bonus mutation – Pheromones. Blackberry Bush (weed): Bonus mutation – Natural Attack (thorns), Fruit, -2 mutation points.

Bracket Fungi (fungus): -1 step bonus to Stealth-hide skill checks.

Cactus (succulent): Bonus mutation – Biorhythm control.

Creeper Vine (vine): -1 step bonus to Athletics-climb skill checks, Bonus Mutation – Natural Attack (choker vines), -1 mutation points.

Dandelion (weed): Bonus mutation – Spore Cloud.

Hedge (brush): -1 step bonus to Stealth-hide skill checks, Bonus Mutation – Vascular Control, -1 mutation point.

Holly Bush (brush): Bonus mutation – Natural Attack (razor-edged leaves), -1 mutation point.

Honeysuckle (vine): Bonus mutation – Pheromones/Blooms.

Kudzu (vine): -1 step bonus to Athletics-climb skill checks, Bonus Mutation – Natural Attack (choker vines), -1 mutation points.

Mushroom (fungus): Bonus mutation – Life Leech; -3 mutation points.

Oak Tree (tree): Bonus mutation – Dermal Armor (replaces Dermal Reinforcement), -1 mutation point.

Pine Tree (tree): Bonus mutation – Dermal Armor (replaces Dermal Reinforcement), Pheromones (no Interaction bonus); Bonus Drawback – Susceptible to Damage (fire only).

Poison Ivy (vine): Bonus mutation – Poison Attack (contact irritant), -3 mutation points.

Redwood Tree (tree): Bonus mutation – Dermal Armor (replaces Dermal Reinforcement), Oversized Limbs, Size Change (larger), -3 mutation points.

Rose Bush (flower): Bonus mutation – Natural Attack (thorns), -1 mutation point.

Water Lily (flower): -1 bonus to Movement-swim skill checks, Swimming movement rate increased to 100%, Bonus mutation – Environmental Adaptation (wet), -1 mutation points.

Weeping Willow (tree): Bonus mutation – Dermal Armor (replaces Dermal Reinforcement), Natural Attack (choker vines), Environmental Adaptation (wet), -3 mutation points.

#### Plant Physical Mutation Descriptions

Below are the descriptions of the new plant physical mutations that have been added to **Table 35a**, above. All of these mutations will alter the mutant's physical form in an obvious way. In addition there are some old mutations that have notes added to them with regard to mutated plants.

#### **Explosive Seeds**

Amazing, Activated, STR

The mutant plant grows and carries  $d4+1$  seeds of a volatile nature. This number of seeds is also modified by the plant's Constitution resistance modifier (i.e., +1 seed for CON 11-12, +2 for 13-14, etc.). These

items can be willingly plucked and hurled as if they were fragmentation grenades. All targets within 2 meters of the explosion suffer Amazing damage ( $d6+2w$ ), targets between 2 and 6 meters away suffer Good damage ( $d4+2w$ ), and targets between 6 and 10 meters suffer Ordinary damage ( $d4w$ ). Anything farther than 10 meters away isn't affected by the blast. Note, this mutation comes with an inherent danger to the mutant as well. On any Amazing hit by an opponent or any fall of a significant distance, the mutant must make a Stamina-endurance skill check to avoid having one of the explosive seeds prematurely released and dropped at its feet. The resulting explosion would, presumably, leave the mutant within the 2-meter range of the blast radius. These seeds can be re-grown in 1 month and can only stay on the plant for up to 3 months before becoming useless.

#### **Fruit**

Ordinary, Permanent, CON

The mutant plant grows berries or some other type of edible fruit that may have a useful function. It takes a month to grow a fruit, and multiple pieces of fruit may be growing at any one time. The mutant can have up to  $d4+1$  pieces of fruit growing at any particular time. This amount is modified by the plant's Constitution resistance modifier (i.e., +1 fruit for CON 11-12, +2 for 13-14, etc.). The fruit stays fresh for a month before rotting and falling off. It can be any size, from a strawberry to a melon, and can be any color or texture selected at the time of character creation. Mutated plants cannot benefit from eating their own fruit, but they can provide them to other non-plant characters. Unless otherwise stated below, the fruits must be consumed for them to have any effect whatsoever. This mutation can be selected more than once, but if so, a different type of fruit should be selected each time. **Table 5: Fruit** describes the benefits of various kinds of fruit, and can optionally be used to randomly generate the variety that the hero is capable of growing.

#### **Gas Bags**

Good, Activated, WIL

The mutant has an inflatable bladder that fills with helium or some other lighter-than-air gas. The bladder expands to twice the size of the mutant and allows it to float away at 75% of the Fly movement rate from **Table GW7** in the Gamma World Roleplaying Game. The mutant can purchase and use the Acrobatics-flight skill to properly control vertical lift, but has no control of lateral movements, being subject to the whims of the prevailing winds. Without this skill, the success of any attempt to fly is determined by an untrained skill check (one-half Dexterity with a +1 step penalty). The inflation process takes a full min-

ute to provide enough lift to fly, and can only be invoked three times per day without penalty. Further use of this mutation in the same day requires a Resolve-physical resolve skill check with any success providing enough gas for another flight. Even so, any Acrobatics-flight skill checks will suffer a +1 cumulative penalty for each use beyond the norm. Once airborne, the mutant can drift on the winds for the same length of time that any normal character could travel before becoming fatigued. In other words, it is impossible to sleep while traveling in this manner, and the mutant must land eventually. If the mutant is knocked unconscious, falls asleep, or suffers Amazing damage and fails a Stamina-endurance check while traveling aloft, the gas will begin to escape, dropping it at an alarming rate. Treat the Severity of Impact on Table GW26 as one category less than a regular fall of the same distance due to the natural braking advantage provided by the remaining gas.

### ***Natural Attack/Improved***

Good/Amazing, Permanent, STR

The mutant gains a natural attack form, such as thorns, jaws, choker vines, or razor-edged leaves. Replace the hero's normal unarmed damage with  $d6+2s/d4w/d4+2w$  (LI), or  $d4w/d4+2w/d4m$  (LI) for the Improved version. If the player chooses to make the natural weapon retractable, reduce damage figures by 2 (to a minimum of 1 point). The actual form that the natural attack takes can be determined randomly by rolling d4: 1, Thorns or Spikes; 2, Jaws; 3, Choker or Squeezing Vines; 4, Razor-Edged Leaves. Note: If you roll or select Jaws as a natural attack form, you can optionally declare the plant to be carnivorous at no additional mutation point cost. This makes the plant capable of digesting meat, rather than living off of soil and sunlight. The plant still would require water, of course, and could still choose to forego meat and rely upon soil and sunlight at any time.

### ***Pheromones/Blooms***

Ordinary, Activated, WIL

The mutated plant has blooms that provide a -1 step bonus on Interaction-charm and -seduce skill checks. These blooms can also release pheromones that sap the willpower of creatures within 10 meters. Each creature to be affected must make a Resolve-mental resolve skill check to determine the effect: Critical Failure, reduce Intelligence and Will resistance modifiers by 5; Failure, reduce by 3; Ordinary, reduce by 2; Good, reduce by 1; Amazing, no effect. The effects last for as long as the mutant maintains the pheromones and remains within 10 meters of the affected creature. Note that while this mutation is active, crea-

tures tracking the mutant by scent gain a -2 step bonus to Investigate-track skill checks. This mutation does not work on other plants, but it does affect all non-plant creatures.

### ***Spore Cloud***

Ordinary, Activated, WIL

The mutant plant has  $d4+1$  spore sacks that it can fire at will. This amount is modified by the plant's Constitution resistance modifier (i.e., +1 sack for CON 11-12, +2 for 13-14, etc.). It takes one month to grow a new sack. When activated, the sack bursts, releasing a thick cloud of spores that are the equivalent of a smoke grenade. These spores fill an area in a 6-meter radius around the plant. The spore cover lasts for  $d8+4$  rounds. It provides Good cover (+2 penalty to opponents' attempts to attack) and applies a +2 penalty to Awareness checks for all characters within the area of effect, including the mutant until he leaves.

### ***Projectile Seeds***

Amazing, Activated, DEX

The mutant plant has  $d6+2$  pointed seed pods growing on its body. This amount is modified by the plant's Constitution resistance modifier (i.e., +1 pod for CON 11-12, +2 for 13-14, etc.). They look like fat thorns, and each has a pressurized gas bag underneath. The mutant can fire these seeds as if they were shotgun shells (Range 6/12/30,  $d4w/d6w/d4m$  (HI), damage doubled at short range and halved at long range to a minimum of 1 point of damage). These seed pods take one week to grow back.



