

HELL ON EARTH
Brainburners

Table o' Contents

Posse Territory.....3



Chapter One: Veterans o' the Syker Wars.....5

Way Back When.....	5
The Academies.....	8
Syker Squads.....	24
Earth Sykers.....	29
Jericho.....	29
Tale of an Earth Syker.....	30
The End.....	32

Chapter Two: Makin' Sykers 35

Starting Powers.....	37
Hindrances.....	38
New Hindrances.....	38
New Edges.....	39
How Sykers Get	
Their Groove On.....	41
Earth Sykers.....	42
The Uses of	
Syker Powers.....	44
Tactics for Sykers.....	45
Affecting Undead.....	47
Syker Slang.....	47

Chapter Three: Syker Powers 53

New Powers.....	53
Creating New Powers.....	81
Syker Powers.....	83
More Syker Powers.....	84
Powers by Type.....	84

No Man's Land... 85



Chapter Four: Syker Tech 87

Sykertropic Drugs.....	87
Hardware.....	91

The Marshal's Handbook 95



Chapter Five: Syker Secrets 97

The Jericho Academy.....	99
Powers.....	101
Syker Tech.....	101
Brainburn.....	103

Chapter Six: Red Reckoning 111





Chapter One: Veterans o' the Syker Wars



Hey, you.

Yeah, you. Baldie. C'mere a minute.

You're a syker, aren't you?

Sure, sure, a lot of guys have lost their hair—some naturally, some 'cause of radiation. But not many as young as you. Or with such a clean scalp. Brainers with the glows lose their hair in patches. Your head's shiny as a waxed baby's butt.

I've been around a long time, kid. I recognize a greenie syker when I see one. And a newbie like you—Hell, I can practically see the water dripping off your earlobes.

How do I know? I'm one myself. Name's Jack Mather, but most folks just call me "Sarge."

See this clasp holding my shirt together? That's a Screaming Eagle. It shows I was on Banshee. The sykers who stayed on Earth don't have clasps and symbols like these. They didn't do anything to earn them.

No, I didn't find you by accident. Some of us make a point of seeking out "greenies" like you and teaching them what they need to know. The old academies are gone forever, but a few of us have started a new one. Why? 'Cause sykers are brothers. And sisters. If you don't learn how to handle your powers, you're not going to live long enough to appreciate 'em. Or you'll give the rest of us a bad name by blowing your fool head off or siding with the wrong elements out there in the wastes.

So sit, and let me tell you about your family.

Way Back When

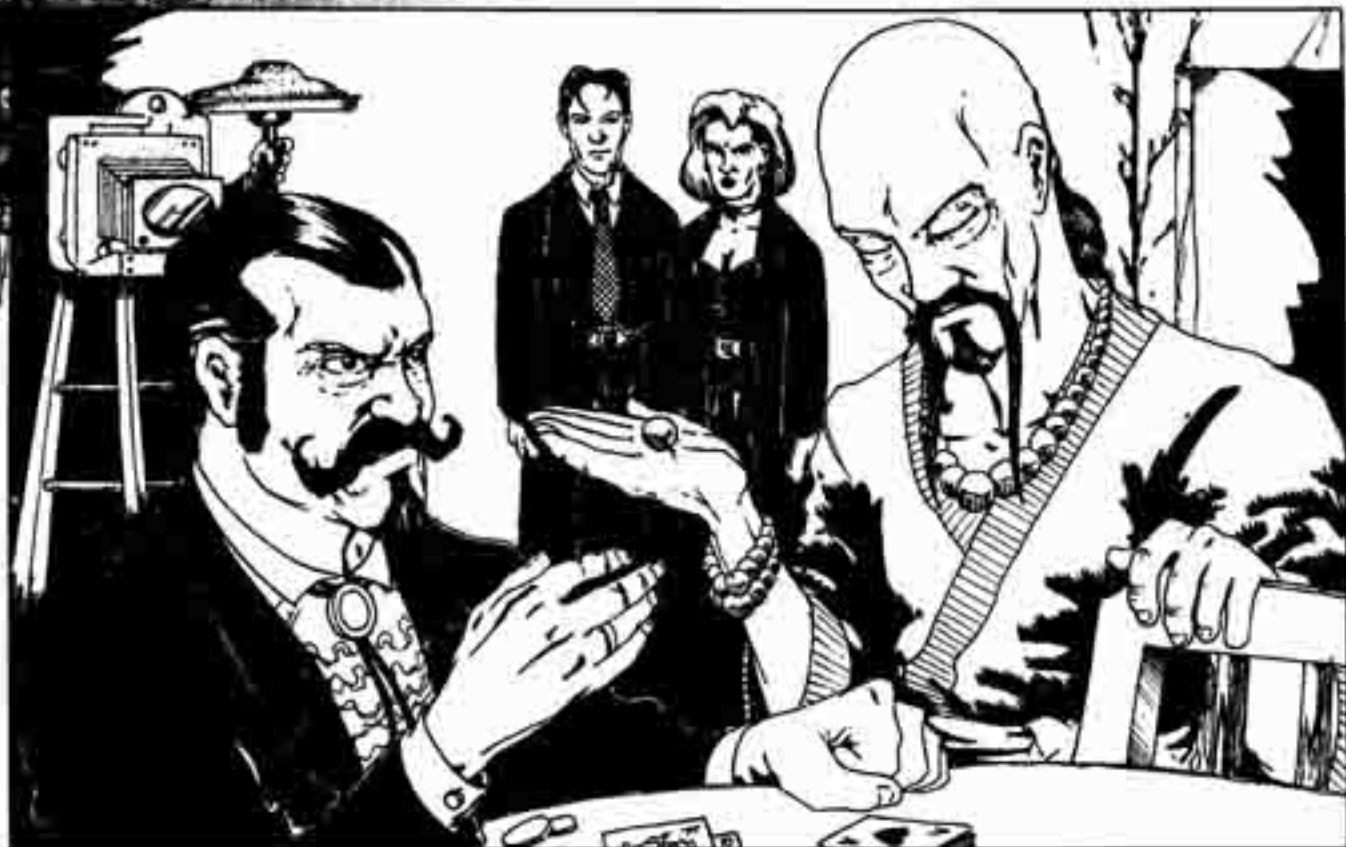
They don't teach you kids much these days. Hell, there are hardly any schools where they *could* teach you. So I'll begin with a few basics.

Over 200 years ago, on July 3, 1863, there was this little thing called "the Reckoning." It was touched off by a bitter, old bastard named Raven. He was an immortal Indian shaman who never got over the fact that white men had killed his family, so he decided to take it out on them by unleashing a group of evil spirits called manitous. At least that's the Indian name for 'em. These demons served greater masters—the Reckoners—feeding them with human fear. The Reckoners turned around and "planted" more fear by releasing all sorts of monsters into the world—many of which are still running around out there even as we speak, so watch yourself.

Some folks soon realized they could manipulate this new magic too. Some called the methods they used to harness magic "hexes," and they cast spells like wizards out of fairy tales. Well, okay, not exactly like that, but you get my point. They figured out a way to tap into the land of the Reckoners—what the Indians call the Hunting Grounds—and draw arcane power from it by literally dueling a demon, or "manitou," for it. Sometimes that worked like a charm, but sometimes it backfired.



Veterans of the Syber Wars



and the "huckster," or spellcaster, got zapped by the manitou. All in all, not the best of situations, really. The same goes for the "mad scientists" who unwittingly used the power of the manitous to create fabulous inventions—but who were almost inevitably driven insane by the process.

But there were some other folks who could reach into the Hunting Grounds and grab a fistful of power for themselves without suffering any kind of backlash. The most prominent of these were the martial artists of China, Japan, and other parts eastward (no, not back on the Atlantic seaboard—the Far East).

Somehow these fighters were able to draw on the power of the Hunting Grounds to perform all sorts of amazing feats. They could jump dozens of feet, cause terrible injuries with a seemingly insignificant punch, even snatch bullets out of the very air! They could do all sorts of stuff.

Even better, they never seemed to suffer any problems from using these powers. There were lots of old—sometimes very old—martial artists. Very few hucksters or mad scientists survived long enough to get gray hair or die in their beds. Somehow the

martial artists were able to tap into the Hunting Grounds *directly* and, because of their intense mental training, use its power with little fear of harm.

Needless to say, the governments of the world were *veeeery* interested in these folks.

Starting with the USA and later the CSA, the Agency and the Texas Rangers began rounding up hucksters and their brethren so they could study and test them. Some of them came willingly and offered to help their countries, but far more were simply shanghaied, kidnapped, or blackmailed into participating.

They were poked, prodded, run through mazes, monitored, examined, analyzed, psychoanalyzed, and subjected to countless tests. Sometimes they were even dissected—and not always after they had bothered to stop breathing, if you catch my drift. This was just the first in a long line of episodes of exploitation of people like us by the so-called "authorities."

Don't get me wrong. Me and all the other sybers were all gung-ho when it came to saving the country. Maybe even the world. They just never told us we'd have to destroy it first.

Blood under the bridge, I suppose.

Let's get back to the lesson.

Veterans o' the Syker Wars

The Huckster-Soldiers

It took the Agency and the Rangers a while, but eventually they started to get a glimmer of the truth. They figured out how hucksters and martial artists accessed the Hunting Grounds. More importantly, they learned what sort of people have the talent to do so, and how to find them. Both the CSA and USA, not to mention other countries around the world, began to "recruit volunteers" from among the "potentials," as they called them, with an eye toward developing a corps of arcane-powered soldiers for use in their military forces.

Trying to use the hucksters in armies ultimately proved disastrous. Their powers were too unreliable for proper military use, and the chance of a backlash causing harm to other members of a huckster's unit was too great. Just to use one famous example, during the later years of the War Between the States, both sides began including hucksters in small, specialized field units. While on a raid in Kentucky, a Southern huckster named Luke McCray lost his duel with a manitou while attempting to destroy an enemy unit with arcane energy.

The resulting blast blew McCray's head to smithereens, annihilated about four-fifths of the rest of his unit, and left the survivors to be slaughtered by the Northern troops—who recovered a valuable military intelligence report from one of their bodies. As a result, the Northern army was able to ambush the Southern army two days later and achieve a major victory.

So, huckster-soldiers proved to be a pretty stupid idea, overall. The martial artists worked out better. What I mean is that the martial artists' *methods* worked better than those of the hucksters. Of course, neither nation was going to allow a lot of foreigners into their army back then, but they did learn from them.

Eventually, the Northern and Southern governments figured out what made the martial artists tick, how they were able to draw power from the Hunting Grounds with such relative ease. I don't know exactly what it was, myself, though I've been told it's a combination of certain latent genetic anomalies which are brought out through intensive training regimens.

Supposedly this genetic trait is a little bit more common among folks hailing from China and other parts of Asia, which is why they developed such powers long before the rest of us. But there are plenty of other people around the world who can do it too, given the right course of study.

Trial By Fire

The governments who studied the martial artists decided the time had come to develop training programs of their own. At first these programs were fairly small. The masters were still learning how to build and use their tools. The first projects took as long as 20 years to produce a usable "psychic warrior," or "syker" as they eventually came to be called. About 80% of the people who entered the programs died or went insane. Only a few survived to use their powers in combat.

The sykers got their first trial by fire during a big dust-up called World War I. It began when a German dictator decided he needed a bigger backyard and tried to take over the rest of Europe. The whole conflict soon drew in all the European nations, plus the American ones as well. The USA weighed into the fight on the side of the "Allies"—those who opposed the Germans and their comrades—in the year 1917. The CSA came in at about the same time, or maybe a little earlier. (I'm not sure.) The few sykers who made it over there proved to be invaluable. The Germans had a psychic development program of their own, but it lagged far behind the American versions.

Sergeant York

The American governments usually hushed up syker involvement anyway. They preferred to inspire the troops with stories of "ordinary" victories and hide the extent of their psychic warriors' awesome powers. For example, one of the best-known stories from that war was about this tough old Reb named Sergeant York. He single-handedly killed 25 Germans and captured 132 more in a daring attack on a machine-gun nest. What the newspapers didn't tell the cheering public was that York was no ordinary soldier. He was a syker.

He used a power we now call one-man army to make it look like there were dozens of him. The Germans, thinking themselves outmatched, surrendered to him. I heard tell that when he learned the truth, the German captain in charge of the men who were captured killed himself in shame. The government didn't tell anyone York was a syker 'cause they were afraid regular soldiers would just dig in and wait for someone else to do all the dirty work for them.



Veterans o' the Syker Wars

The Academies

World War I convinced all the world's governments to ramp up their syker programs. Before long, the training programs were formalized into special academies.

The first of these academies was the United States Psionic Academy, or USPA, located in a secret facility said to be somewhere in Idaho or Iowa. Some "I" state. There was a scientist there named Bertram Killingham who did more to advance the study of syker powers than anyone. Even today, eggheads use the term "Killinghams" to represent "units of psionic energy." Real sykers just call it "juice."

The Confederate equivalent, where I went, was the Mental Proving Ground. It was in western Louisiana, so it's under water now. We were a bit more brutal in our discipline and training, but our way worked. The Rebs got just about as many sykers out of the Proving Ground as the Northerners did out of the USPA.

Naturally, many other governments had their own programs, like the British Wembley Yards school or the Chinese Wuxi-Chang course. All were similar in one way or another to the two main American programs. By the time the Second World War broke out, the training programs had been decreased to a 10- to 15-year period, and several hundred sykers had been churned out.

Kinetics

Killingham and other scientists who studied sykers before the Last War divided syker powers up into five categories: biokinesis, psionics, sykokinesis, pyrokinesis, and telekinesis. Some weirdos have other categories, but these are the main groupings which just about everyone agrees on.

Biokinesis

Biokinetic powers manipulate body functions in humans, animals, and—as we found out later—even aliens.

Brainburners accomplish this nifty trick by probing the victim's mind with psionic energy, then getting in sync with its electrical and neurological impulses. The body being a complicated thing, biokinetic powers require great concentration. They're a little easier to pull off on your own body than someone else's, but even that's still tough. That's why sykers don't make great healers.

Veterans o' the Syker Wars

Psionics

Psionic powers are things like mental communication, mind control, and emotional influence. Typically, these abilities involve the syker channeling energy toward the target's mind and then controlling some part of the id, ego, or superego. Or sometimes they just poke the host's mind in the cerebral kiester with a sharp stick.

Psionic powers also allow sykers to do things like detect other minds (or mental powers), scan a large area for a particular mind, perceive through another person's senses, or turn some loser into his personal servant. Handy stuff.