Table 5: Fruit

D12	Type of Fruit
1	Anesthetic – This fruit can render its victim unconscious, either willingly or unwillingly. If the victim fights against the effects, a Constitution feat check determines the results. Critical Failure, victim is knocked out (all stun points lost); Failure, victim suffers d6+ 2s; Ordinary, d6s; Good, d6-1s; Amazing, d4-1s. If the victim is knocked out (either willingly or unwillingly), the effects are exactly like normal stun recovery as detailed in the Gamma World rules. They last for the remainder of the round in which he was knocked out and the entire next round. Starting in the round after that, the subject makes a Resolve-physical resolve skill check, but with a + 2 step penalty due to the remaining anesthetic in the victim's system. On any success, the character becomes conscious but cannot attempt any other actions in the upcoming round.
2	Antibiotic – This fruit provides a –3 step bonus to Constitution feat checks to fight off disease. This process isn't instantaneous, but rather it provides the bonus over a period of d8 days, hopefully giving the treated character enough time to recover fully. The antibiotics provided by this fruit might not be effective against rare or new microbes, at the Gamemaster's discretion.
3	Antiradiation Serum – This fruit provides a –2 step bonus to Constitution feat checks when fighting off the effects of any form of radiation.
4	Antivenom – The fruit acts as an antidote for natural poisons, such as snake bites and scorpion stings. If the victim receives a dose of antivenom within the poison's onset time, he gains a –4 step bonus to his Constitution feat check. This bonus is halved if the antivenom is administered after the poison begins to affect the victim. Antivenom may be ineffective on some toxins or unusual venoms, at the Gamemaster's discretion.
5	Coagulant – This fruit can be made into a paste that causes clotting at the point of injury without thickening blood throughout the body. A dose of coagulant gives a dying character a –3 step bonus to his next Stamina-endurance check, making it much more likely that his or her condition will not worsen for at least the next 24 hours. The Knowledge-first aid skill is needed to successfully apply the coagulant to a creature's wounds (i.e., it is not ingested).
6	Mental Enhancement – This fruit temporarily provides a bonus to mental mutations by boosting the mental acuity of whomever eats it. If a particular mental mutation requires a skill or feat check to use, the fruit provides a –1 step bonus; if the mutation forces a target to make a skill or feat check to resist the effect, that check suffers a + 1 step penalty. If neither of these situations apply to a particular mental mutation, the fruit has no effect on that mutation. These mental enhancement effects last for d4+ 1 rounds per fruit consumed.
7	Pain-Killer – This fruit provides anyone that eats it with the ability to function normally and temporarily ignore some or all of the situation penalties for suffering large amounts of mortal (but not fatigue) damage. The first time during a combat scene in which the treated character has received at least 1 point of mortal damage, he makes a Stamina-endurance check. This check does not count as an action, and takes place before any other characters act. The result of this endurance check lasts for the rest of the combat scene. Any penalties caused by the damage are applied to the check. For instance, if a single attack causes a hero to suffer 2 points of mortal damage, the check is made with a + 2 step penalty because the character is dazed. The result of the endurance check determines the amount of penalties that can be ignored. On a Critical Failure, the pain-killer magnifies the pain to overwhelming and the hero cannot act for 2d4 phases. On a Failure, the hero suffers from damage penalties as per the normal rules. On an Ordinary success, the hero ignores 1 step of penalty; a Good success, the hero ignores 2 steps of penalty; an Amazing success, the hero ignores 3 steps of penalty. Note, this penalty reduction can never result in a bonus. It can only offset the penalties. The pain-killers have no effect on dying or death results.
8	Poison – The fruit is an ingested poison. Roll a d6 to determine the type: 1, hemotoxin; 2, neurotoxin; 3, necrotoxin; 4, caustic agent; 5, paralytic; 6, irritant. <b>Table GW28</b> lists the appropriate damage results for any poison that is ingested.
9	Restorative – When processed into a paste and smeared upon a wound, this fruit is capable of healing damage like a trauma pack. This provides a –2 step bonus to any user's Knowledge-first aid skill check or a –3 bonus to a Medical Science-treatment skill check to heal wounds or stun damage. It can also be used to stabilize a mortal wound. One fruit provides enough paste to provide a bonus on three attempts to heal wounds and three attempts to heal stun damage. It can only be used once to stabilize mortal damage. Any amount of leftover paste cannot be preserved, and it loses its potency in just ten minutes after exposure to the elements.
10	Sedative – This fruit has a calming effect on anyone that eats it. Sedated individuals suffer a + 3 step penalty to all action checks and actions. This penalty is reduced by 1 step per hour (or some other time unit, at the Gamemaster's discretion) until the effect wears off. Victims that consciously struggle against the effects are entitled to a Constitution feat check: Ordinary success, penalty reduced to + 2; Good, penalty reduced to + 1; Amazing, sedative has no effect.
11	Stimulant – This fruit heightens the awareness and alertness of whomever eats it, temporarily offsetting the effect of fatigue damage or stun damage or both. Each fruit provides one dose of stimulant that functions in all respects like the pharmaceutical of the same name from the Ancient-age equipment list.
12	Sustenance – The fruit provides enough nutrition for a normal-sized human for one day.



# Futuretech

By Stephen Dunaway

## The *Blackhawk* Darkstar-class Military Scout

COMPARTMENTS: 5      DURABILITY: 30  
MANEUVER RATING: -2    ACC: 4 Mpp  
CRUISE SPEED: 3 AU/hr   Berthing: 6

ARMAMENT: Plasma cannon (04,08,16):  
1d6+2w, 1d8+2w, 1d6+1m (E/e)

DEFENSES: Point-defense gun, Jammer

ARMOR: Neutronite (Light): 1d6 (L), 1d6 (H), 1d6-1(E)

COMPUTER: Good computer core, with ordinary battle, defense, communication, navigation, and sensors

ENGINES: Induction engine

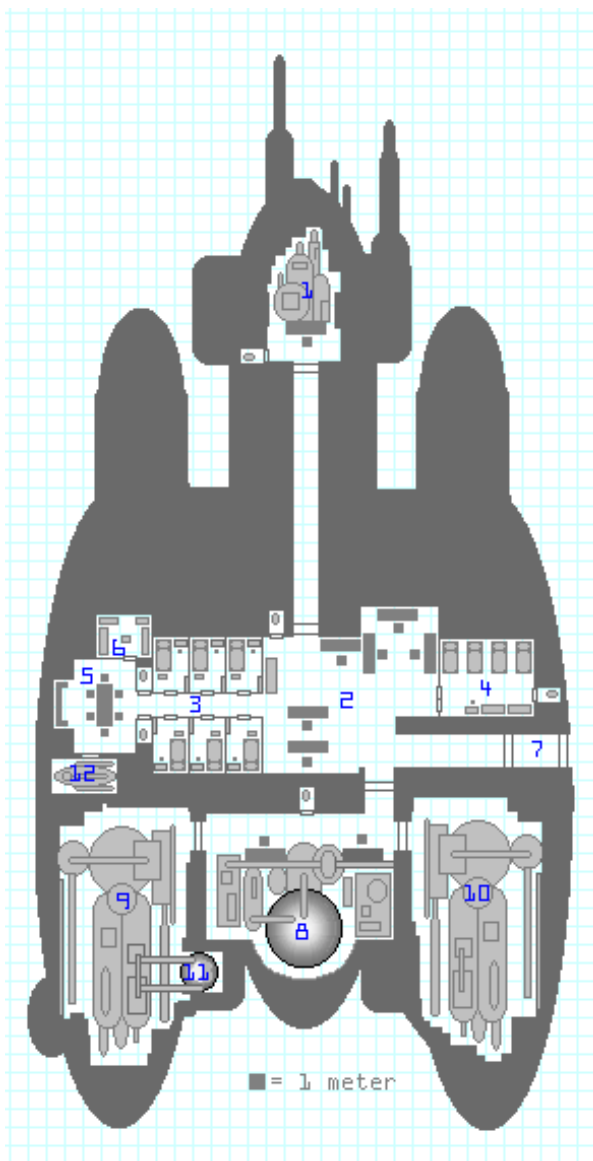
POWER: Mass reactor rated at 25 power factors

DRIVE: 10 light-years per starfall

HATCHES: Security (0 dur)

COST: \$7,150,000

ROLL	COMPARTMENT	SYSTEM (DUR,POW)	DUR
1-3	Command	Laser transceiver (0,1) Radio transceiver (0,1) Computer core (G) (2,0) Ded. Battle (O) (0,0) Ded. Defense (O) (0,0) Ded. Navigation (O) (0,0) Ded. Sensors (O) (0,0) Ded. Communications (O) (0,0) Crew Quarters (1,0) Sick bay (2,0) Jammer (0,1) EM detector (0,0) Multiband radar (0,0) Airlock (0,0) Reentry capsule (0,0)	(10,10,5)
4-6	Auxiliary	Mass reactor (10,0) Autosupport unit (0,2)	(20,20,10)
7-9	Engineering I	Stardrive* (1,0) Induction engine (6,6)	(14,14,7)
10-14	Engineering II	Induction engine (4,4)	(8,8,4)
15-20	Weapons	Plasma cannon (3,3) Point-defense gun (1,1)	(8,8,4)



\* Top Secret Concord stardrive technology- only takes up one DUR instead of the regular three. This is a prototype with its own risks (to be determined by the GM.) In all other regards, it behaves as a normal stardrive.

1. Weapons
2. Command Deck
3. Crew Quarters
4. Sick Bay
5. Mess Deck / Lounge
6. Galley
7. Main Airlock
8. Auxiliary
9. Engineering I
10. Engineering II
11. Stardrive
12. Reentry Capsule



## SUPPORTING CAST

By James Sharkey, Fabian Benavente

Note: These characters were created using the optional rules set for skill purchase and advancement available at [www.wizards.com/alternity](http://www.wizards.com/alternity).

### Ms. Fixit – Phoenix Masters StarMech Tinkerer [by James Sharkey]

Level 8 Tech Op

STR 7 INT 13 (+2)

DEX 13 (+2) WIL 8

CON 8 PER 11

Durability: 8/8/4/4 Action Check: 15+/14/7/3

Move: sprint 20, run 12, walk 4 #Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Last Resorts: 2

Perks: Gearhead

Flaws: Obsessed (Slight), Oblivious

#### Attacks:

Unarmed

3/1/0 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s

Hammer 5 11mm Charge Pistol

16/8/4 d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+1m

Nova 6 Mass Pistol

16/8/4 d6w/d6+2w/d6m



#### Defenses:

Haramaki 200 CF Coat (long) d4/d4/d6-2

#### Skills:

Athletics [7]; Modern Ranged Weapons [13]-*pistol* [16]; Vehicle Operation [13]; Stamina [8]; Business [13]-*illicit business* [15]; Computer Science [13]-*artificial intelligence* [14], *hacking* [14], *hardware* [15], *programming* [14]; Knowledge [13]-*rare and exotic goods* [16]; Physical Science [13]-*physics* [14]; Technical Science [13]-*invention*[15], *juryrig* [20], *repair* [20], *robotics* [17], *technical knowledge* [16], *xenoengineering* [15]; Awareness [8]; Interaction [11]-*bargain* [14], *charm* [14], *seduce* [13]

#### Gear:

GM's discretion. Since she runs a less than legal business, she can get her hands on all kinds of unusual things, given the time and the resources.

#### Notes:

She receives a -1 step bonus to all *Technical Science*

tests and another -1 step bonus to *Technical Science: juryrig* and *Technical Science: repair* tests due to being a citizen of the StarMech collective. She receives an additional -1 step bonus to all *Technical Science* tests due to her rank in *Technical Science: knowledge*. She receives a +1 step penalty to *Awareness: perception* tests due to her Oblivious flaw. Members of the StarMech Collective receive double the points for the Oblivious and Obsessed flaws. If she is used in a setting other than Star\*Drive, the GM should adjust her abilities accordingly.

#### Personal Information:

Sex: Female

Motivation: Fun First

Attitude: Anti-Authority

Traits: Optimistic, Cheerful

Phoenix Masters loved machines from the day she could hold a welding torch. Growing up in the StarMech Collective, Phoenix had plenty of opportunity to learn the ins and outs of fixing things. Her parents were both fine engineers, and were happy that Phoenix followed in their footsteps. However, they weren't as happy to find out that Phoenix had other interests, things she learned outside the classroom.

Phoenix, it turned out, was involved in a chop shop, selling secondhand stolen parts and fixing vehicles for people who clearly weren't on the up-and-up. She didn't really care where the money came from; all she knew was that her skills could help her buy the things she craved. Right after graduating from StarMech Tech, she set out to find her way among the stars.

Phoenix now owns an unassuming but highly successful "gray-market" shop and repair bay called "Phoenix's Fix-It" near where the players are based. For a small group of adventurers with their own starship and no PCs with engineering skills, she would make an excellent repairwoman. She can also be a resource when they encounter xenotechnology, or need some bit of technological information to help clear up one of those mysteries that adventurers seem to so often find. In addition, if the PCs decide they need something shady for themselves or their ship, she's an excellent resource. Finally, she could make for an interesting and amusing love interest for a PC as well.

Phoenix is a true hedonist. She is obsessed with get-

ting “the latest thing.” She will often accept exotic or illicit items, such as designer clothing, *objects d’art*, and mind-altering substances, in trade for repairs and parts; in fact, she can be used by the GM to get the PCs to go places to retrieve some trinket or another in return for things that they need.

Phoenix stands 1.7 meters tall. She weighs 61 kilograms, has auburn hair, hazel eyes, lightly tanned skin, and a sprinkling of freckles across her nose that gives her a girlish look. When not out living it up, as StarMechs are prone to do, she has her head placed squarely in some starship’s engine, tinkering with it. At work, she usually wears old, well-worn, short coveralls. Outside of work, she wears whatever is the latest in fashion and is appropriate for the occasion. In fact, if the PCs meet her outside of the shop, they’d never guess that she’s the same person who they’re hoping will install a mass cannon on their starship. While she seems flighty and unreliable (and indeed, she can be absent-minded in a charming sort of way, sometimes not noticing that the very tool she’s looking for is right under her nose), she takes her work very seriously, and is well known in her area of space as someone who can fix nearly anything.

She will generally have several robots in her shop at any given time, assisting her in whatever job she has at the moment. In addition, she will have at least two good quality guardbots at her shop at all times to deter intruders.

The Wraith – Norrin McCormick  
VoidCorp Assassin  
 [by James Sharkey]

Level 14 Combat Spec

STR 11 (+1) INT 9  
 DEX 13 (+3) WIL 12 (+1)  
 CON 13 PER 6  
 Durability: 13/13/7/7 Action Check: 17+ /16/8/4  
 Move: sprint 24, run 16, walk 6 #Actions: 3  
 Reaction Score: Good/3 Last Resorts: 0  
 Perks: Reflexes, Heightened Ability  
 Flaws: Infamy, Powerful Enemy (moderate)

**Attacks:**

Unarmed  
 5/2/1 d4+ 1s/d4+ 2s/d4+ 3s  
 Viper D Filament Blade  
 16/8/4 d8w/d8+ 1w/d12w  
 CLR-19 Laser Rifle  
 20/10/5 d6+ 1w/d6+ 3w/d4+ 1m  
 Hammer 5 11mm Charge Pistol  
 16/8/4 d4+ 2w/d6+ 2w/d4+ 1m

**Defenses:**

Milano GX CF Bodysuit d8-1/d8-1/d6

**Skills:**

Athletics [11]-*throw* [13]; Melee Weapons [11]-*powered weapons* [16]; Modern Ranged Weapons [13]-*pistol* [16], *rifle* [20]; Stealth [13]-*hide* [15], *shadow* [16], *sneak* [18]; Vehicle Operation [13]; Stamina [13]-*endurance*[16]; Knowledge [9]-*computer operations* [10], *exotic animals* [11]; Security [9]-*protection protocols* [12], *security devices* [16]; Awareness [12]-*intuition* [13], *perception* [16]; Resolve [12]-*mental* [13], *physical* [13]; Interaction [6]

**Gear:**

GM’s discretion. Since he works for VoidCorp, he has access to any technology he needs to complete a mission, including programs and tools to counter security measures, stealth equipment, etc.

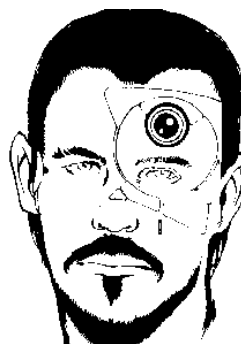
**Mutations:**

Enhanced CON, Biorhythm Control, Improved Reflexes, Minor Physical Change, Temporary Weakness, Slight

**Notes:**

He receives a -1 step bonus to his Action Check due to the Reflexes perk. His Improved Reflexes mutation increases his DEX resistance modifier to +3. His -1 step bonus for being a Combat Spec should be used for his *Modern Ranged Weapons: rifle* skill. In addition, due to his high rank, he gets an additional -1 step bonus to his attack, and his range penalties are reduced by one step.

Finally, the laser rifle grants another -1 step bonus when attacking. He has increased his Action Check score by 2, spending 8 achievement points. As a member of VoidCorp, the *Business* broad skill and rank 1 in the *Business: corporate* specialty skill are free. Also, all *Business* skills receive a -1 step bonus to their skill checks. VoidCorp employees advance faster than their comrades; his achievement points are lower than his level would indicate. If he is used in a setting other than Star\*Drive, the GM should adjust his abilities accordingly. Note that his Strength bonus is already added into his hand-to-hand damage.



**Personal Information:**

Sex: Male  
 Motivation: Staying Alive  
 Attitude: Selfish

Traits: Rude, Humorless

DS128 56RJB, Norrin “The Wraith” McCormick, was born on a small planet in VoidCorp space called Sarahaut that had not been completely terraformed before settlers started moving in. As a result, mutations on that planet were not uncommon. Early on in life, Norrin was observed to have a natural swiftness and skill that a manager on Sarahaut noticed early on.

Norrin was taken from his parents, and placed in a special school only a few high-ranking VoidCorp officials know exist. At this school, Norrin drilled relentlessly on firearms, security measures, and stealth. He found that he took quite well to the training, and strove to be better than any of the other students. In that regard, he exceeded all expectations. His ability to find his way into even the most well guarded area during training sessions earned him his nickname, “The Wraith.” That and the fact that the other students never saw Norrin outside of training, that is.

Since leaving the “Death School,” as it is called by those few that survive the training there, Norrin has been terribly successful at what he does. So successful that both the Rignunmor Star Consortium and Insight have a standing order for their operatives to shoot to kill should they encounter him. That order has been in place for ten years now, and Norrin has since assassinated more than a dozen high-ranking officials and Grid jockeys in both stellar nations.

The Wraith stands 1.9 meters tall and weighs 95 kilograms. He has medium brown skin, dark curly hair, and his eyes are entirely golden. As a result, he wears dark glasses most of the time. He dresses as inconspicuously as possible, and always wears his CF bodysuit. He’s a grim man in his late thirties, and avoids chitchat and pleasantries as much as possible. He’s an imposing figure; while he’s not muscular and obviously dangerous like a weren, for example, he exudes menace. He speaks quietly when he does talk, and has few social graces. He has no known friends, but it’s believed he keeps a small menagerie of exotic pets in his home somewhere deep in VoidCorp space. It’s believed that they are among the few things he cares about besides himself and his mission.

Norrin is a crack shot with his rifle. He prefers to take his targets out at long range, if possible. It reduces his risk. However, if it becomes necessary for him to get up close and personal, he’s quite capable of handling that as well. The Wraith is known among those who make it their business to know these kinds of

things as an extremely dangerous person. His failures are few and far between, and even when he missed the target, he was never caught.