The hard part is that people don't like having their minds invaded. Go figure, huh? How'd you like for someone to peek into your head and examine every dirty thought you've ever had? Or every sick notion that crossed your mind, even for an instant? Then they give you that look like you're filth? That's why no one likes "mind freaks." Of course the worst part is some folks think we're all like that. Get around someone who doesn't know better, and they'll think you can read their every thought. If you can, kid, keep it to yourself. Nobody likes to have strangers going through their dirty laundry.

Telekinesis

Telekinetic powers is a broad category. It covers everything that involves mental manipulation of matter. This includes not only telekinesis itself but many other specialized applications of TK, such as boneripping or itsy-bitsy spider.

Telekinetic powers were very popular with Banshee sykers because of their versatility and capability for carnage. (A few successful Aztec surprises put fear into the local anouks.)

Telekinetic powers are also useful for creating minor but impressive effects—things like drinking a mug of beer without holding it in your hands, or making someone dance in midair. These "parlor tricks" can be good for impressing the yokels. Sometimes that's more important than blowing some jerk's head off if you're in need of food and shelter for the night.

Pyrokinesis

Pyrokinetic powers involve the mental manipulation and creation of fire, flame, and heat. A skilled pyrokinetic can detonate explosives at range with but a thought, cause his targets to burst into flame, or even take out entire platoons with tremendous bursts of flame.

The funny thing is that no one knows why sykers can manipulate fire. Why not water? Or cold? Who knows? That was one of the mysteries scientists had been trying to solve when the Last War broke out.

Pyrokinetic powers were not especially widespread or popular during the Cold War years, when sykers mainly worked as spies and commandos. They really came into their own during the Faraway War and the Last War. When the sykers finally had to stand up and begin blasting things, nothing worked better than powers like arson, pyro, or slow burn. And pyrokinetic abilities haven't lost any popularity in the Wasted West. Nothing's better for roasting muties.

Sykokinesis

Sykokinesis was originally "psychokinesis," but everyone misspelled it so often, sykers made it official.

Regardless of how you spell it, sykokinesis is the manipulation of supernatural energy. How it works is more mysterious than even pyrokinesis. It is also damned unpredictable and has the most chance of backfiring. Many of the powers in this category can be just as dangerous to the syker as folks he's working against.

Sykokinetic powers let you steal another syker's juice, zap another loser's power, and all kinds of funky stuff. We were really just getting a handle on sykokinesis when the world blew up.

The "Sixth" Category

A lot of brainers think sykers can interface with machines, and the term "cyberkinesis" has appeared in newspapers like the old *Epitaph* and other rags. It just ain't true, kid. Mostly.

See, there is this device called "machine head" developed by Hellstromme Industries. It translates brain waves into electronic signals to let you sync up with a computer or other gizmo with a CPU (Central Processing Unit, junior), but no syker I know has ever been able to do that without the machine head.

I guess folks think sykers can do all those things because they've seen sykers in news vids jacked into warwalkers and other assault craft, or breaking into computers and stealing secrets. It's only logical to figure we can do it on our own. But we can't, not without a little technological wizardry.



Veterans o' the Syker Wars

Bald Is Beautiful

One thing we discovered early on is that focusing mental powers through one's brain is tough work. It causes a lot of stress and strain on the system. One of the ways this stress manifests is that your hair falls out. I used to have a big, full head of hair, but blasting anouks burnt it right off. Some of the old martial artists went through the same thing, but most didn't push their powers like we did. Hucksters got off the hook, even though they pushed their powers to the limit, because manitous helped them out. We pushed our powers and did it on our own. Our hair paid the price.

The scientists used to talk about "dermal" stress factors and "follicle fatigue," but I don't think they had a clue about it. There hasn't been a working syker who wasn't stark bald since we started. Even the lady sykers are like that. Personally, I think it's damn sexy.

Sykers in the Night

Anyway, the world's powers quickly discovered sykers were best at black ops: commando and spy stuff. Their powers gave them an unmatched ability to impersonate, infiltrate, assassinate, gather intelligence, and perform all the other tasks that keep governments and armies going. They could be used for pure military missions too—fighting on the battlefield and all that—but generally they weren't as good at that, and frankly they were too valuable to risk on such dangerous activities.

So, covert ops is what the sykers did during the Second World War, which started in, if my memory serves me, 1939 and lasted until 1948 or so. Unlike World War I, which was basically confined to Europe, in World War II they pulled out *all* the stops. There was fighting across the globe: Europe, Africa, Asia, and even a few generally unsuccessful strikes here and there against the Americas.

Espionage and sabotage were very, very important. There's nothing like knowing about your enemy's troop movements or technological developments to give you that upper hand, after all. And sykers, spies, and commandos were invaluable to both sides.

A spy who can change his appearance, read minds, and manipulate locks and machines with just a thought is virtually unstoppable by ordinary troops—and most other folks too.

After the war ended, with the Americans and their Allies victorious, the world settled down into a so-called "Cold War" pitting the two American nations (now generally allied with each other) against the power of the Soviet Union—what eventually became the Russian Federation. Looking back on that era, one might wonder whether entire military budgets weren't really devoted to spying. When you can't fight with guns and bombs, you fight with information—a spy's stock in trade.

As a result, the number of syker training academies soared, as did the amount of research into syker powers and their applications. As techniques improved and understanding of psychic powers increased, the amount of time needed to train a syker shrank to five years. As of the Last War, no one had succeeded in reducing this training time further—and at this point I doubt anyone ever will, since there aren't any formal training programs anymore.

As the "fighting" became more vicious, more attention was paid to using syker powers not just to gather intelligence, but to eliminate enemy agents and officials. Assassination joined spying and sabotage in the syker's portfolio. The graduates of the Soviet Union's elite *Schola Pervlenie* in particular developed a reputation for ruthless use of their powers to kill.

However, despite their increasing power, sykers gradually became more and more outmoded. Though unmatched as spies, they weren't nearly as effective on the battlefield as many of the weapons developed in the early-to-mid-21st century.

It took little or no training for ordinary soldiers to use guns which virtually aimed themselves and fired explosive armor-piercing ammunition, to aim accurately emplaced guns capable of firing across oceans, to target objects as small as a human hand with space-based lasers, or to gain a precise picture of the battlefield using linked radar and satellite imagery and computer mapping.

Sykers, by contrast, had limited uses and were outrageously expensive to train. They could even become liabilities if they went loco due to brainburn or, worse, became double agents serving their former enemies. Generals enamored of the toys of war became less and less willing to fund psychic warrior programs instead of covert development projects. However, they did maintain elite troops of "black ops" sykers for use in the inevitable, low-intensity conflict situations or sabotage.

Veterans o' the Syker Wars



The Sandusky Incident

The most famous syker incident concerns the United States President Everett Sandusky, who ran the country from 2012 until his death in 2016. His fondness for the ladies was well known, and the Russian (formerly Soviet) spymasters decided to take advantage of this fact. They sent one of their most highly trained sykers, Akilina Svetlova, to eliminate the President, allowing his more pacifistic Vice President to replace him.

Svetlova used the skinwalker power to impersonate one of the President's many mistresses and gained access to his bedroom while the First Lady was away on a goodwill tour of some God-forsaken place in Africa. Once they were alone, she dropped the disguise and, before he could scream for help, gutted him like a fish.

His aides found his corpse sprawled on his blood-soaked bed the next morning. Svetlova was never seen again, but you can bet her masters paid her a pretty penny to vanish into the woodwork for the rest of her life. The whole operation went so well that the United States only found out what happened when a spy dug through the Russian archives a few years later.

Beredsky

Another good example of syker power in action is the Beredsky case of 2031. The United States' Agency uncovered evidence that Beredsky, a Washington, DC, bookseller, was a spy for the Russian Federation and a point of contact for many other Russian spies in the region.

Without attracting any attention whatsoever, they had some of their sykers "bring him in" for "questioning." When it was all over, Beredsky's personality had been completely broken down and remade. He kept on spying—but for the United States. Every report he filed for nearly 20 years contained only information the Agency wished him to transmit. The resulting disinformation campaign, coupled with knowledge gained from Beredsky's contacts back home, proved invaluable to the Americans during the Last War. One former Northern Alliance officer who survived the war said Beredsky was the one who alerted the Northern Alliance to the Russian landing in Alaska. That little tidbit got an entire Russkie battalion wiped out on the beach.





Veterans o' the Syker Wars

The Tunnel

Hellstromme's discovery of the Tunnel back in '44 was destined to change the sykers forever. Now, I'm not up on all the fancy science behind the thing, but I know what it did.

It opened a pathway to another world. Sure, the Americans, Russians, and Europeans had established bases in near space and on the Moon a decade or so before, and the Americans would have one on Mars before too much longer. But as advanced as their space programs were, they could never hope to travel to other stars (or their planets) in a person's lifetime.

The Tunnel changed all that. Think of it as a shortcut across the galaxy, junior. And the probes that Hellstromme Industries sent through soon found an inhabitable planet! It was in a star system Hellstromme himself called "Faraway" because of its location far across the galaxy. Hellstromme immediately sent a ship and a squad of his "corporate security force" (read: private army) through the Tunnel to the planet.

Banshee and the Anouks

When they got there, these soldiers (marines, really) found a planet full of people! All right, maybe I should be more clear. They were aliens. That's right: little, green men—except they weren't little, green, or men. In fact, they had dark purple skins, were taller than humans, and seem to have descended from some type of warmblooded lizard. Hellstromme's marines called 'em "grapes."

After the marines misinterpreted the aliens' attempted greeting as an attack, they opened fire. About 200 or so of the aliens were slaughtered before the marines realized what was going on. After that stellar (pardon the pun) introduction, you can imagine what human-alien relations have been like since then.

Eventually, we learned the aliens called themselves "anouks" and were a peaceful, mainly agricultural people. Like humans, they were the only intelligent race on their planet. Unlike humans, they found its climate—extremely windy, and usually quite dry—very comfortable. Humans seemed better adapted to the warmer equatorial regions, but the rest of the planet was also habitable. With the constant wind screaming over the blasted plains, the name "Banshee" was a natural.

The Rock Rush

The anouks didn't seem to mind contact with Earth. At first, the only people who really wanted to go there were scientists and the like. They began studying, exploring, and analyzing everything they could get their hands on. It was a lab weasel's dream come true: a whole new planet and people to learn about!

All that changed in 2052 when a scientific expedition sponsored by the European Confederation discovered ghost rock on Banshee. News of the Eurcon team's discovery soon reached just about everyone on Earth, and the race was on. Suddenly tens of thousands of people were coming to Banshee, hoping to strike it rich. The newsguys called it the "Rock Rush."

The anouks were none too pleased. Having some scientists on their world was one thing, but having huge, human colonies of greedy rock-diggers was another thing entirely. They protested strongly to whatever human officials they could find and tried to set limits and boundaries on human settlements and activities.

As you can imagine, this worked about as well as it did when the Indians tried to do the same thing on Earth 200 years ago. In short, humans kept doing what they wanted. The anouks, despite occasional raids on human settlements and minor "brush wars" with settlers, kept getting pushed back from any areas with ghost rock. Any treaties which were made were soon broken by one or both sides.

You see, most of the folks who went to Banshee were, well, let's just say they were unscrupulous. Only the most greedy or desperate sort travel millions of light-years from their homes to chip at rocks on another planet. Whether they wore dirty, tattered leathers or tailored survival gear, a lot of the Banshee "colonists" were pretty much the worst humanity had to offer.

The colonists came from all over the Earth. You name it, every country had people there. More overcrowded places like China and India even voiced the idea that maybe conditions in their countries could be eased by mass emigration to Banshee. In the end, colonists came like a plague of locusts. Within five years of the discovery of ghost rock, there were something like 300,000 humans on Banshee. Within 20 years, that number had increased by a factor of at least 10. No one got around to taking a census, so I really don't know for sure, but there were more colonists than you could shake a dead anouk at.

Veterans o' the Syker Wars

The Faraway War

It took about 20 years for the whole vicious stew to bubble over into outright war. The people at the UN apparently didn't know any American history, or they might have handled the whole situation better. A quick read of the old Sand Creek Massacre, Little Big Horn, the Trail of Tears, or the Ghost Dance might have clued them in.

It all started so innocently. The humans arrived and at first asked only for living room and the right to mine. The anouks are herders, so they didn't care if humans dug around in the mountains, as long as their grazing land wasn't harmed.

The humans stayed true to their word for all of about 20 years, but eventually they needed grassland to grow crops and feed the still-growing masses.

The anouks put their four-toed feet down. They refused to give up any grazing land. But we humans are nothing if not persistent. The colonists negotiated and cut a deal: grassland in exchange for certain items of human technology the anouks thought were pretty nifty. A treaty was prepared and signed, granting the humans the right to live in a specific area and nowhere else.

Broken Promises

It was only a couple weeks later when the treaty was broken for the first time. Some colonists decided they needed a little more room. They also needed some of the "barkas" the anouks herd. So they just put up huge electro-fences around vast areas of grazing land, some of which extended outside the treaty boundaries.

When the anouks found out (by getting zapped on the electro-fences, I'm told), they raised holy Hell to the only organized body on planet—the United Nations. The UN made the folks who violated the treaty dismantle their fences and move back inside the boundary. That was it.

No punishment, no fine, no nothing. Just c'mon back inside and play nice.

It didn't take long for other humans to begin trying the same trick. They didn't stand to lose anything but time. Soon there were a bunch of ranches and farms outside the boundaries. The anouks kept screaming bloody murder, but the UN didn't do much of anything about it besides make a few settlers move back inside the colony once they'd been caught.

A New Treaty

Finally the anouks got the message. Instead of talking, they tried a more direct approach. They raided some farms, beat the farmers silly, duckwalked them back to the treaty boundary, and tossed them back onto UN land. The humans were outraged. There was talk of "wiping all those purple scumbags out." Fortunately the UN renegotiated the treaty, allowing the humans more land. In exchange, the UN created a force of "Rangers" to patrol the reservation and keep the humans in line and off anouk lands.

But even that wasn't enough. Thousands of colonists began mining just about anywhere they wanted, regardless of what the treaties said. The Rangers performed their job admirably, but the UN never raised enough of them to handle all those sneaky colonists. Even the few they did recruit weren't given enough money or equipment to do their job properly. The anouks got understandably frustrated. Worse, after seeing the Rangers use violence to enforce the law, they decided it was okay for them to do the same. They began attacking isolated miners and settlers wherever they could find them.





Veterans o' the Syker Wars

Third Times The Charm!

The colonists pitched a fit. It was one thing to be shot by a duly-appointed Ranger, but another thing entirely to have some backwater aliens killing humans. Tons of folks considered the UN treaty null and void and began walking around armed to the teeth. Things turned ugly soon enough, and the Banshee cemeteries started to fill.


In late 2072, there was a major skirmish near one of the illegal settlements, a farming community called Stockade after the big wall the townsfolk had built to protect themselves. Five anouks and two humans were killed in the fighting, and dozens more were injured. Several homes and farms were burned to the ground.

The UN stepped in and tried one last time to defuse the situation. They offered the anouks brand-new tech in exchange for nearly unrestricted access to farmland. The anouks said they'd have to think about it. The whole world waited for over a month while the anouk leaders met. No one knows where they met or what was said. When they finally got back in touch with the UN and asked for a meeting, the few sensible humans on the planet breathed a sigh of relief and hoped the whole situation would soon be resolved.

They were disappointed. The anouks delivered a long, rambling message to the UN detailing all the things humans had been doing to them and their planet, which they didn't much care for. They wrapped it all up by insisting that the original treaty's terms be obeyed, since they hadn't done anything to break them.

Of course, they were asking to put the genie back in the bottle, and that never works. So instead of a peaceful resolution, the humans just got more of the same: more skirmishes, more raids, the whole horrible scene. Everyone knew things couldn't continue as they were. Something was going to give.

Crosstown



The camel's back broke in 2073 when four anouks were found butchered near a human mining settlement called Crosstown. War was one thing to the anouks, but this was kidnapping, torture, and murder. The local anouks, naturally enough, blamed the humans, and they were probably right. Doesn't matter, 'cause whatever the explanation, the end result was the same: four dead anouks and thousands of pissed-off live ones.

Two days later, after no apology was forthcoming from anyone in Crosstown, nor anyone arrested for the crime by the overworked Rangers, a miner named Harry Loftis blew up the town's water tower, threw open the gates to the local stockade where the settlers kept their weapons, and then gunned down the mayor before being shot to death. Before the town could recover, a wave of anouks swarmed over the town, killing everyone they could find before a defense could be raised. Today we know it must have been one of the mind-controlling skinnies who made Loftis do what he did, but back then, no one could figure it out.

The Crosstown attack got the whole planet riled up. Anouks everywhere went on the warpath while humans armed themselves. A few anouks and humans urged restraint and peace, but no one listened. More towns were attacked by anouks, and humans began to go on the offensive and attack anouk settlements outright. By late 2074, the situation had evolved from scattered clashes and skirmishes into a full-fledged war.

Coltrane

The odd element in this whole situation was a fellow named Jesse Coltrane. This guy spoke out on behalf of the anouks and even encouraged them to murder and raid the humans! He claimed they had a right to make the humans pay for their constant lies.

To this day, no one's quite sure why he did it. Some think he was a puppet of the skinnies (which I'll tell you about in a minute), but if you've ever fought one, you know that ain't right. They can't get hold of someone for longer than a few hours. Some people say Coltrane was just a genuinely noble person standing up for something he believed in. Maybe he was. Me, I think he had an angle. I don't know what it was, but I suspect he hoped to get special mining concessions from the anouks by showing himself to be "acting in their interest."

I never met Coltrane, but everyone I talked to who did agreed on one thing: The man could talk. And I don't mean jabber, I mean inspirational, like an old-fashioned preacher or a slick politician—or maybe both all rolled into one. When he spoke, people listened. The result was a growing group of human "rebels" who began helping the anouks.

One of the reasons I think Coltrane had something going on the side was the sort of people who joined up with him. Some of these

Veterans o' the Syker Wars

folks were genuine sympathizers who wanted to help the anouks protect their planet from human depredation. (Eco-babble from bleeding-heart whiners, if you ask me.) But most were disgruntled, low-end miners and troublemakers. That kind never gets involved unless there's something in it for them. Whatever it was, it brought them in like flies to cow patties. Most of the anouks cast a pretty dim eye on these human "allies," but another gun is another gun, so they didn't worry about it too much.

Reinforcements? What Reinforcements?

I gotta tell you, at first it looked pretty bad for the humans. The anouks were primitive, sure, but they outnumbered humans by about a hundred to one, at least, and they were bigger, stronger, and tougher to boot. Anouk spears and throwing clubs aren't nearly as good as bullets and lasers—but if one hits you, it kills you just as dead.

You'd expect the folks back on Earth to send some help, but it wasn't as simple as that.

Remember how I told you the colonists came from all over Earth? Well, that left the question of who was responsible for them. It wasn't as if all the French colonists lived together in one little area, and all the Mexican colonists in another. They'd mixed, mingled, even intermarried. The end result was that no one was sure just who was responsible for them. While politicians argued about it back home, anouks and colonists continued to slaughter each other.

Warfield

Finally, the people back on Earth figured out that maybe the United Nations should get up off its fat ass and do something, since no single nation could or would. The UN responded by calling for troops from all of its members, most of which actually sent a battalion or two.

Appointed to lead this "expeditionary force" was General Paul Warfield, more aptly known by his nickname "Overkill," or the shorter version: "OK." He was a US Marine General, and since the Rebs didn't know the USA was already secretly plotting against them, they agreed to let him command the Banshee forces. That led to some serious problems on Banshee among the conventional forces, but that's a story for another day.

OK Warfield was not a man who believed in the "minimum force needed to achieve the objective" rule which most generals guide

themselves by. No, this piece of work had a completely different philosophy. Before he left Earth in early 2075, he made sure all his men were equipped with the latest and best equipment Earth's arsenals could offer: man-portable guided missiles, hover tanks, milspec combat armor, long-range cryptocom, battle analysis computers, blochem grenades, C-27 plastic and liquid explosives, and hundreds of other tools of destruction and death. He didn't believe in traveling light.

When the United Nations Expeditionary Force (UNEF or, more casually, EXFOR) emerged in Faraway space and landed on Banshee, it got the chance to use its toys. Carpet-bombing, self-perpetuating incendiary bomb strafing runs, intercontinental artillery, and heavy hover tanks turned the tide of the conflict in a little over a week.

Tens of thousands of anouks were killed by Warfield in just a few days. I had a friend on Banshee who'd been there since day one. He told me the smell of burned anouk was everywhere on the planet, so strong that his armor's filters never could completely clean it out of his breathing air.



Veterans o' the Syker Wars

The Skinnies

Warfield thought he had the whole thing wrapped up in a neat little package. Then the anouks took the opportunity to turn the tables on him. They brought out the skinnies.

We called them "skinnies" because we never learned the proper anouk name for 'em. They were obviously anouks, but they looked like they were suffering from malnutrition or something. They were always much skinnier than the usual anouk—sort of wizened and wasted. Since we never managed to capture one alive (Hell, capturing one *intact* was usually a major effort), we never learned why this was. They weren't malnourished. Our autopsies showed that.

But whatever they lacked in brawn, the skinnies more than made up for in brainpower. They had strange mental abilities unlike any which most of the human soldiers and brass on Faraway had ever seen. All anouks have some strange powers, but most are pretty low-key. Skinnies are different. They can blast better than the best of us sykers.

Shortly after the first skinnies were encountered, there was a wave of soldier suicides, accidents and sabotage, colonist riots, and attacks on UNEF installations. The skinnies' powers caused soldiers to attack their commanders, destroy equipment, and lay down their rifles and wait meekly like lambs while the anouks hacked them down. Warfield's gains evaporated in the face of this new threat.

If you ask me, the skinnies are pretty much just anouk versions of sykers like us. However, their powers are a Helluva lot stronger than ours, and they seem to work at greater range with greater effect. It's a damn good thing there were so few of them, or we'd never have won that blasted war.

The Legion

When Overkill saw what the skinnies were doing to his troops, he knew he needed help. Even his kill-'em-by-the-thousands tactics weren't enough to take out the skinnies. The sheer fact that they'd never been seen before proved they were able to hide and protect themselves damn well. So he called for the one weapon he knew could work against the skinnies: sykers.

The United Nations put out the word, and its members, surprisingly, responded once again. Nearly 1,000 sykers were "volunteered" for a new unit of the EXFOR called the United

Veterans o' the Syker Wars

Nations Psychic Legion (UNPL). That's a more than a mouthful though. It didn't take long for folks to start calling us what we always called ourselves: "The Legion."

Squads

The Legion was broken down into squads, typically with 20 soldiers each, for a total of 50 squads at first. More came later. They were all given official designations, First through Fiftieth and so on, but before too long the sykers started choosing their own informal unit names and mascots. That's where we get names like the Screaming Eagles, the Brain Dogs, the Voodoo Gurus, and the Fightin' 43rd.

Me, I was with the Screaming Eagles—the best of the best, kid, and don't you forget it. We were the toughest, most experienced bunch of sykers on the planet. We could fry a skinny like bacon in a pan, and we never left a man behind.

We were sent to Banshee with several missions in mind. First and foremost was to protect the human colonists from the anouks, especially skinnies. Ordinary anouks could be fought off with ordinary weapons, but not skinnies. They were our job.

Warfield made sure it was drilled into us that our top priority was to protect his troops, despite the fact they were nothing but cannon fodder for his war machine. He treated them—and us—almost as if we were toys to throw away when he was done with us. Bastard.

Our second, but almost as important, task was to uncover human spies, conspirators, and anouk sympathizers. There were plenty of humans on Banshee who felt the anouks were in the right—that they deserved to be left alone to do what they wanted with their homeworld.

I dunno, maybe that's true. But for better or worse, one of my jobs was to find and, if necessary, eliminate those people. They put our troops in serious danger time and again by passing information to the anouks. I can't even begin to estimate how many human lives they cost. They betrayed their own people for a bunch of lizards.

We were based all around the planet—they sent us where they needed us, after all—though we did have a few bases. The first two were huge fortresses on the planet: Fort Reagan, built near Reagan's Bluff shortly after Warfield's victory at that battle, and Fort Antillia. The others were off-planet. One was on Banshee's only moon. We called it Moonbase Tranquillity, because up there nothing could hurt us. Not even the skinnies'

powers could reach us all the way up on that rock. The second was a space station out in one of the asteroid-mining colonies. There were only a few sykers out there. God knows what happened to them.

I was mainly stationed at Fort Antillia. I'll never forget what it was like on Banshee. It was an accurate name. The howling of those winds is like nothing else I've ever heard, before or since. Most weeks it seemed like there weren't more than a few hours when the air was still. And it had a distinct sort of smell. It wasn't that burnt anouk smell I mentioned earlier, but the overall odor of the place, sort of a "musty rock" odor, as if the planet itself were somehow unbelievably old, even by planetary standards. The odd greenish-tinted light caused by the frequent cloud cover didn't improve the place at all. In short, no one would ever mistake this place for Earth.

First Encounters

I'll admit the anouks surprised us at first. Despite the briefings, the first encounter with an enemy is always something of a shock. Just being around aliens feels, well, alien. I can't put it any other way.

The problem was, the anouks didn't fight right—not by human standards anyway. Our job was to get at the skinnies. Like any other smart guys, the anouks put their main weapons at the rear. But then they protected them with wave after wave after wave of anouk troops. They'd virtually throw themselves at our guns to keep us from getting a close shot at a skinny, much less actually get anywhere near one. They just didn't care about their own lives. For all I know, the skinnies might have been forcing them to do it, but they were so busy throwing rocks at us with telekinetic power and brain blasting us that I doubt they had the energy for it.

Energy—that's one thing the skinnies had in abundance. They didn't tire out quickly like we do. They could stand there and use their powers for hours at a time sometimes. No one of us could ever match a skinny, so we didn't. We faced 'em by the dozens and still lost half the time.

I sure as Hell wish I knew what their secret was. My best guess is that they know how to use things like Banshee stones and red better than we do. Both these things increase your juice, but the skinnies still kicked our ass even after we figured out how to use them too.





Veterans o' the Syker Wars

That means the skinnies had more than just red and Banshee stones. The only time I ever heard of sykers coming up even was when my own squad, the Screaming Eagles, caught one crossing the plains all by itself. Even then it put up one Hell of a fight. Damn thing killed our Lieutenant and three good veterans before the rest of us put it down in a barrage of brain blasts and bullets like you ain't never seen.

Learning by Attrition

OK Warfield eventually got tired of fighting a defensive war. He wanted results and progress, casualties be damned. Heaven help us, we went along with him.

At Warfield's orders, we began a methodical assault against the anouks. We'd find an anouk village, town, or stronghold and go at it until the place was rubble and they were all dead. Men, women, and children. Warfield didn't care. He wanted them all six feet under.

This wasn't as effortless as it sounds. We took some heavy hits during those first months. Those anouks are tough warriors themselves, even without the skinnies. They'd ambush us every chance they got, and they didn't have any problem with a stand-up attrition battle either—especially since there were a Helluva lot more of them than us. And all along, the skinnies attacked us and our men. I lost count of the number of times I had to kill one of the EXFOR soldiers when a skinny took hold of his mind and made him start shooting at us. It still sickens me to this day, but Warfield refused to let us slow down enough to develop defenses against those sorts of assaults. Bastard.

By 2076, though, we'd learned a lot more about how to fight the lizards and protect ourselves. We were actually making progress. We butchered thousands upon thousands of anouks, and still they kept coming. By now the sykers who had survived, like me, were battle-hardened warriors, capable of killing a lizard with fists, bullets, or brainpower. Even the skinnies began to retreat.

But that doesn't mean they were giving up. You see, many parts of Banshee are ideal for fighting a guerrilla war. Once you're off the plains, there are more jungles, forests, canyons, hills, and mountains than you can shake a stick at. In places, the terrain was so bad even the hover tanks had difficulty moving. In other words, there are plenty of places to hide.

Red River

UNEF spent over a year trying to dig those rats out of their holes. It was an almost impossible job. There weren't nearly enough sykers to go around—over half of us had been killed or injured badly enough to leave the fighting—and wherever we weren't, the skinnies seemed to be. With their mind control, telekinesis, and other assorted powers, they could usually make mincemeat out of ordinary human troops. And they did, again and again. But one by one, we sykers would track them down and eliminate them.

Usually that meant killing them and everyone with them, because by this point no anouk or rebel would surrender to us. Warfield's orders had seen to it that we were so feared and distrusted that they'd fight to the death rather than let us capture them. We couldn't really afford to capture them anyway. The skinnies had some way of making their own troops heads explode once we'd taken them to be interrogated. You wouldn't believe how much chaos that caused. Of course, that just pissed us off even more. I can't tell you some of the things we—I—did to them, but I'll never forget it.