The Wraith would make a great villain for mid-level to high-level PCs to encounter. While he is not highly intelligent, he is well-trained and very cunning. In addition, he is backed by the resources of VoidCorp, one of the most powerful of the stellar nations. He is cold-blooded and ruthless, and the GM should reflect that in his tactics. He will think nothing of zapping a PC from more a half a mile away, if he can. A good way to get the PCs working hard is to have them guarding his next target, or possibly being paid a bounty by some grieving spouse to get her husband’s killer.

Another possible tack is that Norrin is tired of killing, and wants to leave VoidCorp. Naturally, this won’t sit all too well with his former bosses. It’ll be up to the PCs (and the GM, naturally) to decide if this infamous assassin has really decided to change his ways. And if he has, will they even want to help him? Who would take him in, and would they just expect him to do the same sort of work for them he did for VoidCorp? The PCs could wind up encountering him again and again, in either scenario.

### Kukorho-Kurgan Scout

[by Fabian Benavante]

#### Level 4 Combat Spec

STR 12 (+1) INT 10  
DEX 10 WIL 9  
CON 11 PER 8

Durability: 16/16/8/8 Action Check: 14+ /13/6/3

Move: sprint 22, run 14, walk 4, EZ swim 2, swim 4

# Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 1

Perks: Observant

Flaws: Code of Honor (see background), Primitive (partially paid off)

#### **Attacks:**

Unarmed

15/7/3 +d0 LI/O Personal d6+ 1w/d6+ 3w/d4+ 1m  
Flintlock

11/5/2 -d4 HI/O 20/40/100 d8+ 1w/d8+ 3w/d6+ 2m

Hunting knife

13/6/3 +d0 LI/O Personal d4+ 3w/d4+ 4w/d4+ 5w

#### **Defenses:**

Armor: CF Short Coat

Protection: d4-1/d4-1/d6-3



**Skills:**

Athletics [12]-*throw* [13]; Melee Weapons [12]-*Blade* [14], *Bludgeon* [13]; Unarmed Attack [12]-*Brawl* [15]; Ranged Weapons, Prim. [10]-*Flintlock* [11]; Stealth [10]; Movement [11]; Stamina [11]-*Endurance* [12]; Knowledge [10]-*Deduce* [11], *First aid* [11], *Standard* [11]; Animal Handling [9]; Awareness [9]-*Intuition* [10]; Investigate [9]-*Search* [10], *Track* [11]; Interaction [8]

**Gear:**

Item	Mass	Location	Description
Flintlock musket	4	Shoulder	Weren-style
Hunting knife	2	Belt	Weren-style
CF Short Coat	3	Body	
Clothing	3	Body	
Powder Bag	1	Belt	Leather
Powder	2	Powder bag	For musket, 100
Shot	2.5	Powder bag	For musket, 250

**Personal Information:**

Nationality: Kurgan

Sex: Male

Species: Weren

Age: 40

Height: 2.3m

Weight: 150kg

Hair: White, wispy

Eyes: Black

Skin: Brown

Moral Attitude: Honorable

Motivation: Discovery

Traits: Curious

**Description:**

Kukorho is a tall and thin, almost rangy looking Weren. His fur is naturally brown with white streaks through it when he is not consciously changing its color to match his surroundings. His head is covered by long, wispy, white hair that trails past his shoulders. Two yellow tusks about 3" long protrude from his lower jaw, although one is blunt-ended and chipped. A pair of copper earrings dangles from his ears: one in each ear so that they do not touch and make unnecessary noise. His beard is worked in intricate braids. Hard muscle is easily seen on his forearms where his body hair is not as dense, and thick shoulders frame his tree trunk-like neck. Wide nostrils give way to small, dark eyes seemingly out of proportion with the rest of his face.

Kukorho wears a loose pair of pants held up by a wide belt. He wears a short, sleeveless suit of what appears to be leather and has a bandolier across his torso, holding his ammunition. On his belt is a long, Weren hunting knife. The knife's hilt is beautifully carved from some sort of bone, but much of it has been worn by frequent use.

**Personal Background:**

Kukorho was born in Kurg as were all Weren before they set off into space. He was a loyal retainer of the Hikaro Family, a "peaceful" (by Weren standards) family that had land close to the subarctic "wild" lands of Kurg. The Hikaro farmed the land and lived off its bounty for many generations. New frontier Weren families flocked near the Hikaro who kindly gave them land to farm in exchange for a small token of their crops. This token also served to pay off the Hikaro militia which always patrolled the surrounding area and quickly put down any impending raid from the wild Weren tribes that abounded nearby. It was fairly easy to raise a small army since Weren thrive on warfare, and frontier Weren are tougher than average.



Kukorho enjoyed the frontier and grew up traveling the subarctic steppes and mountains of northern Kurg. He was taught to track, shoot and survive in the wild by his father and he learned to brawl with his siblings; the rest of his skills are necessary for his trade. He stood out from his peers for both his marksmanship and his tracking ability. While his siblings made good soldiers, he was an even better scout, always working with similarly skilled Weren.

While it was fairly easy to put down isolated wild tribes, it was only a matter of time before a leader stood out and united the subarctic Weren tribes. Kukorho had warned the Hikaro family that it was unusual for different tribes to gather together like he had seen, but his warnings fell on deaf ears. There had been too many decades of relative peace, and he certainly had never seen the Hikaro stronghold threatened in his lifetime. His instincts told him otherwise. Sure enough, the inevitable came to pass and not Kukorho, his siblings, or the Hikaro militia could stand up to the wild hordes of Weren united in a common cause. The stronghold was overrun, the settlers either killed or dispersed, and Kukorho was left without any familiar face to turn to. Barely past his teenage years, the young Weren decided for a change, a big change.

The change came about as he headed south into more settled lands. He quickly tired of these and was befriended by humans who told him about other worlds and even bigger wars. He signed up and left with the Orlamus. He even listened to their crazy religion long enough to learn about space and flying ships and lasers and anti-grav pods and many other

technological innovations.

**Personality (Code of Honor):**

Kukorho was "bred" with a natural code of honor that was later ingrained further by his father-mentor. This code includes ideals such as respecting elders, not starting a fight without a good reason, fighting to the death and not fighting with those weaker than him.

He is very superstitious and will try to listen to "nature" (wind, stream, animals, etc.) about certain portents he knows it carries. He was taught to attune himself with the land, to be slow to anger but quick to strike. He spent many nights and days by himself with only the wind to whisper to him about possible dangers.

The young Weren has a healthy curiosity, especially about technology and its "magic". Much to his companions' dismay, he has been known to take something apart trying to figure out how it works, like when he tore a speaker from a wall swearing that there was someone in there talking to him.

As any strong feudal warrior, the Weren needs a strong figure to look up to whom he can trust. His friendship is not easily won as he is suspicious of others at first, but his loyalty is death defying and everlasting.

The Weren is still confused with all these new worlds and technology and is sometimes sullen, perhaps thinking of simpler times when his existence depended only on his skills. He is still very naive about his surroundings and has been duped by fast-talking con artists; Kukorho is still looking for them. Pity the fools should he ever find them.

**Notes:**

\*Combat Spec Action Check Increase: Action Check score increased by 3

\*Combat Spec Situation Bonus: -1 step bonus to a selected skill

\*Weren Superior Durability: CON x 1.5 for Durability scores

\*Weren Natural Weapon: on successful Unarmed Attack-*brawl* check claws do  $d4w/d4+2w/d4m$  (L/O) plus any STR bonus

\*Weren Camouflage: +1 step to ranged attacks vs. Weren

\*Weren Primitive Culture: +1 step penalty when using any items of PL4 or higher

**Achievements:**

\*Action Check Bonus (bought at third), -1 step bonus to Action Check

## GRIDSITES

By Jeff Ibach

### "Roc's Nest"

Steve Bartell's Homepage. Steve is a member of the RPGA and is an active member of the Alternity Mailing Lists. For the many folks who have had a hankering to try fantasy roleplaying using the Alternity engine, his site is a tribute of just what a good idea that really is. He has done a lot of work converting a D&D campaign to Alternity on his own and has a number of PDF downloads that can save aspiring GM's a lot of footwork.

<http://hometown.aol.com/stbartell/index.htm>

### "Harvest Moon"

Shameless self-plug. My own Alternity web site. While updates are only bimonthly, it tries to stay as meaty as possible. You can find 2 custom, full-fledged play-tested adventures: Bughunters and Cellscape, as well as a Cleopatra 2525 adventure and rules. There's also a players 1-page rule sheet we hand out to new folks to help them through the Alternity system we're quite proud of. There's even adventure fold-up figures for Dark\*Matter.

<http://www.harvestmoon.freesevers.com>

### "Chris West's Matrix Page"

This site is purely set up as an on-line Campaign supplement to play out adventures in the film The Matrix using Alternity rule systems. A lot of work has been put into fine-tuning this site which is chock full of adaptable info even if you don't play Keanu Reeves and friends. There's a martial artist in my Dark\*Matter game who uses a scaled down version of the martial arts FX rules therein to great effect.

<http://home.talkcity.com/InfiniteLoop/inthematrix/>

### "Living Verge"

Wizard of the Coast's RPGA campaign setting to play out Living Verge Alternity convention adventures is actually a quite well-put together site. For a starting GM who has the PHB and GMG but no setting ideas, an entire campaign could easily be built off the starting information given here. Specifically it details the struggles of Marybelle, as terraforming winds down and exploration begins. A planetary map is also provided.

<http://www.wizards.com/rpga/LV/Welcome.asp>

## Traveler's Report

Hello there. I'd like to introduce myself, but unfortunately there's a significant amount of danger involved in doing so, for both of us. For one thing, if I identify myself in greater detail, it will make it easier for the forces pursuing me to track down my place of origin. If they find out where I came from, my explorations will come to an abrupt halt, and I can't let that happen.

The second reason for this anonymity has more to do with you than it does with me. While you don't know it yet, you and I have a great deal in common. If not for your work on the Project, I wouldn't be writing this report today. You're probably sitting there thinking "What project? What are you talking about?" You're probably even convinced that I'm a lunatic hacker playing some kind of prank. That's OK. All that matters is that you read what I have to say, and if you're anything like the person I've known for so many years, curiosity will drive you to learn the truth of it.

Everything will become clear in time. Until it does, you may call me "Traveler."

OK, time for me to start explaining. I know that you don't yet have the educational background of the person I know, so I'll put it in simple terms: Alternate dimensions do exist. Your counterpart on another dimension, and a team of other top-notch scientists (including myself), conclusively demonstrated proof of their existence about 10 years back. We called them "tangents." From the moment we confirmed our theories, we began trying to find a way to travel between these parallel dimensions. Last year, we finally succeeded.

A lot has happened between then and now, and I won't bore you (or endanger you) with the details. Suffice it to say that during our explorations, some very disastrous events occurred that separated me from the rest of the team. Tangent hopping is not an exact science, despite our years of research. It has taken me this long to arrive at a tangent world that is similar enough to my own to contact someone I know. You're that someone.

I believe that, given time, you will be able to do something with the information I'm sending you. Perhaps the catastrophe that separated me from my team can be prevented from happening on your world. I honestly don't know what will become of me if that event never occurs on your tangent, but I hope that if it does affect me, it will land me in a better situation than the one I've been living in for the last several months.

At any rate, my time here is limited. I can only remain on one tangent for a short time before those hunting me trace my paratransponder signal to it. After delivering this report, I must go. But I will return periodically, if possible, to update you on my travels. Thank you for hearing me out this far. I pray that you'll be intrigued enough to continue sharing in my discoveries through the words I record in this journal.

+ 15.478, + 20.132 (Arctic World Cluster)

Cosmological Division; PL1;

G2/R1/A2/P3/H2

Primary attributes: Arctic World

Secondary attributes: Conquered by Aliens, Technologically Stalled

## Day 1

The first thing I noticed when stepping into this tangent was the temperature shift. It's damn cold here! Fortunately, I was prepared for just such an environment. This is exactly what I'd hoped to find on this tangent, and the result has filled me with more hope than I've had in a long, long time. While it'll take a few more successful trips before I can be sure, it would seem that the repairs to my quantum tunneler are both complete and effective. If I'm right, and my tunneler's ability to target specific tangent clusters is restored, then I can start working on ways to refine its targeting ability, and perhaps someday--dare I write the words?--make my way home. Unless the frigid environment is just a cruel coincidence, I'm on a tangent in the cosmological division, one where the Earth formed a little further out in the solar system. Whereas the Earth I originated from experienced occasional ice ages in between long periods of temperate climatic conditions, this world is just the opposite. Occasionally the ice and snow gives way to periods of melt-

ing and receding glaciers, but most of the time it's just a barren white wasteland. Or at least, that's my theory. I plan to take some measurements of the sun after the sky clears. If my theory is correct, it should be at least marginally smaller in the sky.

I've set up camp near the spot where I entered this tangent. Despite all of my cold weather gear, I'm still freezing; my polyinsulated tent from the Fero-cious Gales tangent is great at keeping the wind out, but it doesn't trap heat worth a damn, despite the name. I'll need to find something better before I ever come here again. (Not that I'd want to.)

I'm tempted to just activate my tunneler and say goodbye to this tangent here and now, but I'm determined to find something more conclusive than a snowstorm to validate my theory about this tangent. If the sun's not out in the morning, I'll leave and try to return another time

It's times like these that I really wish we'd built the quantum tunneler into a vehicle instead of making it a handheld device. Of course, a vehicle probably would have frozen up by now. I know I have.

#### Day 2

Well, the cloud cover is gone this morning, and the sun DOES appear noticeably smaller in the sky (I knew it!), but I have seen something that I completely didn't expect to see: signs of life. I believed that humans could not have evolved on an Earth as inhospitable as this one, but there's a trail of smoke rising in the northwest! It's still absolutely frigid here, but I'm going to investigate. I know that one of these days, my scientific curiosity is going to be the end of me, but I just can't pass up this opportunity. I've always considered myself an explorer (even if I have little choice in the matter), and what explorer worth his salt would leave a world without learning all he could about it?

It took me about three hours of very tedious and very slow walking (I'd swear that whoever invented these ice-shoes was a sadistic chap) but I finally

came in sight of the fire's origin. There are, indeed, humans here, but they're not alone. Also visible in the camp was a group of massive, muscular creatures with large tusks. They're mostly covered with white fur that blends very well with the background. Visually, I must equate them with tales of "yeti" from the fables of my home tangent, but something tells me that these creatures are different, perhaps of alien origin, though I saw no signs of high-tech knowledge. Indeed, while I saw examples of metallurgical understanding in the form of bladed weapons, I don't believe that either culture has moved on completely from the hunter-gatherer stage of societal development. Both species appear to wear

garments of fur and leather, though the tusked ones don't wear nearly as much of it as the humans.

I watched the encampment for about an hour and a half, and the general impression I get is that the humans are subservient to this other species. The humans would lower their heads whenever they passed

by one of the yeti-like creatures, but the creatures would not return the gesture. Instead, it appeared that the yeti had no shortage of orders for the humans. They never raised their weapons against the humans, but considering their sheer size (well over two meters, by my estimation) and powerful musculature, I suspect they didn't need to. While this instinctively alarms me, it's not the first time I've come across such a situation. In a realm of infinite possibilities, an explorer must accept even undesirable ones.

I fear there's little more I can learn here without making my presence known, so I'll be leaving as soon as I finish this journal entry. I've accomplished what I set out to do here, and now it's time to continue testing my quantum tunneler. I now feel confident that I can once again target any general tangent cluster, and I'm eager to move back towards the historical division and more familiar climates.

Hopefully my next stop will be someplace warm.





# SUPPORTING CAST

By Scotti Mullen

## Super Heroes!

Note: These Supporting Cast for your Alternity Super-hero Games were created using the author's excellent Action Check-Published Sourcebook "Super Hero FX". This tome was sent to all subscribers of Action Check to celebrate our special GENCON issue.

**Dark Angel** (Real name unpronounceable in English: goes by Lev in intimate circles)  
Level 1 Diplomat (Combat Spec)

STR 13 (+2) INT 9  
DEX 8 WIL9  
CON 10 PER11  
Durability 10/10/5/5 Action Check 10+ /9/4/2  
Move: sprint20, run 12, walk 4, EZ swim 2, swim 4, glide 20, fly: 40  
Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 # Actions: 2  
Last Resorts: 2  
Perks: Fortitude (-1 bonus on stamina / endurance checks)  
Flaws: Alien Artifact (Related to Hero weakness FX Flaw), Temper #1 (+1 penalty on all actions when triggered), Competitive #2

### Attacks:

Unarmed [untrained]: 6/ 3/ 1 d4+ 2s/d4+ 3s/d4+ 4s unarmed combat modifier + d4  
Pistol laser 9/ 4/ 2 En/O d4+ 1w/d6+ 1w/d4m

### Defenses:

Cerametal armor 13/ 6/ 3 d6+ 1/d8+ 1/d6

### Skills:

Armor Operation [13], powered armor [15]; Bureaucracy [10], administration [9]; Athletics [13]; Awareness [9], Perception [10]; Ranged Weapons Modern [8], Pistol [9]; Resolve [9], mental resolve [10], physical resolve [10]; Vehicle Operation [8], space vehicle [9]; Interaction [11], Leadership [11]; Stamina [11]; Command [13]; Knowledge [9]; Extra language [10] (English); Tactics [9], Infantry tactics [10], Space tactics [10]

Species: Quinn  
Gender: Male  
Career: Military Officer  
Moral Attitude: Anti-Authority  
Motivation: Helping Others  
Character: Aggressive, Compassionate

### FX Powers:

Flight (Wings) 9/ 4/ 2

Energy Field (light) 9/ 4/ 2

Constraint: Because of the difference in tidal pulls On Earth, this power will not function during the three days of the full moon or the three days of the new moon.

Increased Concentration: Outside of the times when the power does not function, it still takes an effort to use the power. (+ 2 step penalty)

Energy Blast (light) 9/ 4/ 2

Super Constitution (Active) 9/ 4/ 2

### FX Flaws:

Slow Recovery: It takes Dark Angel twice as long to recover spent FX points.

Hero Weakness: (6 points) explained in description.

### Description:

Lev is of extraterrestrial origin. His race, known as the Quinn, is an aggressive, warlike race. They are descended from a mammalian bird-like creature. Lev's skin is dark maroon in color. He is 6'4" tall and weighs 250 pounds. Instead of hair, Lev had short, black, downy feathers that cover his head and extend down his back and sides. The feathers on his wings are also black.

Lev was a military leader during a civil war on his planet. The war involved two factions, a xenophobic war-like faction that sought conquest of all those different from them, and a more open-minded liberal faction that believed in a more peaceful co-existence of all creatures. Lev, belonging to the latter faction, was captured by the enemy.

Instead of martyring him, Lev was exiled from the Quinn's dominion. The verdict mandated that since he put so much faith in co-existence, he would live out the remainder of his life among those with whom he wished to co-exist. The court ordered him "suppressed" (a bio-shackle, positioned around his waist, prevented him from exercising his powers), and shot into space in a small suspended animation pod.