The last major EXFOR offensive of the Faraway War came at a place called Red River Canyon. Reminded me in some ways of the Grand Canyon here on Earth, though it isn't nearly as big. It's a fairly large region where the water has cut down through red-tinted rock for centuries to form a steep-walled canyon. The river itself emerges from the rock cliffs and into a wide delta at the very end. The canyon's big enough to have several small jungles and plenty of other places for anouks to hide.

Red River Canyon was the territory of a particularly devious female anouk warrior known to us as Kreech. I never saw her, but they say she was damned pretty—for an anouk—and twice as smart. Kinda like a purple Joan of Arc. She was certainly the best tactician and fighter I ever heard of. Ordinary ground troops never got near her. She'd use her skinnies' powers to make them suicide, detonate their explosives, and turn their vehicles into so much scrap metal. The few soldiers who survived were inevitably driven mad.

Finally Warfield sent in sykers. The first squad to tackle Red River was the Hammerheads. When they didn't come back, the Black Falcons went in after them. According to their last radio transmission, the Falcons found the Hammerheads— butchered, skinned alive, and

Veterans o' the Syker Wars

hanging upside down from jungle trees. Then their transmission was cut off in mid-sentence without so much as a scream. The Tetsukaminari were sent in next, and they never even had a chance to report back.

Humiliated (and, if you ask me, a bit terrified), Warfield assembled the rest of the Legion and hurled us into Red River Canyon. I was with the group that found the Falcons and the Tetsukaminari. Something had staked the Falcons to the ground and peeled them apart like you'd peel a fruit, as if the anouks wanted to see what made humans tick.

The Tetsukaminari had never even gotten close to them. Somehow they'd been ambushed and tied up with jungle vines. Then someone set to work on their minds. When the docs cracked their skulls open later during the autopsy, their brains were nothing but blackened goo. From the looks of horror and agony on their faces, I can assure you whatever was done to them wasn't pleasant.

I can't really explain what happened next. We were all sick and tired of fighting. We'd been at it a long time, doing things that none of us were proud of. It killed something inside of us. We were cold and hard and ugly. Anouk lives meant

nothing to us. They were bugs to be squashed. And now some of those bugs had skinned a group of our guys alive and mind-fried some others.

Have you ever been so angry everything you see is tinged blood-red? That's what it was like for us when we found out what the lizards had done. It was the last straw. Whatever shreds of our self-control and humanity we'd been holding onto just snapped.

We formed up and plowed through the jungle. We kept running into camps and villages of grapes—totally peaceful ones, not soldiers, just innocents trying to escape the war. But we didn't care. We knew fighters and sympathizers were hiding among them, so we burned them down and blew them up. It was cold and methodical. We didn't let any of them escape. We tracked them down one by one and massacred them all. No quarter given; none asked. They did the same.

Sometimes a small anouk or rebel force would attack us, usually trapping some of these innocents in between. That didn't bother us, either. We just used them as shields. We competed to see who could kill the most anouks, then proved it by cutting out patches of



Veterans o' the Syker Wars

skin on their heads and stringing them together on necklaces. Those patches might as well have been the last of our consciences. It was just the sort of thing Warfield liked.

Bastard.

I wish to God I could go back and change what happened or make up for it somehow. But I never can.

The Final Assault

Finally we came to the last bastion: Castle Rock. It was the biggest anouk fort any of us had ever seen, built right into the side of the canyon near where the river emerged. It was made of huge stones and Banshee wood. Only the anouks' weird powers could have built such a strange place. And it was absolutely impregnable. Even hover tanks couldn't blast through those rocks—something about latent energy inside the stone. Or at least that's what the Voodoo Gurus said—one of our squads who specialized in weird stuff like that.

Me, I don't think it mattered. Warfield wanted to see us level the place on foot. One last brutal, bloody battle to show the anouks there was no hope of resistance. Ever.

In case I didn't say it before: bastard.

The assault took the better part of a week. The anouks and rebels refused to surrender. They knew they were going to die and they sold their lives dearly, damn them. One by one, we burned them down. Regiments of regulars threw themselves at those walls while the Legion did its best to defend them against the skinnies. And that wasn't much, kid.

Finally all that was left was Kreech, a few skinnies, and maybe a couple hundred anouks and human rebels. The final push came from the Legion. Several hundred sykers fought their way through and started blasting with every power in the book. We tore the damn place apart—and everything in it. Finally, the whole damn fortress started breaking free from the cliffs. Not all of us made it out, and not all the anouks were dead when it finally crumbled down off the mountain. Made the biggest crash I've ever heard. And worse, there was another sound just below the cracking stone and falling rocks—like the voices of a thousand screaming souls flying away into the night.

Warfield just looked at it until the dust settled. All he had to say was "Burn it to the ground." We touched off everything flammable with our minds and walked away. We left the bodies to burn.

Veterans o' the Syker Wars

The Last War Starts

We spent the rest of our time mopping up. The back of the anouk/rebel resistance had pretty much been broken at Castle Rock, but there were still pockets of opposition, raiders, and similar threats to deal with. Morale was low. We figured we'd done our job and should be allowed to go home.

Unfortunately, we didn't have very long to rest. As even you should already know, kid, the Last War started in 2078. At first we just heard about it through TunnelCom, but after a couple months of fighting, the nations which had contributed to EXFOR began calling their forces home. Slowly over the years, as the number of troops on Banshee shrank, the anouks' boldness grew. They had more targets with no defenders, so the number of raids increased. We were hard-pressed to protect the other humans. Warfield's ranting about wanting to wipe the anouks out to the last lizard didn't really help matters much.

Most sykers didn't get to go home yet. I suspect no one back on Earth really pushed it because we'd been so mixed up with sykers from other countries. They knew we wouldn't want to come home and start killing each other after what we'd been through on Banshee. I guess mingling with the "enemy" also tainted us in their eyes, and they had more than enough sykers back home anyhow—until the end.

For his part, Warfield insisted he needed us. But I think that was just a lot of hot air. He wanted to keep us there to kill skinnies. It was his damn hatred that kept us there.

He covered his ass by telling the UN he had no way to send us home. That was true. Rides back through the tunnel were more scarce than friendly anouks. All the big ships had been used to recall the conventional troops and their precious equipment. That left us stranded and more than a little pissed off. After a few months had passed, the Legion and the colonial Rangers—what was left of 'em—were just about the only organized defenders left.

In some ways, that was the worst time of all. We couldn't even begin to think about showing any mercy to the enemy. We had to be absolutely ruthless. Any anouk or rebel we found, we killed. Armed or not, warrior or not, we killed them as a warning to all other anouks and rebels to stay away from human settlements. We barely held the line, but hold it we did. We took heavy casualties though. I lost a lot of friends then.

Homeward Bound

Finally, on August 13, 2082, the order came for the sykers to return home as well. At that point, as much as most of us wanted to go home, we really couldn't believe it. It was tantamount to abandoning the colonists to the tender mercies of the remaining anouks and rebels. We didn't want to stay, but we felt it was our duty. Still, we followed orders one last time. Heaven help me, I'm still not sure we made the right decision. And that was a cakewalk compared to what was to come.

I don't have any idea what happened to the colonists. We left them almost all of our weapons, artillery, vehicles, and other equipment, but I don't know if that's enough to save them. I hope they've managed to keep themselves safe, maybe even come to a truce with the anouks and rebels. But somehow I doubt it.

The Unity

We bugged out of there on the *Unity*, a big ship that showed up outta nowhere one day. Some of my friends said it had been some other place, doing some sort of top-secret research that none of us ever heard about. We didn't care about that then, but we should have. I'll tell you why soon enough.

After the Legion boarded, we crowded as many civilians on as we could. It was cramped, but it still felt great to be on a ship instead of sweating in some jungle or freezing your bald head on some God-forsaken orange and purple desert. I got to take a long, hot shower and eat real food for the first time in what was probably months but felt like years. Maybe some part of me felt like I was washing the blood off—off of my body, anyway. I don't think I'll ever get it out of my mind.

The Oaths

I told you before about how each of the units had names—the Screaming Eagles, the Hammerheads, the Voodoo Gurus, that sort of thing. Well, kid, you probably don't understand just how close the men and women in those units were. We'd fought and strained and loved and risked our lives for each other more times than any of us could possibly count over the last several years—and on an alien planet, to boot.



Rebels of the Syker Wars

After the screaming Eagles were more of a hassle than my mom and dad had ever been. Especially since, like most sykers, I hadn't seen my parents since they'd sent me to the academy when I was 13. Looking back on it, I think that's why we were so close. We were really the only family any of us ever had. That was a syker's lot before the end of the world, junior. In some ways, you're almost lucky you grew up afterward.

We all got to talking as we were headed back about how we'd worked together and what we'd meant to each other. Sometimes these talks got pretty emotional. It might sound silly coming outta someone my age, but you just had to be there. We were sick, we were tired, and we were guilty of things I'll never speak of. But we were going home.

That's when we made the oath, formally, the Oath of *Unity*, named after the ship that was taking us to what we thought would be "home" and a well-deserved rest.

Most of us decided we never wanted to fight each other. We were friends, comrades, and even lovers. Rather than risk ever coming to blows, we decided to vow never to harm each other. Sometimes units swore similar oaths to other units they'd fought beside as well.

Even more importantly, by taking the oaths, we expressed our determination never to rely on or wholly trust any kind of authority again. We'd take orders, of course, but no more wholesale slaughter of innocents. We'd spent the past several years, not to mention our time on Earth before that, being used, betrayed, and sacrificed by our leaders, and we were sick of it. They'd made us do things we couldn't even begin to explain or justify, and we didn't ever want to have to be in the position of being a human tool for such petty men again. Kill an enemy leader for your country? Sure. Wipe out an enemy village? No.

The Captain of the *Unity* found out how serious we were when he threatened us with court-martial if we didn't stop congregating together. We carried him to his cabin and locked him in for the rest of the flight. I wonder what happened to him?

Anyway, I bet all this sounds pretty corny to you, kid, but believe me, it was as serious to us as any marriage.

Those who didn't take the oath are the apostates. Somehow, one of the oathtakers managed to brand a big black "A" on their foreheads. No one ever figured out who did that or how. It was just some sort of mental

power some syker had developed on his own. (Probably a Voodoo Guru. Those guys are weird.)



97

The apostates would just wake up and have this big "A" on their forehead. Some of 'em got nasty about it. That didn't last long. An apostate who attacked an oathtaker found out just how serious the rest of us were real quick. You ever meet one of these bastards, kid, don't mess with 'em. They're damaged goods.

Abandon Ship!

Going from one "side" of the Tunnel only takes a few hours—usually—but getting to the thing from Banshee or Earth's orbit takes a few weeks. We arrived in Earth orbit on November 23, 2082. Instead of the greetings we'd expected, we were met with only silence. No one radioed us or responded to our radio signals. We couldn't see any of the great cities below us.

Before we could figure out what had happened, the alarm klaxon sounded and we heard screaming. Apparently some "things" were on board the ship! Somehow, some sort of creatures had latched onto the ship as we passed through the Tunnel, and had even found a way inside! A couple of units moved forward to take the creatures out, but their powers had little effect. We don't know what happened to them, because the rest of us were ordered to the escape pods. We thought everyone else was, too. We didn't realize the civilians had been cut off and couldn't get away. Only after we had launched did we find out how few of them escaped along with us.

Some of us *did* stay though. We figured it out after we'd landed and some of the stories started to circulate. They all must be dead by now, and there aren't many of us who don't wish we'd died there with them. We call them the Unforgotten Fifteen. They serve us as examples of all that we can be, but how far we have to go to get there.

Sometimes at night, when the sky is particularly clear, I can look up and pretend I can see the ruined hulk of the *Unity* floating across the sky as she orbits the Earth, derelict. The only thing manning her now are the souls of the damned.

What were those things? And how did they kill or trap hundreds of colonists and more than likely fifteen of our best sykers? We'll probably never know.



98

Veterans o' the Syker Wars

Houston

Our escape pods touched down in Houston—or, if you really want to be accurate about it, what was left of Houston. I think a lot of us had been hoping that what the *Unity's* sensors had been reading was somehow not true—that Earth had survived all right despite what our instruments said. But the ship's computers hadn't lied to us.

Houston, at least, was in ruins, and we didn't have any reason to believe it was alone. Even after years of butchering anouks and skinnies, we were dazed by all the destruction we saw. It's one thing to trash somebody else's home, particularly when they're threatening you. It's another to come back and find out your own home's been trashed too.

The Last War was already over. While we were in transit, the nations of the Earth ghost-rock bombed themselves back into the Stone Age. It was the most heartbreaking thing you could imagine, kid. All those years on *Banshee*, wishing every day you could go home, just to find it was blown to Hell by the same politicians who'd exiled us to Faraway in the first place.

Most of us stayed near Houston for a few days. If everything had been as expected, each of us could have booked passage on semiballistics and maglev trains to get home in less than a day. Sure, some nations probably would have attempted some monkey business, but Houston being a treaty city, we supposedly had "safe conduct" til we got home.

Obviously, that wasn't an option anymore. We were all stuck. We tried to talk with some of the people—if you can use that term for muties—but all they were interested in was shoving a spit up our asses and roasting us for Sunday dinner. After we blasted a couple dozen of them, they backed off.

We finally located some friendly survivors on the outskirts of town in a walled village. They clued us in to what had happened, at least as far as they knew, and told us that trucks and caravans which we could buy rides on came through periodically. Most of us didn't have much currency which was acceptable on Earth anymore though, so we either had to hoof it or work our way to wherever we wanted to go. Fortunately for us, sykers make good caravan guards.

Eventually most of us got the Hell out of there, and we never went back. However, I'm told that a couple dozen of us stayed behind and

formed a little syker commune, protecting the local villages in exchange for food and other necessities. A few sykers even heard about Pestilence and hit out after him. They didn't stay healthy very long.

The Long Walk

I don't imagine I need to tell you how devastated we were to find our homeland destroyed. There wasn't one of us who didn't lose their family or friends in the Last Wars. After we landed at the Houston spaceport, we drifted apart to seek out homes and loved ones who might have managed to survive, or to seek our fortunes with only our brainpower and guts to get us by. We call this the Long Walk.

Since then, most of us just wandered the Wasted West, selling our services for food and a roof over our heads and trying to come to terms with everything that's happened. Some of my comrades snapped and went on horrible rampages that left dozens dead before some other syker or hero managed to put the poor loser down. Few of us, frankly, have done what we should to try to make the world a better place—to make a difference.