That was the public policy. Privately, the court had arranged for a sabotage of the pod's energy source. The sabotage, through a bribe, never took place. Lev wandered unaware through open space for hundreds of centuries. The pod, not designed for sustained space travel, slowly leaked in radiation. Over time, the biological properties of the bio-shackle mutated. Because of the suspended animation, Lev was undamaged.

The pod eventually crashed on earth. In the crash, the

pod computer was destroyed and the shackle was torn loose. Lev survived, though barely. The mutated shackle, though damaged, still functioned. In its mutated form, however, it serves as his "Hero Weakness". Lev is angered by any oppressive society. He will aggressively work, through the people, to either change the society or help overturn it. He believes that if the people will not rise of their own accord, then it is his duty to show them their error. He is, above all, a friend of the people.

Though he uses his abilities to help the people with the problems of everyday crime, he is more inclined to aggressively pursue a corrupt politician, statesman, or wealthy businessman. Corporations are another favorite target of his, as they are often responsible for the corrupting of politicians. Lev has no aspirations to rule; he only wants to see a wise and caring society, watched over by the just.

With Lev, one chance is all anyone gets.

**Enigma** (Markus Baughton)  
Level 1 Free Agent

STR 12 (+1) INT 11 (+1)  
DEX 11 (+1) WIL 10  
CON 12 (+1) PER 4

Durability: 12/12/6/6 Action Check: 14+ /13/6/3  
Move: sprint 22, run 14, walk 4, EZ swim 2, swim 4  
# Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 1

Perks: Ambidextrous (no penalty for main, only +2 for off hand), Danger Sense (-2 bonus on all Awareness - intuition checks), Reflexes (+1 bonus on dexterity resistance modifier, applied)

Flaws: Bad Luck (19 or 20 on control die is always a critical failure), Temper #3 (+3 penalty on all actions when triggered), Rampant Paranoia

#### Attacks:

Power Martial Arts: 13/ 6/ 3 d6+ 1s/d6+ 3s/d4+ 1w  
unarmed combat modifier + d0  
Pistol laser 9/ 4/ 2 En/O d4+ 1w/d6+ 1w/d4m  
Shotgun 12 gauge 11/ 5/ 2 HI/O d4w/d6w/d4m  
Rapier 13/ 6/ 3 LI/O d4w/d4+ 1w/d4+ 2w

#### Defenses:

Cerametal armor 13/ 6/ 3 O d6+ 1/d8+ 1/d6

#### Skills:

Athletics [12]; Technical Knowledge [11], special (Temporal Science) [13]; Melee Weapons [12], blade [13]; Unarmed Attack [12], power martial arts [13]; Awareness [10]; Investigate [10], track [11]; Acrobatics [11], daredevil [13]; Interaction [4], interview [5]; Ranged Weapons Modern [11], pistol [12]; Stealth [11], shadow [13]; Vehicle Operation [11], land vehicle [12]; Stamina [12]

Species: Human Male  
Career: Bounty Hunter  
Moral Attitude: Selfish  
Motivation: Winning is Everything  
Character: Aggressive, Egotistical

#### FX Powers:

PSI Pulse Rank 2 10/ 5/ 2 (Wild Power)  
Particle PSI Rank 2 10/ 5/ 2 (Wild Power)  
Time Slip 10/ 5/ 2 (Wild Power)  
Slow Time 10/ 5/ 2 (Wild Power)

The Wild Power Flaw in this case, indicates Enigma's inability to evoke his powers consciously in any way. He does not realize he even has these powers. The Gamemaster rolls randomly to denote which power activates each time a failed check indicates a manifestation. Each power stays active until all FX points are used.

Enigma is 5'10" tall. He has short-cropped black hair, except for a ponytail. He has a laser pistol strapped to one side and a rapier strapped to the other.

Enigma hails from the future. He is (was) a time tracker; a bounty hunter hunting criminals who hope to change history through time manipulation.

An altercation during a chase through the time stream damaged Enigma's vehicle. He "crashed" in this time, suffering grievous bodily harm. His vehicle was damaged beyond repair. He also became slightly off-balance mentally. He eventually chased down the criminal, who also ended up in this time, and proceeded to thrash him thoroughly. He did this with complete disregard for public or private property.

In his mental unbalance, he became convinced this was a pivotal time in history and many criminals were trying to undo the future. He vowed track down every last one of them.

His determination in catching these "time bandits" is such that, once he focuses on an individual, he pursues him almost to obsession. He will fight off anyone, including the law, to "collar" his perp. He has total disregard for property, and is often responsible for indiscriminate damage. (This line of thinking only goes so far as property. He will not kill innocents or the law, but merely frightens or bullies them to keep them from his goal. His rampages have occasionally resulted in the injuring of bystanders, but he tries to avoid that if possible.) He doesn't understand or care why he is wanted. He only knows he is trying to save these ungrateful people.



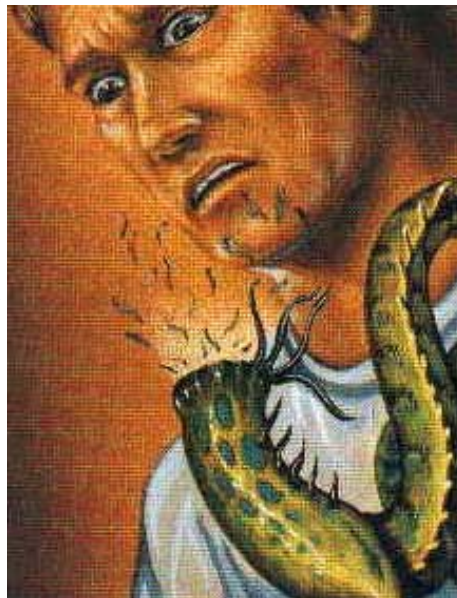
# TRANSMISSIONS

By Fabian Benavante

## STUDYING DANGEROUS FAUNA

The black background of the vidscreen partially faded leaving murky shadows that never quite went away; it was very difficult to distinguish the face of the woman speaking. It all started to make sense as her monotone voice droned on. "This video is intended for internal use of the Concord Intelligence Bureau and all its affiliates." The fact that the woman wielded power was evident by her calm, confident gestures and the glowing tri-staff held in her right hand. Some more legal terms and the Concord administrator continued, "It is mandatory viewing for all agents that may operate in or near the vicinity of the Algemron system. It may be passed on to certain sister bureaus, especially major medical establishments in other star systems. Due to the sensitive and potentially disturbing information contained herein, the Concord admonishes strict control of its distribution." Finally the woman spoke her last words of disclaimer, "The Concord does not endorse the validity of these findings, nor does it endorse or necessarily agree with the methods of information gathering."

The scene opened up in what appeared to be a high tech medical facility. A man dressed in immaculate white had his face covered and his voice was heard through a scrambler. The metallic edge the scrambler gave the voice was irritating. "This is not the innocent looking worm it seems to be." A 2 cm long white maggot squirmed on a metal plate. "This may very well be the most serious threat that humankind has ever encountered." The doctor squished the parasite with his gloved hand and continued, "They have been named *teln*\* and were originally discovered in the Algemron system; unfortunately the Concord believes that they are widespread throughout the whole Verge and maybe even in Old Space." Another worm was removed from a tank filled with a viscous liquid, but this worm lay deathly still. "These parasites enter the host's body through the oral cavity and multiply asexually. What is remarkably dan-



gerous about them is that as the community gains numbers, it also gains in intelligence and powers, mainly psionic abilities."

The doctor entered an area marked restricted and uncovered glass tanks with suspended clusters of teln in them. "These are dead, preserved and still being studied." A group of roughly a dozen worms huddled together in the first tank. "This is a teln larva tangle capable of such psionic powers as mind reading, ESP, telepathy, mind blast and even telekinesis." The man slowly walked around the tank and pointed to larger groups of teln, "As the group grows in size, it becomes a brood tangle and finally a cluster tangle of up to 100 individual teln. It is at this stage that the psionic powers are at their peak, powerful enough to rival even those of old fraal masters or so I've been told. Perhaps the greatest and most dangerous power is suggestion. Through the use of this ability, the tangle may take full control of the host which it inhabits."

The screen showed a radically different scene; it seemed like it was in a field hospital of sorts. Mortally wounded soldiers were being brought in, and a group of doctors and nurses were doing their best to put them back together. Some of them were beyond anyone's help and were simply taken to the next room after all their vital signs were checked. A Cosimir preacher awaited them to bestow their last rites and send them on their way to meet the Creator. The preacher closed his eyes while mumbling a prayer when he unexpectedly doubled over in pain. Suddenly his hands went quickly to his temples, and the man fell to the floor writhing in obvious agony, unwillingly pushing the dead soldier off his stretcher. The video was cut, and the next scene magnified the area near the dead man's mouth. The definition of the image was not very clear due to the magnification, but it seemed that a small trickle of worms was exiting the dead soldier and slowly entering the unconscious priest through his mouth. After a few minutes, the preacher woke

\* The teln is described in the Star\*Drive hardcover campaign book.

up and continued on his business as usual.

The metallic voice explained in his professor-type drone, "It is believed that the teln will reproduce enough to need a second host after a certain time. This incubation need not happen after the teln have reached maturity or a full teln cluster tangle. Some teln appear to multiply within their host until maturity, others will completely leave their host before that time, while still others will 'split' at an early stage and continue their development in more than one host. More information is being gathered and studied as we speak on this seemingly erratic behavior; one thing is for sure, the teln must leave a dead host's body as soon as possible for fear of starving to death, although the parasites have found a way to keep their host in suspended animation for up to a few days.