Veterans o' the Syker Wars

Syker Squads

Let me tell you about some of the Banshee squads. This ain't all of them. Most were just names to me, and I don't know a whole lot about them. Originally there were 50 squads, but many were completely destroyed on Banshee. Others were decimated by anouk or skinny attacks, and the surviving members were absorbed into some other squad. In the end, when they bugged out from Banshee, there were about two dozen surviving squads, none of them at full complement (originally 20 sykers).

Each squad adopted its own moniker and symbol. This symbol is usually incorporated into the uniform clasp. You might also see it featured on shoulder patches or tattoos as well. Many of the names and symbols incorporate lightning or thunderbolts, which in syker symbology represents blasting or syker powers. Banshee sykers are proud of their units, so you often see us wearing our unit designations even if we don't like to talk about the military itself.

We're also very loyal. Anyone who insults your squad had best be prepared for a splitting headache—literally.

Squad Specialties

Most of the squads on Banshee were assembled based around a particular type of power which the members possessed. Pyros in one place, lifters in another, and so on.

The specializations tended to break down as the war dragged on and so many of us bought the farm, but it still held true in many cases. In fact, because they mixed us up by the type of powers we specialized in, they were forced to mix nationalities as well. That's the main reason the nations of Earth had a difficult time recalling us. We had been consorting with the enemy for the last two to five years! And after Beredsky and other double-agents, that was something most governments were rightfully terrified about.

What follows are a few brief notes on the most well-known, surviving syker squads and their members. If I know for sure, I'll tell you which squads swore oaths with other squads as well. This usually happened because the squads fought together in a particular region or campaign on Banshee. Others swore their oaths during the bloody Red River Campaign, when we made fast friends under the intense assaults of the skinnies.

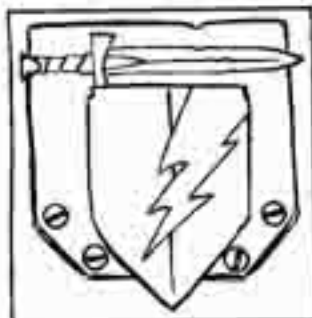
Banshee Blasters

The Banshee Blasters were a frontline combat unit. They were one of the first on-planet when the Legion arrived, and they did more than their fair share of killing—something they sometimes resented the rest of us for.

They suffered hard during the Red River campaign but got replacements from the survivors of worse-off squads. During the post-Red River period, the Blasters mainly patrolled the region around Fort Reagan to prevent anouk and rebel incursions into Legion territory.

The leader of the Banshee Blasters was Captain Tariz Nafsanjani, one of the Unforgotten Fifteen. When the attack on the *Unity* began, Nafsanjani ordered his men to board the escape pods so they could make it back to Earth and figure out what had happened down there. He stayed behind to cover his squad's escape and to try to help the civilians get to escape pods (which they never did). By all accounts, he was one of the good guys.

The Blasters took the oath with the members of Black Lightning, the Dragons, Loki's Thunderbolts, and—surprisingly—the Wendigos.



Black Lightning

The members of Black Lightning have a well-deserved reputation for ferocity. They were often the first into a fight and the last to retreat. The whole unit had a sort of "macho warrior" ethic that made it strive to be better than any other unit. Even the women acted this way. Most of them possessed biokinetic powers. Brain bomb was a specialty, but they had plenty of other tricks up their sleeves.

The sykers in Black Lightning also partied pretty hard as well. Just like in a fight, they were always the first to arrive and the last to leave. And those guys and gals could sure hold their spook juice. I guess you need a good binge after you turn some brainer's head into mush—at least they seemed to think so.



Veterans o' the Syker Wars

Even today in the Wasted West, the survivors of Black Lightning are known for being extremely tough and tenacious fighters and wild carousers. It's not uncommon for a Black Lightning syker to breeze into town, throw away all his money buying drinks and dances for everyone at the local bar, and then beat the red-hot stuffing out of anyone who takes offense at him.

They fought beside the Banshee Blasters, the Fightin' 43rd, and my own squad, the Screaming Eagles, in the Red River campaign, and they swore the Oath of Unity to each.

All but one apostate named Killian, that is. This black-hearted bastard was the worst of them—and their lieutenant as well. That's probably how he got the top-spot: Warfield spotted a natural and relentless killer.

Killian made it back to Earth, so he's still out there somewhere. Last I heard he was running some gang out in Kansas.

Brain Dogs

Some of the more combat-oriented units, like Black Lightning or the Screaming Eagles, often looked down on the Brain Dogs because they weren't on the front lines. Their duties often kept them back near the forts, base camps, and headquarters.

Their specialty was interrogation, and they were mighty good at it. Even the most strong-willed lizard or humie sympathizer wasn't able to resist these mind freaks for long. They were also good at long-range mental communication with outlying units, and they performed a lot of research on various psychic phenomena.

These days, the survivors of the Brain Dogs often find themselves employed by towns, warlords, or gangs for their special talents. Having a mental interrogation/communication specialist on your side can make a big difference in a large fight.

Despite their reputation as mind freaks, I think most of 'em are honorable folks who try to choose employers who are worthy of their assistance. A few, however, have wound up leading gangs of bandits or raiders.

The Brain Dogs are loners. They didn't swear oaths to any other unit besides themselves.



Dragons

The Dragons chose their name because their initial assignment was as part of General Warfield's air cavalry. Before the conventional forces pulled out, the Dragons rode in flying assault craft and parachuted in on the anouks and rebels to fry 'em up with their close-range pyrokinetics. That's how they got their name.

When the skinnies got involved, many of the Dragon's pilots and other brainers in the air cav were too susceptible to mind control, so the Dragons began piloting the assault craft themselves. Most used machine-head devices to help them out as well.

These guys proved really handy during Red River. They could get the rest of us in close, then after our ride was trashed by the skinnies, they'd bale out and defend us from the warriors with arson and similar "in your face" pyrokinetics. A lot of those guys and gals gave their lives holding off the grapes while the rest of us crawled out of the wreckage.

Three of the Unforgotten Fifteen were members of the Dragons. Their squad was close enough to the civilians to realize what was going on, but they bailed anyway. Some thought the civvies were on the way to their own pods, but others knew better. All of 'em are deeply ashamed they were unwilling to make the sacrifice three of their comrades made, and they've vowed never to abandon the helpless and innocent again, even if it costs them their lives.

Many Dragons have teamed up with Templars or Law Dogs to try to bring a measure of peace and security to the Wasted West. They seem driven to take on impossible tasks and use their powers to right wrongs. Folks in many communities have to come see the symbol of the lightning-breathing dragon as a sign of hope and protection, so Dragons rarely lack for a place to spend the night or a bit of food for their supper.

Dragons are still skilled at using their cyberkinesis on vehicles. You often see them finding work leading or guarding trade caravans.

The Dragons swore the oath to most frontline units, like the Banshee Blasters, the Fightin' 43rd, and the Screaming Eagles.



Veterans o' the Syker Wars

Fightin' 43rd

Unfortunately for members of the Fightin' 43rd, their original leader, Captain Lydia Mazzuchelli, didn't have a whole lot of imagination when it came to unit nicknames. However, with their fierce fighting and brilliant, unorthodox, battle tactics, they lived up to the one name she did manage to think up. The other sykers on Banshee used to say that if you were in trouble, the Fightin' 43rd would be the ones to figure a way out of it—or to come get you if you were trapped. Needless to say, this particular talent made them a lot of friends.

Many members of the Fightin' 43rd tended to specialize in destructive powers like brain bomb and boneripping, but they usually sprinkled their arsenals with liberal helpings of general-use powers like brain blast and juice. They also tended to study anouk psychology and anatomy, military strategy, and other subjects which made them better fighters.

Captain Mazzuchelli may not have had much imagination, but she was unsurpassed in her ability to inspire her troops to be the best warriors they could be. Sadly, she was killed by a marauding biker gang shortly after she returned to Earth.

The members of the Fightin' 43rd have found plenty of uses for their powers in the Weird West (beyond trying to find the biker gang that murdered Captain Mazzuchelli, something they'd dearly love to do). Tactical experts with mental powers are just about worth their weight in ghost rock—and they know it.

The 43rd swore the oath to the Black Lighting squad, the Dragons, the Screaming Eagles, and the Star Swans.



can do it. Need to get your campfire started or cigar lighted? They can do that, too. Need a village toasted? Unfortunately, they were all too good at that.

The surviving Firewalkers feel a special burden of shame for the things they did on Banshee. Their powers made them the sykers to call on when General Warfield wanted to burn out a village, send anouk crops up in smoke, or burn down entire forests and jungles. They were particularly effective in the Red River Canyon campaign, where they immolated any anouks or rebels who popped up. It was the Firewalkers who obeyed Warfield's final order to burn Castle Rock to the ground. Their memories—and nightmares—are heavy with images of charred bodies and smoking craters. Sometimes they have a hard time living with that.

Many Firewalkers have a nervous habit of playing with fire. They light fires, then call up fireproof so they can handle the flame without fear of being burned. They'll juggle burning sticks, burn pools of kerosene in their hands, stuff like that. It can be a pretty cool show to watch—but don't make them angry, or they'll turn the fire on you.

They swore the oath to the Screaming Eagles 'cause we were with 'em when they incinerated the remains of Castle Rock, and those flakes in the Voodoo Gurus, though God knows why.

Loki's Thunderbolts

Most of the original members of Loki's Thunderbolts came from Scandinavia and Northern Europe, so they chose a name that reflected their heritage. It was a good choice. The Norse trickster god was a perfect patron for a unit which quickly earned a reputation for flouting authority, disobeying orders, carousing, and playing practical jokes on each other.

They probably acted that way because they were infiltrators and saboteurs. It takes balls to trick your way into an enemy settlement.

It was their job to work their way into human rebel bases and blow them apart. It's fun to knock a building down. It's not so great to see there were hundreds of fellow humans, including whole families—and innocent children—crushed in the rubble.



Firewalkers

As you might guess from their name, the Firewalkers are masters of pyrokinetic powers. You want something burned or melted? They



Veterans o' the Syker Wars

Loki's Thunderbolts came away from the *Unity* disaster with a special kind of shame. Of the dozen or so largest surviving syker squads, only their squad had no members among the Unforgotten Fifteen. Since then, they've tried to make up for it by taking on missions designed to repair ruined communities or build new ones. Others believe their souls are already damned, and they sell their deadly powers to whoever's paying. Several of the latter are oathbreakers.

The Thunderbolts swore oaths to the Banshee Blasters and the Voodoo Gurus.

The Phantom Brigade

Named by an officer with a flair for the melodramatic, the Phantom Brigade was made up of sykers who had received advanced espionage and infiltration training. Unlike most other Banshee sykers,

who had to learn to use their powers for direct battlefield assaults, the Phantoms usually retained the traditional syker role of assassins and spies. They used skinwalker, predator, and other powers to sneak into enemy territory and spy on the lizards and, more often, the rebels. In fact, it was a Phantom who almost got Calloway, the humie traitor that stirred up the anouk's human allies. Way I hear it, one of them had Calloway all but dead when a skinny showed up outta nowhere and blew the Phantom to bits.

The Phantom Brigade developed a reputation on Banshee for being haughty and selfish. They attributed many major victories solely to their intelligence-gathering efforts, completely overlooking the contributions of the soldiers and sykers who did the actual fighting. This attitude extended to things like equipment, quarters, and food. The Brigade felt itself entitled to the best which was available and took it. This did little to endear them to other sykers.

Phantoms in the Wasted West haven't really done much to improve their reputation. They always ask exorbitant fees for their services, demand the best quarters and foods in settlements they help, and so forth. Most other sykers want little to do with these prima donnas.

The Phantoms swore the oath only to themselves. Selfish creeps.



Screaming Eagles

The Screaming Eagles was the best squad on Banshee. We were the toughest bunch of stone-cold bastards you ever saw. We were the syker elite, the best of the best—all the news vids agreed. That's great,

but it also meant we were who Warfield turned to when no one else could get the job done.

The average Screaming Eagle was not only a better fighter than other sykers when it came to fists and weapons, but we typically had more and stronger powers as well. We trained all the time. Our lieutenant, a cold bitch named Cathy Griffin, worked us like dogs. But it paid off on the battlefield.

We lost Cathy—I mean, Lieutenant Griffin—on the *Unity*. Shut up, kid. She stayed behind to try to save civilians, and she ordered the rest of us into the escape pods.

A lot of us carry on the old tradition of honor and service because of her. It was Lieutenant Griffin's last order that we get down here, find out what was wrong, and make it right. Those of us who are still alive are obeying that order, no matter what the cost.

Our buddies were usually squads we'd saved. We swore the oath to the Black Lightning, the Dragons, the Fightin' 43rd, and the Firewalkers.

Star Swans

The Star Swans unit is unique among Banshee syker squads as the only all-female outfit. The Swans' commander, Captain Alexa Taranova, was a well-known and influential syker who pulled a bunch of strings to get the female sykers she wanted into her unit.

The truth is, the brass didn't mind having an all-girl squad. They were used against the human traitors—who were almost always men—to great effect. Ever try to say no to a beautiful woman? That's hard enough. If she's using *manipulator* on you, it's damn near impossible.



Veterans o' the Syker Wars

Once they got in, the Swans used their mix of powers to spy, assassinate, or sabotage the rebels. They really had a mix of powers, being grouped by sex instead of by talent, so they could do just about anything.

Even after Captain Taranova died during the assault on Castle Rock, the unit kept on as a girls' club. The Swans were proud of their accomplishments and didn't intend to sully them by going against the Captain's wishes. In fact, they never actually had another Captain appointed to lead them. Captain Taranova's second in command, Lieutenant Janice Fremont, took over without an official promotion.

The Wasted West, unfortunately, hasn't been very kind to the Star Swans. Two of them died within a month of landing, one fighting Pestilence's minions, the other apparently at the claws of some other abomination. But they're still as strong and beautiful as ever, and always willing to help out someone in need. Just watch out if they start coming on to you. It means they're after something, kid, and they'll probably get it.

The Swans swore oaths to their boyfriends in the Dragons and the Fightin' 43rd.

Voodoo Gurus

The Voodoo Gurus ain't some kind of religious cult. Their first leader, Captain Robert "Bobby" Grissom, grew up in the swamps of Louisiana and couldn't resist throwing a touch of home into his unit's name.

His men got into it and rewarded him by setting up a little "voodoo doll" shaped like him against the squad's dartboard back at headquarters. That came back to haunt them later on. He was killed by a volley of skinny-charged anouk javelins at Castle Rock. No one could ignore the fact that he looked just like that damned voodoo doll.

The Voodoo Gurus were a mixed lot of talents and abilities, most of which were weird. Some of these guys were "wild talents" who became sykers late in their careers. Many of their talents have never seen print in an academy instruction book. Whoever slinged the "A" on the apostates' heads was very likely a Guru.



If they had a speciality, it was sykokinesis. They were always trying to figure out more about our powers.

One mission they gave themselves, and which they successfully completed I hear, was to see Captain Grissom buried in his old hometown cemetery—or, rather, what was left of it after the ghost-rock bombs. They all stuck together long enough to do that. I'm sure some have scattered across the Wasted West by now, but there are still a few reportedly living in the Mississippi Delta.

The Voodoo Gurus swore an oath to Lok's Thunderbolts. I think those practical jokers amused them more than anything else.

Wendigos

The Wendigos, like the Voodoo Gurus, were masters of sykokinesis and powers of investigation. That was unfortunate, because Warfield assigned them to unveil the secret of the skinnies.

Talk about bad jobs. The Wendigos stayed on standby in a hypersonic transport just waiting to hear about an encounter with a skinny. When one was reported, they streaked out to the site and fought their way to the front. At first, most of us were happy to see them. We knew what they were about and thought the cavalry had arrived. Imagine our surprise when they just sat there and watched the rest of us get torn limb from limb by the skinnies' incredible powers.

It didn't take long for us to hate these guys. We just knew they were in league with the brass, trying to get us to battle the skinnies so they could study the carnage. It was true, we later found out. It even caused a minor war in the Legion for a while after a bunch of civilians, Rangers, and a squad called the Ravens was wiped out by a skinny near Fort Reagan.

Near the end, the Wendigos paid the price for their years of watching. They took out the first batch of skinnies at Castle Rock. I don't know how they won, but they did. And lost half their number doing it.

The Wendigos swore no oaths, to other squads. Maybe they know the rest of us don't like 'em.



98

Veterans o' the Syker Wars

Earth Sykers

The nations of Earth certainly didn't send all of their sykers off to Banshee. When we got back home—or, I should say, to the barren, wasted wreckage that used to be home—we found out some of them were still around.

Earth sykers for the most part stuck to more traditional roles: espionage, sabotage, assassination—at least until the end. Then most everyone got involved in the sort of battlefield blasting we'd gotten used to on Banshee. Most of them are older, having been judged too old and experienced to "waste" on Banshee in the first place, but a few are young Turks who graduated from the academies after we left.

I don't really know what all happened in the Last War. Find a Librarian if you want to know more. It seems like every time I ask about it I get a different answer, so I've given up asking. But from my encounters with Earth sykers I have learned that at least some of them went through some of the same things we did. They had to learn more about how to use their powers for sheer destruction than for subtle manipulation and infiltration.

Anyway, most Earthers were slaughtered by tanks and mindless warbots and the other toys the generals like to play with, but a few managed to survive. Those who did are some tough hombres.

What chafes my ass is that these guys think we had an easy time with it. They think "fighting a bunch of savages," as they put it, couldn't have been all that hard. There's been more than one time I wanted to slam one of these oldsters against a wall and shove several years' worth of Banshee memories into his brain so he could understand how easy *he* had it, but I can't do that to a fellow syker.

And to tell you the truth, I'm not sure I could. The older ones, the vets are *bad*. I've seen plenty of Banshee sykers use *brain blasts*, but Earth sykers with the same power sometimes cause twice as much destruction. Why is that? I've no idea. It's almost like fighting on the battlefield during the Last War gave them more raw destructive power than the rest of us. Go figure.

They're also a little older than the rest of us, so they've got a leg up as far as experience goes. These guys were vets when we got sent to Banshee. If you meet one, treat him with respect. If you want him to leave your mind in one piece—at least until you toughen up a little yourself, kid.

Jericho



99

One syker who's taken it upon himself to do something good for others is Daniel Marin. Marin served on Banshee and was—is—a member of the Black Lightning squad. He realized greenies like

you were likely to do more harm than good if left to learn syker powers on their own. He figured a new academy was needed, one run not by a government to use up and throw away its brainburners as it pleased, but by sykers, for sykers. So he set out to create one.

Marin set up shop in the little town of Jericho, Nevada. He was always a smooth talker, so it didn't take him long to make a deal with the locals: food and other necessities in exchange for the school's protection from wandering abominations, biker gangs, packs of savages, and the 3,001 other threats that stalk the Wasted West.

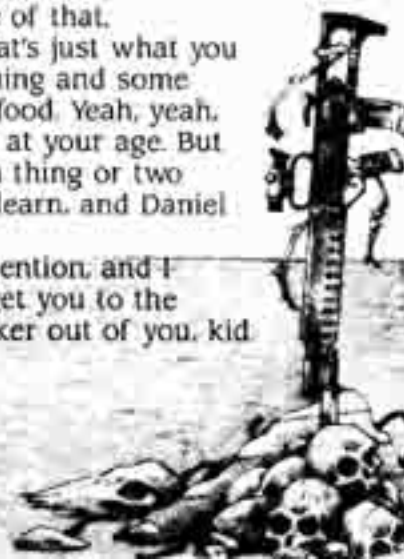
That was, oh, six or seven years ago at least. Since then, the Academy, as Daniel calls it, has grown pretty big. He's usually got upward of two dozen students there at any given time, and several other sykers—both from Banshee and Earth—have joined his "faculty" to help him teach.

Then there's me. I'm the recruiter. It's my job to find greenies like you and help you deal with your powers. Left alone, you're likely to blow your own head off—or worse, turn bad. Then we'll have to blow your head off for you. And none of us want that, junior.

Don't look so scared. The courses aren't as intensive or detailed as the ones at the old government academies—there aren't the time or resources for that—but Marin's instilling things even more important in his students than a head full of powers: morality, decency, honor, heroism. Daniel wants his students to go out and *help* the world, not exploit it, and he tries to make them see the importance of that.

Frankly, kid, I think that's just what you need. Without some training and some smarts, you're worming food. Yeah, yeah, you know it all. I did too at your age. But take it from me, there's a thing or two more you really need to learn, and Daniel can teach them to you.

You've been paying attention, and I appreciate that. So let's get you to the Academy and make a syker out of you, kid.



Veterans of the Syker Wars

Tale of an Earth Syker

Welcome to Jelicho. Now listen up, new kid. I know Sergeant Mather's been filling your head full of BS about how great Banshee sykers are and how us old farts just sat on our ass during the Last War.

Well, that just ain't so. I'm Sergeant Kristina Dupry, late of His Majesty's Royal Syker Battalion, and I'm going to tell you how things really were down here in Hell.

I teach bio- and telekinesis here at Marin's new school, so you're going to be seeing a lot of me. Listen up, and you'll do well. Ignore my advice, and I'll be mopping your brains off the floor. Got it? Good.

I came to your bloody continent in December of '80. Landed on the beach at Corpus Christi and went straight into action fighting Mexicans in Texas and the Maze. The first thing I noticed was that your country was damnably hot, even at Christmas. I was raised in London, and I can tell you heat like that just isn't proper.

The second thing I noticed was that the Latin American Alliance sykers were pushovers. It didn't take much to fry their brains, break their

bones, and send them running home to their mums. US sykers, however, were a tricky lot. My Confederate allies and I could usually best them in an open fight, but the sneaky bastards never fought like that—at least not 'til the end.

Knowing these things helped me blast LatAms and outmaneuver Yanks. That's why I'm going to tell you everything I know about the different nations' sykers, how they fought, and why they failed or succeeded at their most-famous missions. Know your enemies, child, and when you meet them, you'll have the advantage.

Organization

Both American and Confederate sykers were organized into 10-man squads. They rarely acted that way at first, however. Instead, they were sent individually to perform covert operations. When they were together, it was often to conduct a raid or rescue operation, or to infiltrate the enemy rear and destroy or confuse their command and control.

Later on, when we sykers were pushed onto the battlefield, the squads operated together. Casualties quickly reduced the 10-person teams to groups of 5 or 6—if they were lucky.



Veterans o' the Syker Wars

Brits, Canadians, and most Europeans did it the same way. LatAms, Russians, and African nations usually grouped sykers into 100-member companies but broke out individuals for specific missions just like everybody else. I only know of one occasion when a whole company of sykers fought together. I'll get to that later.

Here's how we got numbered. The USA and CSA numbered their squads starting at 101. That means the 101st Syker Squad was the first, junior. The highest unit numbers I've heard were 230—something for the Yanks and 198 for the Confederates. Europeans did the same, but started our numbering at 001. I suppose you Americans needed larger numbers to feel better about yourselves.

Most African coalitions and the LatAms grouped themselves by where their home base was. The Tulancingo Company was based—guess where—in Tulancingo, Mexico. When there were multiple companies from the same base, such as Mexico City, they'd call themselves the 1st Mexico City Company, the 2nd Mexico City company, and so on.

The Russians were even more difficult to keep track of. They used the alphabet to divide their syker legions. Aa Company was the first, Beh Company the second, and so on. If you don't know their alphabet, it can sound downright silly. Somehow, the "Eecracknaya Company" just doesn't strike dread into one's heart, does it, chap?

How They Fought

Remember that what I'm about to tell you is what I noticed about the way sykers from different nations behaved. Some of it might not be right. Even if I'm as perceptive as I usually am, not every individual enlisted in a syker unit is the same. The Yanks were devilishly tricky at times, but they also had their fair share of blasters striding the battlefields blowing up assault striders.

That was the Confederacy's forte: destruction. Many were saboteurs and demolitionists. More than any other nation, the CSA used them as shock troops, throwing scores of veteran sykers at young conventional troops in order to panic them without firing a shot. I am something of a historian, and I can tell you that this tactic very likely developed from their early successes in your First Civil War, at the Battle of Washington. Confederate agents using then-unheard-of devices overran the capital in 1870, and the memory has stuck in their collective

consciousness ever since. Never underestimate the effect your powers have on those who have never seen them.

The Germans fought the same way. They used powerful sykers as "über troopers" to bust a hole in enemy lines. Then their luftpanzers exploited the gap and struck the fleeing enemy as they ran. They made good use of a little device called a "machine head" as well. Developed by that Hellstromme bloke, it allows sykers to interface with machines. German sykers used them to pilot giant tanks, warwalkers, and assault striders. They made those things damned deadly.

Imagine a five-ton walking weapons platform running across the battlefield, firing machine-guns one way and plasma cannons another. By the King, I hated fighting those things. Some of these maniacs are still here in your country, mate, using their machine heads on hover bikes, cars, or the few remaining military vehicles. You stay away from anything like that, even after we get you trained, right? Right.

The Americans, the French, and—to some extent—my own government used their sykers in more traditional ways. They would parachute or infiltrate behind the lines and disrupt command and control. Yes, everyone played that game, but the Yanks and Frogs were damned annoying about it. When we first landed on your shore, for instance, a syker spy garbled our orders and had us land four miles east of our assigned zone—through a mined harbor. Several landing craft full of irreplaceable British brainburners drowned in that fetid water you call a bay.

The LatAms never could figure out what to do with their sykers. They had moments of brilliance, such as disabling the Confederate early warning and anti-air systems at the very beginning of the war, but then they allowed them to sit unused in a base camp for months afterward. I suppose they were afraid to waste them. Their academies weren't very good, and those they used to start the war were their top graduates. Still, use them, or lose them, I always say. And they lost them. By accident, a 60-pound Confederate artillery shell dropped right into their barracks one night and killed them all.

Some said the disaster wasn't caused by a shell at all. There was a rumor it was the work of one of those giant rattlers you blokes have over here, but that's nonsense. Even such a creature could not destroy an entire company of veteran sykers.



Veterans of the Syker Wars

The North African allies were similarly wasteful. They used their sykers as terrorists, destroying mostly civilian targets, such as schools, universities, and research labs, in an attempt to lower morale and force their targets out of the war. Hitler did the same thing with "buzz bombs" in World War II, and just like way back then, killing civilians made the public angrier and more resolved.

Southern Africans were more clever. They used their sykers in the usual ways, but they also insinuated a few battlefield blasters into companies of regulars as "artillery support." I watched a battalion of light infantry assault a river bank one night, and having that one, hidden syker mixed into their ranks, taking over gunners and other key opponents, helped them overrun the enemy in an hour.

The Russians, damn their eyes, were masters of assassination. Every day brought a report of some post commander, politician, or military leader dying by their minds. Russian assassins who got captured did not meet pleasant ends.

The other nations I haven't mentioned used their sykers in the standard variety of ways. You'll gain no useful information by me nattering on about them.

The End

Now, just because old Mather has filled your head full of the glories his mates won fighting a bunch of spearchuckers in outer space, let me tell you about some of the *real* fighting that went on down here. Pay attention, child, because the tales I'm going to tell you are about your family.

Things turned really nasty near the end of the war. Casualties for both the Northern and Southern Alliance had reached nearly 50%. New recruits were as green as snot. They fought poorly against other green troops. Against veterans, they just cost their government a fortune in body bags and death benefits.

Equipment losses were even heavier. The destruction of civilian factories by conventional shelling and (later) tactical nukes, wiped out most every nation's manufacturing capabilities—especially here in the Americas, where the worst of the fighting took place. Guns were scarce, and ammo had to be looted from the dead. Armor commanders had to scavenge parts for their remaining tanks and other assault craft. There just wasn't any place to make them back home.

That left most armies with two major weapons: nukes and sykers. Of course, we were the first to be sacrificed. When the armies began to fall apart, we sykers were thrown into the thick of it. Most of us had fared pretty well up until Christmas of 2080. That's when President Tremane negotiated a cease-fire that stuck for a few days. Then she got assassinated (probably by a syker), and the war machined started up again.

But we were all the allies had to fight it with. They began by copying the South African style—inserting a "fire team" of sykers into conventional battalions of 500-1,000 regulars. A few bald heads rolled into the mass graves following any major action.

Things got even worse as the casualties rose, and the generals gave the go-ahead to tactical nukes. Any time a spy satellite spotted a large concentration of troops in the field, a missile would streak from a sub or silo and blast them to atoms.

The Confederates started the "syker war" in earnest. They put together a hundred brainburners and sent them straight into the battle.

Relatively small groups like this had to be ignored. There were just too many scattered companies of each side to attract attention. A hundred regulars was nothing. A hundred sykers,



Veterans o' the Syker Wars

now that's a threat. But as long as we kept our helmets on, spy sats and aerial recon couldn't tell the difference. Regular spies and enemy sykers could, but you can imagine how difficult it was to infiltrate a company of mind readers, even for one of our own.