The screen showed the priest clearly failing in common hand-eye coordination tasks and his appearance was clearly deteriorating, becoming weaker and weaker. "Interestingly enough, the teln do not control the host all the time, but rather plant a suggestion on them when they want or need something done a certain way. The preacher suddenly became skilled in computer operations and tried to erase the security camera's tape after the teln found out it had been recorded. These acts coupled with the man's physical deterioration lead to his discovery, apprehension and . . ." The doctor fell silent for a second before clearing his throat and continuing, "The preacher was extensively 'studied' and his case has provided much needed information. Through his unwilling sacrifice, he was able to help out more than he could have ever done by preaching alone." It was obvious that the narrator felt very uncomfortable discussing the methods used in the investigation and experiments against the teln.

The scene changed again and it was seen from a war correspondent's point of view as he accompanied a group of Galvinite soldiers. The camera bounced about with every step as the group covered rough terrain. There was little doubt that the taping was being done by an infiltrated spy, judging by the clandestine nature of the video. The image was not very clear as the group's leader kicked over a 'dead' soldier. The camera lost sight of the scene for a second only to turn sharply at the sound of a scream. A few seconds later, the camera showed another soldier grabbing his head and the group's leader blasting the 'dead' soldier's head off at short range.

The metallic voice continued, "It is believed that the teln can stabilize, or put into suspended animation,

its host not allowing it to die when its wounds would have killed it otherwise. This power is carefully being studied, for it could mean a major breakthrough in modern medicine. The worms use all their psionic energy keeping their host in this suspended animation. The only way for the teln to survive is to abandon the current host and pass on to another host. The only way that the teln can do this is through another strange and dangerous psionic power being studied by fraal masters. The maggots seem to be able to leech psionic energy and use it to bring their host back to life, if only weakly, and to power their own psionic attacks."

The voice continued on, "By now you must all be wondering how to get rid of these interstellar parasites. In all our test subjects and field investigations, a teln host that is 'overkilled' also takes care of the teln tangle for good; such was the technique found out by the last group leader when the 'dead soldier' remained so after he was shot at close range."

The next scene was the harshest yet. It showed a pit dug into stone with many charred and blackened bones. A group of Alitarian war prisoners huddled in the center of the pit filmed by the war correspondent. Three Galvinite soldiers, each equipped with a flame-thrower, started to spit death and fire into the pleading crowd. It was a good thing the quality of the film did not allow to see the faces of those being burned alive or hear their cries for mercy.

"At first, It was believed that the 'overkilling' and burning of those suspected to be infected by teln was the only way to take care of the problem. We are experimenting with new ways of ridding victims of teln tangles without having to kill them. This method is very dangerous and not 100% proven, so it is not recommended except for those individuals for whom the rewards are worth the risks. "

A new scene opened up, and an individual was in a radiation chamber while another victim was injected intravenously with some sort of greenish liquid. Both of these victims squirmed in pain even while knocked out from anesthesia. The monotone voice continued, "Other earlier research involving radiation in the form of rays or injected chemicals was somewhat successful at getting rid of the teln tangles, but the effect on the hosts prohibited the extensive use of this therapy."

The scene returned to the high tech medical facilities where the documentary started. The picture was very clear and sharp in contrast with the 'war footage' previously shown. A patient was laid open on an op-



erating table while two doctors and a couple of medical robots meticulously worked on extracting a tangle of teln worms from inside the man's body cavity. These worms were carefully put into a clear solution where they squirmed for a few seconds before slowing to a complete halt.

The droning voice continued, "At this point in our research we have found out that the teln host must be conscious for them to hold on to their psionic energy store. It appears that once the host is knocked out, the teln cannot use their mindwalking powers; these worms do not possess any other dangerous forms of attack. The procedure of surgical removal is very risky and not many patients survive the ordeal. The cured individuals must remain under constant scrutiny lest the doctors made a mistake and left a teln worm inside them. At the end of this video is a training film for surgeons and other qualified personnel detailing our findings and providing advice on surgically removing teln from victims."

The screen showed another high tech operation under way with a mix of human and t'sa doctors working side by side. The teln worms were quickly removed and put into the same clear liquid where they ceased moving. The calm scene erupted into chaos as a human doctor dropped his tools and grabbed his temples while silently screaming. The background voice warned, "The operating team must be very carefully screened for any latent psionic abilities, as the good doctor found out." The t'sa medic cursed and started in a frenzy of movement characteristic of his race while another doctor applied contingency measurements. He grabbed a hand-held flame-thrower and doused the patient in flames.

The Concord administrator reappeared as this scene signaled the end of the film. "One final word of warning to those agents that may have to deal with teln infected victims. The teln do not always have their victims under their control. It is believed that the teln let their hosts go about normal business and only plant suggestions when those activities hinder them in some way. In this manner, there are times when a person's actions will not make sense, as it seems there may be some duplicity or two separate personalities emerging in the victim. This last fact seemed to throw every investigator off course at the beginning of our fight against the teln maggots. As of today, we do not know the teln's intentions but we do know that they are a danger that must be recognized and dealt with. No alien being should be in control of humans or their associates in space. Be careful and go in peace."



## TRANSMISSIONS

By Jeff Ibach

While passing through a known safe area, the characters find a slaughtered group of travelers not unlike themselves. The thing is, they were destroyed in a spectacular fashion; nearby trees are split in two and pits in the earth look like they were shattered by heavy weapons fire. The nearby peaceful village of Kaert should be warned!

### What Goes Here:

For maximum effect, replace the village with one in your world to which one of the PCs has a tie (perhaps he was aided here once, or has family). Little does the group know that the village itself is what caused this calamity. Recently an earthquake revealed a nearby military structure, and inside it was found a suit of power armor, fully loaded with extra ammo and power packs. The village leader Garlzon Trak claimed the armor for the defense of the village, but began using it to rule with an iron hand and to waylay trespassers through their land and take tolls. The villagers have turned to a young, charismatic rebel named Fremos to speak for them and talk reason to Garlzon.

### Ways to involve the PCs:

- 1) When the group arrives near the village, they come across some of the rebels led by Fremos making their way to the old military structure. The rebels have received word that another collapse has revealed more of the building, where yet another suit of power armor may be, or at least weaponry to help dissuade Garlzon from abusing his power. An exploration of the military base is in order!
- 2) Fremos has already explored the Military base and got the other suit of power armor and its munitions. The PCs come into the picture to find the town a battle zone! Garlzon and Fremos are going at it and there are folks running everywhere, buildings exploding, and rockets flying. The villagers are caught in the crossfire!
- 3) Regardless of the above two situations or how you choose to involve the PCs, it's likely that Garlzon and Fremos, two otherwise rational people, have been injected by experimental drugs by the power armor. These drugs were originally meant to help regulate blood pressure, promote aggression, help the wearer keep cool under fire, and most importantly, obey military instructions. The drugs have gone bad, and the result is an overpowering ego trip and adrenaline rush that brings out the two men's worst traits and turns them into unstoppable fighting machines.



# FUTURETECH

By Scott Thomas & Jeff Ibach

## FX Artifact: Precursor Grafting Item

Internal Memo  
EYES ONLY

To: XW584 39JNS (Bartholomew Dark)  
Director of Special Operations: Voidcorp.  
From: TR458 04HIQ (Jameson Alhandro)  
Project Director: APOLLO Project  
RE: Precursor Grafting Item #13155

Mr. Dark:

At the time Subject #13155 was delivered to the APOLLO research facility, it was taken out of stasis, examined, and found to be in acceptable condition. Since the subject's escape and (presumed) death in the Ahargus asteroid field, the grafting item has not been recovered. Although we are hopeful for recovery, I have enclosed the current report for your review.

### Precursor Grafting Item - Gauntlet

Subject #13155 came into our care after an item of ancient, apparently "Precursor" manufacture grafted itself onto his lower left arm and the back of his hand. The subject is a field archeologist currently working on the Precursor dig on Iskandar 5. Tiny filaments of unknown material penetrate the skin around the edges of the artifact. These cause the subject no apparent pain, and seem to graft into his circulatory system. In addition, magnetic scans discovered two long tendrils penetrating the bones of the forearm, bonding with them on a molecular level. The artifact is seemingly powered by the life force of the subject. It is our current opinion that trying to remove the item will kill the subject and utterly destroy the item.

The item is constructed of an unknown bio-metallic substance most similar to Mechalus bone carbon. Dating the item has been nearly impossible. Our best suppositions have come by dating other items recovered in the dig.

The gauntlet is powered by the subject's bio-field, and will keep him alive in very adverse conditions. The detrimental effect of this is that whenever the subject's natural adrenal functions operate, i.e. under stress or surprise, the artifact overrides the subject's nervous system and the subject suffers a momentary loss of consciousness.

The second ability of the gauntlet was not discovered until

later. Recorders show that the artifact can project a stealth field over the subject, rendering him nearly invisible to the naked eye and electronic viewing devices. The nature of this field is unknown. We believe that the subject hid this ability and waited for an opportune moment to make his escape. The base recorders clearly show the subject engaging the device and fading from view, leaving only a distorted outline. The same blurry outline was detected entering a class 2 shuttle and taking it out of the base, into the Ahargus asteroid field that borders our research satellite. Due to the dense nature of the asteroid field, the subject's odds for survival are thin. Maintenance robots are scouring the field in the direction the subject was heading.

Recovery of the artifact is our first priority.