So the last year of the war saw hundreds of sykers fighting over some miserable pieces of soil. I cannot describe to you the strange beauty of those battlefields.

Thousands of incendiary tracer rounds crisscrossed the night. Warwalkers and assault striders stalked over the blasted earth, blazing away with brilliant plasma beams and thundering cannon shells. Hover tanks and assault craft maneuvered through this maze of fire, lined by the telltale glow of slow burn, moments before they would explode and crash like thunder into the chaos below.

And beneath it all, exposed by parachute flares, covered thousands of soldiers, scrambling for hiding places on a blasted battlefield devoid of plants or cover other than muddy, bloody craters full of the corpses of those who had gone before.

I see that look, child. Perhaps this sounds like theater to you. But I was there. I saw the heads explode, the flesh melt, and sykers die by the hundreds in those final, useless, cataclysmic battles.

The Reckoning

I don't know what you Americans did to have the Reckoners appear in your backyards, but I hope whatever it was, you all rot in Hell for it.

I was in Texas, recovering from the wound that took this leg off, when Pestilence showed up. At first we didn't believe these wild tales. We couldn't even believe that the ghost-rock bombs had truly been dropped. We thought the swirling, black maelstrom around Houston was a firestorm caused by incendiary bombs. That happened all the time.

Slowly, when the hospital couldn't contact anyone, we realized something worse had happened. Then a trickle of refugees wandered by, begging for help for themselves or their loved ones. They told us what had happened, that Houston had been hit by a nuke and then covered in a storm full of the screaming souls of those who'd died.

But we still couldn't believe it. I saw the doctors do what they could for a while, but then the trickle turned into a flood, and they had to turn the wounded away.

That's where I saw my first zombie. I see by your expression you've seen such creatures yourself.

We were incredulous. Many of us had been briefed on such things. Some had even seen them—and worse—before. But these were covered in sores and pustules. Anyone they scratched contracted the same disease, and often became a "plague zombie" herself.

Slowly, our numbers dwindled. Some soldiers wandered off to find their units. Most went to find out if their families had survived. A few of us sykers tried to use our powers against the growing horde of undead, but we were pissing in the wind.

Eventually, a few of us foreigners decided to explore Houston and find out if a transport had survived. It was likely our only way home. Of course, they hadn't. What we did see, however, was Pestilence himself.

At first we thought he was just another of the weird muties we'd encountered in the ruins. Then we saw the scores of plague zombies following reverently in his wake. One of my best friends, Gus—we'd survived the whole damn war together—look a shot at Pestilence with a brain blast. He put everything he had into it, using a technique we call overkill.

But it only angered the horrid fiend. Pestilence whipped its head around in anger and locked its hate-filled eyes with my Gus'. In moments, his body began to tremble. Giant boils erupted on his skin, then burst into bloody fungus.

In moments, this man who had saved my life a dozen times, who had made love to me during the Sack of Amarillo, and who would have married me some day, was a grisly mass of flesh and pus.

The rest of us fired our TSARs or whatever we had on us at Pestilence, but it just ignored us. The small army behind him didn't. They rushed us, and only myself and one other managed to escape.

I'll never forget that day, the way Gus died, or the awful face of a Horseman of the bloody Apocalypse. Pray they never come back here, kid. 'Cause if an Earth syker can't take them down, no one can.

All right, I reckon that's all for today. I need a swig of spook juice.

Daniel Marin will start your real training tomorrow, after he's had a chance to measure you up.

Don't disappoint him, son. We sykers are all this old world has left.





Chapter Two: Makin' Sykers



We hope you know by now what a syker is: a bald-headed, brain-blasting maniac with more power than he knows what to do with. If you think you've got what it takes to play one, more power to you. (No pun intended.) Here's how.

First, of course, your hero must have the *arcane background: syker* Edge. This costs him 3 points. After that, you need to purchase *blastin'*, figure out your brainburner's Strain, and choose his powers.

Once we go over how to do all that, we reveal some new Edges and Hindrances, how to raise your hero's control, and learn new powers. Then we wrap up the chapter with a short discussion on how your chrome-domed blaster should use all those nifty abilities.

Blastin'

Sykers call using their abilities "blasting." Individual powers are learned through hard work, practice, and watching other sykers with different abilities.

Blastin' is a *Knowledge-based Aptitude*. Unless your syker is a *greenie* (see **New Edges** on page 39 for more about these rookies), your hero must have *blastin'* at level 3 or better.

To use a power, the syker declares which one he's trying to use and makes a *blastin'* roll against the TN listed in the power's description. Raises on this roll usually produce additional effects.

Strain

Sykers channel energy from the Hunting Grounds through their psyches to create incredible effects. This is very taxing on their minds and bodies, so they can only do so much before they must rest a while. The amount of power a character can handle is called his "Strain." In the game, sykers themselves call it "juice." In the old days, eggheaded scientists tried to measure Strain in a unit called Kellinghams, and if your syker ever talks about it, that's probably the term he uses.

A syker's Strain is equal to his *Vigor* die type. If he has a 3d12 *Vigor*, for example, his Strain is 12.

Every power has a Strain cost listed with it. When successfully used, it drains this amount of Strain. An easy way to keep track of your syker's current Strain is by sliding a paper clip up and down the Strain scale we so thoughtfully printed on the side of your character sheet.


When a syker's Strain reaches its "breaking point" (the syker's maximum), he can no longer use his powers, unless he finds a temporary or artificial source.

Increasing Strain

There are several ways for a syker to increase the amount of Strain he can withstand, thus increasing the amount of



Makin' Sykers



power, he can use or project. The first is the same thing that would get you to Carnegie Hall (if it still existed anymore): practice, practice, practice. This method of training one's self and building up the "psychic muscles," so to speak, is represented by the Edges *fortitude* and *steel-trap mind* (see pages 39 and 40).

The second way to increase Strain is to use certain rare and exotic drugs. This is dangerous, since these drugs are not exactly the healthiest thing to put in the body. See Chapter Four for more details on them.

The third way is to use certain types of technology. Both before and during the Last War, scientists on Earth researched ways to increase and improve sykers' powers, and some of them succeeded. None of these successes became mass-market technology—they tend to be one-of-a-kind objects, more precious to a syker than gold—but there are still a few salvageable relics out there. Details about such devices can be found in Chapter Four.

A few sykers have an almost supernatural ability to handle more Strain than usual. This is reflected by a new Edge called *steel will* (see page 40).

Recovering Strain

Equally as important as increasing Strain is improving the syker's ability to recover it.

The basic way to recover Strain is simple rest and relaxation—not always the easiest thing to find in the Wasted West. For every hour of rest, the syker regains 1 point of Strain.

During this time, he can't do anything more strenuous than sit, take a nap, ride in a car, or carry out other activities which require no real effort or concentration. That means a blaster recovering juice can't drive a car (but he could ride in one if the road isn't too bumpy), ride a horse, read a book, or even engage in a lengthy conversation. If your syker has just run out of juice, make someone else drive while he sleeps in the back seat.

One point of Strain for a whole hour is a mighty slim gain—particularly if a brainburner is fighting for his life. So there are plenty of sykers out there who have tried to find a way to "boost the gain," as some of them say.

There are only three known ways to do this. One is by ingesting the strangely named "green bird of Heaven." Check out Chapter Four for more information.

The second way some sykers recover Strain is through a new Aptitude called *meditation*. Read all about it below, compadre.

Meditation

Sykers are products of two masters: curious hucksters and patient, Far Eastern warriors and monks. They gained their versatility from the former. From the latter, they gained discipline, finesse, and the art of meditation.

When a syker really needs to let his troubles drift away, he can *meditate*. Usually it's easier to make troubles go away by shooting them, but hey, any port in a storm, right? *Meditation* is simply a way for a syker to more quickly and efficiently get his body to calm down and relax.

Meditation is a new Aptitude based on *Spirit*. It allows a character to enter a sort of trancelike state which heightens his ability to relax and recuperate. Its main effect is that it can double the speed at which Strain is recovered.

To use *meditation*, the syker must merely make a Fair (5) roll to enter a trancelike state. This takes five minutes. If he fails, he can simply try again. If he goes bust, all his remaining Strain is drained, and he must wait at least 1 hour before trying again. That's what you get for trying too hard, friend.

If the brainburner's roll is successful, each half hour spent *meditating* allows the syker to regain 1 point of Strain. Each raise reduces the time increment another five minutes, up to a minimum of 1 Strain recovered every 15 minutes.

If the syker's trance is interrupted by a threat, or if he chooses to end it by speaking or answering one of his less-enlightened companions, he loses all benefits for that hour. Make sure your companions shut up while you commune with your inner child. Ooohhhmmmm.

Artificial Enhancements.

Besides practice, a syker can temporarily improve his *blastin'* effectiveness with drugs such as axor and, more commonly, spook juice. Yup. We mean getting toasted. (That's drunk, friends, not set on fire and smothered in butter and jelly.) No one's quite sure why spook juice works and other liquors don't, but it does, even if the syker isn't resting.

If you're willing to put up with the hangover and other risks of drinking liquefied ghost rock, give it a "shot." The details are in Chapter Four, but that's in **No Man's Land**, so be sure to get your Marshal's okay before heading that way. Good luck, friend. You're going to need it.

Makin' Sykers

Brainburn

"Brainburn" is the syker term for what happens when you go bust on a *blastin'* roll or your hero uses an ability like *fortitude*, *overkill*, or a greenie's ability to spend extra juice for extra effect.

In most cases, brainburn results in massive mental feedback that causes severe pain and injury to the syker. There's more than one recorded case of a syker being killed this way, and believe us, it ain't pretty when some poor bastard's head explodes near you.

Fortunately, there's some relief in sight. The Marshal has a new Brainburn Table which provides far more options than just getting hurt. Of course, after you experience some of them, you may beg for simple pain.

Starting Powers

Your syker starts with one power for every level he has in *blastin'*. A syker doesn't get more powers by raising his *blastin'* once the game starts. All he gets is more dice to use when *blastin'*.

A syker may start with any power listed in the *Deadlands: Hell on Earth* rulebook—those are considered the basic powers available to all sykers. After that, he can learn new powers either from a teacher, or on his own if the power is from his primary category (often known as his specialty).

Specialty

Every syker is predisposed to one particular category of powers. Some brainburners are best with pyrokinesis; others are natural telekinetics. Researchers think it's genetic—a lot of (former) redheads are pyros—but it also seems linked to a person's personality. Pyros are "hot tempered," while mind freaks are cool and calculating.

Your syker's specialty determines which powers he can develop on his own and which ones he must learn from some other source.

You must choose one of these specialties when you make your syker:

Blokinesis: Body functions.

Psionics: The mind and psyche, including emotions.

Pyrokinesis: Fire and heat.

Sykokinesis: Supernatural energy.

Telekinesis: Manipulation and movement of matter.

Learning New Powers

Once your syker has survived a session or two (congratulations, bunkie!), he may want to learn a few new tricks. Here's how he does it.

Powers Within the Specialty

Sykers have an intuitive grasp of the things they can do with the type of energy they specialize in. Your syker can learn any power within his specialty simply by paying 5 Bounty Points.

It usually takes a brainburner 1d6 days to develop a new power—half that if he has a mentor syker with that power to teach him. You shouldn't normally keep strict track of this time. Just assume your hero was working on it when nothing else was going on, such as between game sessions, during a long trip, or when camping for the night. Sykers should not be allowed to buy a new power in the middle of combat or any other tense situation.

Powers Outside the Specialty

Powers outside the syker's specialty cannot be developed without a teacher, book, or learning machine (see Chapter Four). This is the only way sykers can develop powers outside their specialty.

A syker can teach another brainburner a power in 1d6 hours. Learning a new power from a book takes a like amount of time. Learning machines are discussed in Chapter Four, but typically get the job done in only a few minutes.

Fast Learners?

It looks like it would be easy for a syker from an academy to graduate with scores of powers, right? All he has to do is spend 5 Bounty Points each, so what's the big deal?

The reason is that a syker in the relatively safe environment of an academy learns through long hours of study and practice. He's not learning "under fire" in a harsh world full of death and danger. In game terms, this means he's simply not earning Bounty Points as fast as a counterpart battling muties and walkin' dead.

Also, it might just be it's a little easier to tap into the power of the Hunting Grounds now that the Reckoners are on Earth and there are so many Deadlands and other supernatural areas on the planet.



Hindrances

Don't have enough ways to screw your character? We're here with some helpful advice on which Hindrances to pick for your syker, plus a passel of brand new ones to mess with his already overloaded mind.

Common Hindrances

Bloodthirsty, mean as a rattler, night terrors and *pacifist* are often taken by Banshee sykers. The horrors they saw on Banshee, and which General "Overkill" Warfield forced them to commit, affected the Legionnaires in different ways—most of them bad.

Some become ruthless killers. Others refuse to ever kill again, or they have nightmares about what they saw and did. You can use these Hindrances to reflect these problems.

Geezer is common among Earth sykers, many of whom are getting along in years (which is often why they weren't sent to Banshee). Obviously it's not appropriate for a *greenie*.

Finally, some sykers use drugs to boost their powers. Some of them might have picked up a *hankerin'*. See Chapter Four for a list of drugs used by sykers, and their possible side-effects.

New Hindrances

Apostate



97

Apostates are Banshee sykers who refused to take the *Oath of Unity* as it returned to Earth. Mysteriously, all of the apostates had a black "A" singed onto their forehead shortly afterward. No one knows how this happened, but

many suspect it was done by the Voodoo Gurus.

Apostates are regarded as the lowest of the low by other sykers. Most sykers give these folks a wide berth, but a few simply wait for a good excuse (or even a bad excuse) to light out after one and grind him into the dirt. Yup. That means most every Banshee syker is your hero's enemy.

If your character swore the oath and later broke it, he's an *oathbreaker* instead.

Apostates are often bad guys, but maybe your syker had a good reason for refusing the *Oath of Unity*. Maybe he knows about some dark deed his squad did on Banshee and now hates the bald-headed brotherhood.

The Oath of Unity

Among brainers, sykers are perhaps best known for the *Oath of Unity*. It's commonly believed among outsiders that no syker will ever harm another syker. That's nonsense, of course. Sykers get into fights with each other all the time. But it is true that Banshee sykers *from the same squad* are bound by an oath to each other and, in many cases, with other squads they formed close relationships with.