### Game Data:

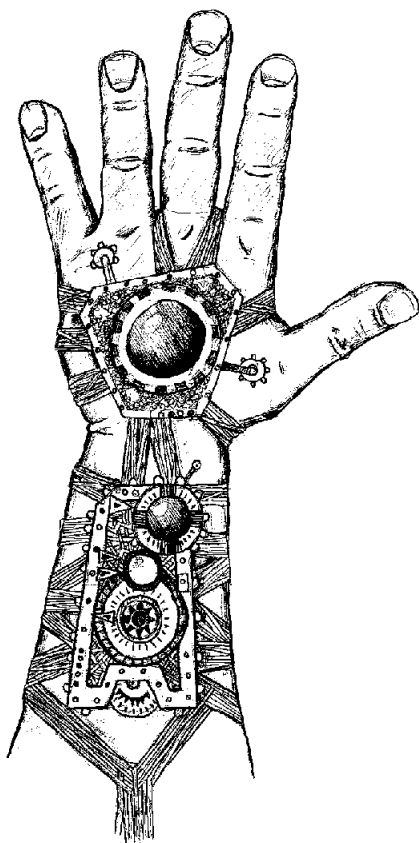
Form: Bracelet/Gauntlet  
Purpose: Defense

Powers: 1 good, 1 ordinary  
Drawbacks: 1 slight

Drawback (blackouts): The artifact may cause its user to lose all of his stun points under certain conditions, usually a time of great stress, triggered whenever the user is 'surprised' in game play. This effect should probably happen once every 2 play sessions of so.

Power (stealth field): The artifact projects a field that bends electromagnetic energy, rendering objects invisible. Attempting to attack an invisible hero imposes a +3 penalty. Sound and smell are not effected, and thus the hero might be detected by that means. If the hero moves while the artifact is active, he becomes visible as a heat shimmer (reduce the step penalty to attackers to +2). The field has a 1 meter radius and lasts for 5 minutes per day.

Power (hyper adaptation): The artifact allows the hero to survive indefinitely in hostile conditions. He is able to breathe and ignore temperature, gravity or radiation extremes, but might eventually die of thirst or starvation if he has no supplies. The device can adapt the hero to any environment that deviates up to four grades on the GRAPH system; for instance two grades of gravity and two grades of pressure, whatever is required by the user (or to sustain his life, when the device takes over).



*Artifact Art & Transmission by Scott Thomas*



# UPLIFTING THOUGHTS

By Jim Sharkey

## Uplifting Thoughts – The Galactic Institutes

Strictly speaking, there are no written Galactic laws. Instead, Galactic society is guided by traditions dating back billions of years. To uphold these traditions, the Galactics established numerous institutes, each one in charge of safeguarding a certain aspect of Galactic tradition.

**Library Institute** – This is arguably the most important of the Galactic institutes. It is in charge of gathering and preserving the accumulated knowledge of the ages. Its knowledge is ostensibly available to all Galactic civilizations, though there are those who suspect that not all clan's Library branches are created equal. Even during times of war, an occupying force must allow its captives to use the Library.

Most Galactic clans rely entirely on the Library for all their technology; in fact, some clans feel that even questioning the information in the Library is blasphemous. These clans find Earthclan's desire to check the Library's facts to be gauche at best and offensive at worst. But other clans agree that it is possible that the older information gets, the less reliable it is, and that some of it should be confirmed.

The Great Seal of the Library is a five-rayed spiral with a line through it that is normally displayed on any ship that has a Library unit. The Great Seal is considered a flag of truce in Galactic society.

**Uplift Institute** – This institute regulates the Uplift process. All client species are required to be capable of piloting starships and being a part of Galactic society. There are several stages of Uplift, and the Uplift Institute is in charge of testing a client species' suitability for advancing to the next stage. These ceremonies allow the client to prove its worthiness, and to choose its Uplift Consort, the Galactic species that helps oversee its development.

The Institute also sets the guidelines used across the galaxies for client eugenics. While Earthclan thumbs its nose at many Galactic traditions, it follows this edict and the others from the Uplift Institute religiously for fear of losing their clients. As a result, there are certain clients whose mating rights are probationary. These "probshers" are usually found in the lower levels of society, and many resent their status. Some,

however, realize that their deeds can lift them into a higher breeding category, and strive to improve.

The Uplift Institute is also in charge of making sure that a patron is not abusing its clients. A patron is responsible for protecting its client *as a species*. That is, an individual client can be sacrificed, but its species as a whole must be preserved. If a patron fails to do so, it may lose its client to another race.

Some of the other rules of the Institute include the following: A race may not Uplift a presapient species without permission from the Institute. A race may not use its clients recklessly. That is, a patron cannot Uplift a race with the intention of keeping them as mere tools, preventing it from becoming able to participate in Galactic society. A race may not modify its client to an extent where its original nature is completely changed.

**Institute for Civilized Warfare** – While this title may seem to be an oxymoron, in a universe with thousands of different races coming into regular contact, a great deal of conflict is inevitable. As a result, to avoid having these titans burn the galaxies to ashes, certain rules for warfare were established. It is designed to protect whole civilizations and planets' biospheres, not individuals, but it is opposed to mass slaughter of civilians. An example of one of their rules is the requirement of an announcement of the intention to invade a target, using precise language listing the reasons for the attack, etc.

**Institute for Migration** – This group is responsible for protecting the ecologies of planets. They declare what planets should remain fallow, allowing new presapient life to arise in them. At first, Earthclan's relations with this group were extremely hostile. After contacting Galactic civilization, Earthclan was forced to withdraw from several colonies and had one decimated outright. However, since then, Earthclan's impressive terraforming and biosphere reclaiming abilities have impressed the Institute greatly.

**Navigation Institute** – This Galactic institute is in charge of documenting and protecting hyperspace jump lines. They also set the guidelines for ships to be space-worthy.

For more on Uplift, see the novels by David Brin, or visit <http://www.davidbrin.com> or <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~tshiple/Encyclopedia/>



# THE NEO-CHIM PC RACE

By Jim Sharkey

## The Neo-Chimpanzee – A New PC Race from *Uplift*

The very first species that humans took to the stars were chimpanzees. It has been a slightly easier road for the chimps than their dolphin cousins, due to their greater physiological similarities to their human patrons. But coming down from the trees hasn't been easy.

Chims and chimees, as male and female neo-chimpanzees are called respectively, tend to show their patrons a bit more deference than dolphins do. Chims are by nature slightly more serious than their cousins are, although not markedly so. By Galactic standards, chimpanzees are still far too flippant.

The neo-chimpanzees have been modified to be taller than they used to be. Their craniums have been changed as well to more closely resemble a human, with a less sloping forehead and a less jutting jaw. Finally, their feet are slightly less dexterous than their ancestors' feet were as well. Chims are still as hairy as they ever were, though, and they have a tendency to scratch a lot. Formal dress in particular makes them uncomfortable.

Neo-chimpanzees generally hate the stereotypes of their presapient ancestors. Climbing trees and eating bananas are especially stereotypical, and are generally avoided if at all possible. Neo-chims do retain some of their ancestors' more basic habits, however. Their marriages tend to be communal, with several wives and sometimes several husbands in each marriage group. One of the most important bonding rituals between chims is grooming. Like their ancient predecessors, neo-chimpanzees groom each other's fur; while they have no bugs, as their ancestors did, it is still a pleasant experience that keeps the chims' fur from becoming unkempt and knotted and is important to their emotional well-being.

### Special Abilities:

Despite their distaste for the stereotype that it promotes, neo-chimpanzees are excellent climbers. They get one free level in Athletics – *Climb* and get a –1 step bonus to any Athletics – *Climb* roll.

Because their feet are able to handle and manipulate items, they're very adept at most Acrobatic skills. Neo-Chims get a –1 step bonus on any Acrobatic – *Daredevil*, *Dodge*, *Fall*, and *Brachiating* specialty skills. The

*Brachiating* skill is a specific skill involving moving by swinging from one branch or vine to another. It allows the neo-chims to move at their normal movement rate in the right situations.

Neo-Chimpanzees are subject to *stress atavism*. When placed in a stressful situation, a chim must make a WIL feat or *Resolve – Mental* check, or receive a +1 step penalty to all actions until the stressful situation ends. Unlike their dolphin cousins, chims' brains were fairly like human ones and required less tinkering, and as a result, they get a –1 step bonus to this test automatically. The presence of a leader, for example a responsible human or a ship's captain, grants an additional –1 step bonus to this check. In the event that a chim is placed under constant stress such as evading an enemy for a long time, this check must be made every month, and the penalties are cumulative. As the penalties get more severe, a chim may stop using Anglic. A Good success reduces prior penalties by one level, and an Amazing success reduces prior penalties by two levels. Over time, *stress atavism* may cause a chim to revert irrevocably to a primal state.

As a client species, chims are expected to show proper deference and respect to patron races. While humans are very relaxed about this, Galactic races are usually not. A chim must show humans proper deference in front of other races, or cause his clan to lose face.

If chims are forced to go for too long without being groomed, they become irritable and cranky. Any chim who is not groomed for more than ten days by another chim gets a +1 step to any Interaction or similar skills. This penalty is cumulative, increasing every ten days, up to a maximum penalty of +3.

### Ability Scores:

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIL	PER
6/15	8/15	4/14	4/13	4/13	4/12

### Free Broad Skills:

STR – Athletics, one level in *Climb*

DEX – Vehicle Operation

CON – Stamina

INT – Knowledge

WIL – Awareness

PER – Interaction

For more on *Uplift*, see the novels by David Brin, or visit <http://www.davidbrin.com> or <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~tshiple/Encyclopedia/>