What does the oath mean? It means the syker refuses to hurt or harm other sykers to whom he swore his oath, either directly or indirectly, even if it causes him problems, injury, or loss of life. If the syker unwittingly harms someone who is protected by the oath, he must do everything in his power to correct or heal the harm. What that means depends on the situation. The Marshal has to make the call here, but your hero should do everything he can to make things right.

It can be especially interesting to see how a character with the *oath* deals with conflicting obligations. Suppose the character takes a job which eventually brings him into conflict with a brother syker. If he follows his *oath*, he betrays his employer. If he does the job, he becomes an *oathbreaker*.

Finally, don't forget that if a syker took an oath to another squad, the two brainburners might know each other. They may have been friends, and might have even saved each other's lives on distant Banshee.

Oathbreaker

-1/-2

Most Banshee sykers took the *Oath of Unity*. While most have kept those oaths faithfully, a few have broken faith with their fellow sykers. These folks are known as *oathbreakers*. Of course, to get the Hindrance the syker has to be known as one who broke his oath. If he breaks his oath but no one knows, he doesn't become known as an *oathbreaker*.

Breaking the *oath* for a good and well-known reason is a -1 point Hindrance. Other sykers typically give the hero a chance to explain himself before they start blasting.

If the reason isn't known or isn't a very good one, it's a -2 point Hindrance. Other oath-takers blast your hero on sight, and it might even be possible for him to wake up one day with a big "A" singed on his forehead. (It still happens on occasion!) If that happens, his *oathbreaker* Hindrance becomes the -3 point *apostate* Hindrance instead.

Makin' Sykers

New Edges

We've screwed your hero, now let's help him out a little.

Additional Powers

Good sykers have a diverse bag of tricks. This is the only way your character can start the game with more than five powers, since sykers (who aren't *greenies*) start the game with one power for every level they have in *blastin'*, and the maximum starting *blastin'* is 5.

With this Edge, you can also purchase additional abilities for 2 points each. There's a limit though. Your syker can only buy an additional number of powers equal to half his *Knowledge* die type. A typical syker with 5 points in *blastin'* and a *Knowledge* die type of d12, for instance, could start with up to 11 total powers.

Adept

Some sykers are really good at one type of power, but not others. We call them *adepts*.

An *adept* adds +2 to his *blastin'* rolls whenever he uses a power within his specialty, but he must subtract -1 from *blastin'* rolls in all other categories.

A syker may only take *adept* once. He cannot be both a pyrokinetic adept and a sykokinetic adept. Being an *adept* is, according to the research, a genetic thing. Either a brainburner's got it or he doesn't, and those who have it can only have one type of it.

Fortitude

Fortitude is an Edge learned by most Banshee sykers after fighting the mysterious "skinnyes." Neither Earth sykers nor *greenies* can learn *fortitude*. Some say this proves a syker had to have contact with a skinny's mind to develop the power. Here's how it works.

(Note: We've changed this a bit from the *Deadlands: Hell on Earth* rulebook, so pay attention, waster! The biggest change is that there's no longer any Wind loss. Instead, we now have room for the nifty Brainburn Table we wanted to put in the main rulebook but just couldn't fit! We hope you like the changes, but if you don't, just keep using the old rules.)

A syker can continue to use powers up to double his normal Strain. When a syker uses Strain beyond that (he goes negative), he must make a simultaneous *Vigor* check with each *blastin'* roll. The TN is equal to 5 plus the



103

Good luck, partner.

"Greenie"

Learning powers is relatively easy. Learning to control the "burn" is much harder. *Greenies* are young or inexperienced sykers who haven't been taught how to handle their incredible abilities.

Your hero is learning his talents on his own, and has likely only experienced his "first sign" in the last year or so. *Greenie* is a very special Hindrance. It doesn't actually give your hero any points—it just negates the cost of buying *arcane background* (which he now gets for "free"). In essence, your syker is just developing his *arcane background*.

The *greenie* cannot start the game with a *blastin'* higher than 1, and he can only raise it once per game session (as usual). He can choose a single power to start with, and new powers cost 5 Bounty Points as usual.

Special



Makin' Sykers

Greenies can't buy the following Edges: *additional powers*, *fortitude*, or *overkill*.

Most *greenies* are kids, but your hero doesn't have to be. Maybe he trained at Jericho or with a mentor after the war, had his first sign late, or simply hasn't tried to develop his power until now. All that matters is that the *greenie* developed his power after the Reckoning (September 23rd, 2081).

Here's what's so special about these brain-blasters. *Greenies'* brains grew and developed after the Reckoning, in a world supercharged with supernatural energy. Because of that, they can channel more power through their minds and bodies. Such feats are not without risks, however.

When a *greenie* chooses, he can spend extra Strain for effect. Every point of Strain spent allows him to add +2 to his *blastin'* roll. The maximum Strain that can be spent on a roll is 5 (which has a +10 effect!).

The downside is that the *greenie* must simultaneously make a *Spirit* roll versus a TN of 5, plus +1 for each point of extra Strain spent. Failure means he suffers brainburn.



103



Overkill

3

Near the end of the Last War, many Earth sykers found themselves on the battlefield instead of sneaking around behind enemy lines. Standing mind-to-barrel with hover tanks, assault platforms, and hordes of gun-toting infantrymen made the best Earthers the toughest bastards around. Some even learned to trade a little piece of their soul for more power.

How, you ask? Easy. Earth sykers with this Edge can spend chips to increase the damage done by syker powers which directly cause damage. A white chip adds one extra die of damage; a red chip adds 2 dice, a blue chip adds 3, and a Legend chip adds 4. Use whatever die type the character is already rolling, and add these bonus dice to the total. Even if the regular dice are rolled like a skill roll (reading only the highest die), these dice are added separately and then added to the total.

Only one chip may be used per *blastin'* roll, but the bonus dice count toward everyone affected by the power.

Along with the *blastin'* roll, an Earther using *overkill* must make a Fair (5) *Spirit* roll. Add +1 to the TN if a white chip was spent, +2 for a red, and so on. If this roll is failed, the syker suffers brainburn as he uses his power.



103

This Edge is only available to Earth sykers who fought in the Last War. Perhaps the Reckoners awarded Earth sykers this advantage before they manifested to increase the carnage on Earth. If so, they are strangely selfish now that they walk our world in the flesh.

Steel-Trap Mind

1-5

Some sykers can go on blasting while others are gasping and twisting for mercy.

Every level of *steel-trap mind* adds +1 to a syker's Strain, up to a maximum of +5. Banshee sykers count this bonus when using *fortitude*.

Steel Will

1-5

For whatever reason, some survivors are naturally resistant to syker powers, whether they've got the mind talent or not.

This Edge is available to sykers and non-sykers alike. It represents someone whose willpower is particularly strong, allowing him to resist syker powers better. For every point of *steel will*, a character adds +1 to opposed rolls he makes to resist or decrease the effects of syker powers.

Makin' Sykers

How Sykers Get Their Groove On

Syker powers typically begin to develop around puberty. Sometimes they come a little later, which is fine. Sometimes they're a little earlier, and this requires some extra work on the part of whoever's looking after the syker-child. It takes a certain maturity to be able to handle syker powers, so young children who develop them have to be turned over to a competent teacher to prevent them from dying of brainburn. Sykers call the very first manifestation of their powers "first sign." Most experience first sign when they're 12 to 15 years old.

In the prewar days, once the child's parents figured out why their pots and pans were floating around the room, they'd usually send their young prodigy to a government-run academy. Not a lot of fun.

Prewar Sykers

Government-run academies featured exhaustive and intensive instruction combined with the strictest discipline. Sykers were taught not only to use their powers but to obey the often sinister commands of their leaders. Before the war, most sykers were fanatically loyal to their military. Afterward, the vast majority were disillusioned and disaffected by what some psychologists suggested the military had become—their surrogate parents.

To create these mental super-soldiers, academies used both human teachers and, at the end, cutting-edge "mental teaching machines." These were used to cram the proto-sykers' heads full of the information they needed to understand and use their powers.

The academies emphasized their students' specialties, but taught them powers within other categories as well. A brilliant pyrokinetic saboteur, for instance, is useless without a few powers to help him sneak in and out of his objective.

Training at an academy usually included the use of basic weapons and took an average student five years to complete.

Postwar Sykers

After the War, more specifically, after the Reckoning, sykers had to rely on other methods of instruction. There is only one academy, Jericho, and few wastelanders even know it exists. That's why Sergeant Mather (our first

narrator) wanders the wastes looking for potential students. Those he or his friends don't find must either have their own private mentor or learn to develop their powers on their own.

Regardless of where new sykers learn their powers, they are all referred to as "greenies" by prewar sykers. It's more than just a label. Greenies actually have an entirely different way of handling arcane energy than veterans of Earth or Banshee.

They learn their trade in one of three ways: at the Jericho Academy, through a mentor, or on their own (vets call them "orphans").

The Jericho Academy

Theoretically, the Jericho Academy *should* be a poor substitute for the well-funded, high-tech, and better-organized academies of old. But the simple truth is the prewar academies took about five years to produce a competent syker, and so does Jericho.

What's Marin's secret? Life. His young sykers are frequently sent out to explore the wastes, protect the local townsfolk, and deal with frequent Doombringer and mutie attacks.

Characters who learned their trade at Jericho have spent a year there for every point of *blastin'* they've got.

Mentors

Some greenies learned their powers by finding an older, more experienced syker and taking him as a mentor.

This can mean anything from a gentle period of tutelage and self-discovery to an extended term of near-slavery in which the syker does hard work and chores in exchange for learning what he can about being a syker from his "teacher." This being the Wasted West, you can guess which is more common.

If this is how your character got his powers, he's been with his master for two years for every level he has in *blastin'*.

Orphans

The last way a person becomes a syker is on his own. Most are mere children who are literally orphans. In some cases, orphans are mistaken for mutants and exiled from their community. Life is hard for these kids, and they have a hard time learning new powers without a teacher around. Sometimes they take more than three years to learn a *blastin'* level.



Makin' Sykers

Earth Sykers

Playing an Earther is a little bit different from playing a Banshee syker. Sure, they've got the same powers and Aptitudes and what not, but what we're talking about here is more a matter of *attitude* and approach to life in the Wasted West.

Banshee sykers tend to be intolerant of authority (because of all the horrible things they were ordered to do during the Faraway War) and sort of angry at the world for leaving them out in the cold. Earth sykers are kind of like that, but it would be better to describe their attitude as guilty.

It's one thing to go to war and come back to find out your home has changed. It's another to actually see the changes taking place right in front of your own eyes. What's worse is to watch the cities go up in ghost rock mushroom clouds and realize you may very well have had a hand in the whole process. It often makes a guy bitter and cynical. It also gives him a good reason to be searching for something better to do with his life, like helping innocents and fighting the creatures of the Reckoning. You know, hero stuff.

The Edge of Experience

Earth sykers tend to be more experienced than Banshee sykers. First off, they're older. That's the whole reason they stayed behind. Their governments kept the veterans and sent the newbies off to Banshee when the UN first called for a syker legion. To the then-snot-nosed 20-somethings who made up the Banshee syker corps, the Earthers are *old*.

Even though most of these grim Banshee vets are themselves 30+ years old these days, Earth sykers are usually 10 to 15 years more experienced. A few Earthers graduated after the Faraway War began, but these young Turks were thrown headlong into the meatgrinder of the Last War. Few Earth sykers remain. Fewer still are young.

Second, Earthers fought a war in which they had to turn their awesome mental powers on their fellow humans, not purple, alien savages. Many worked as commandos and spies, but some, just like Banshee sykers, were tossed into the crucible and had to learn how to use their powers on the battlefield. And while the anouks were tough, especially when backed by skinnies, they just didn't compare to a modern enemy.



Makin' Sykers

armed with cluster munitions, hover tanks, and laser-guided bombs. Today, Earth's battlefields are littered with the bones of Earth sykers who didn't learn to cope with such threats fast enough. The ones who made it through are tough sons of bitches who are more than capable of holding their own against abominations, walkin' dead, and Banshee blasters.

Third, Earth sykers watched the world turn weird while their brothers and sisters on Banshee were fighting aliens. Many of them worked hand-in-hand with the Agency or the Texas Rangers and learned just how bizarre things could get when the terror and violence of a world war mingled with the supernatural power of the Reckoners.

Fourth, the sykers on Banshee had TunnelCom to keep them up to date on the Last War, but they were busy fighting anouks and missed out on a lot of practical information. Earthers know more mundane information, like where major battles were fought, where caches of weapons might be found, and other useful tidbits the Banshee sykers have to piece together from survivor's stories.

Fifth, many Earth sykers worked very closely with their intelligence agencies. In the North, this role was fulfilled by the Agency. In the South, it was the Texas Rangers who tracked down the weird stuff and put an end to it. Working so closely with these agencies gave the sykers a leg up on the nature of the Reckoning, certain abominations, and how to kill them. To reflect this, most Earth sykers have *academia*: occult at level 3 or higher.

Finally, Earth sykers watched their homes blow up. If that doesn't harden a soul, nothing will. Sure, everyone lost family and friends that dismal day in September, but Earthers were there, and many of them wonder why they were chosen to survive. Not many did.

The rest have "survivor's syndrome." A few make the best of it. They figure they should do something worthwhile with their second chance at life. Others let the guilt eat them up inside, drifting aimlessly or worse, using their powers for selfish or even evil reasons.

Making an Earth Syker

Creating an Earth syker character is not significantly different from creating a Banshee syker, but there are a few things to take into account. First, figure out exactly what the character was doing during the Last War.

Whereas most Banshee sykers have more or less the same experiences on Banshee, Earthers filled a variety of roles. Some stuck to their traditional pursuits of spying, infiltrating, assassinating, and conducting commando operations. Others, as mentioned above, became full-fledged combat blasters. The character's background should give you some idea of what kind of powers he should start the game with.

Second, don't forget Earthers can have the *overkill* Edge instead of *fortitude*. Truthfully, this ability creeps them out a bit. Some have likened *overkill* to a gift from a dark God. There just may be some truth to that.

Another important difference is that almost none of them are addicted to red or own a Banshee stone. They also haven't sworn any oaths not to attack any other sykers. That's why Banshee vets don't consider Earthers their brothers and sisters. They're more like distant cousins.

Because of their age and experience, Earth sykers should be *veterans of the wasted west*.

Sole Survivor

Very few Earth sykers survived the Last War. Think about it. These guys and gals are awesome weapons for the military behind them, so they didn't just sit around in the rear and goof off while their side was losing.

That brings us to one important question: How did your syker survive the Apocalypse? Was he behind enemy lines, infiltrating some secret base unknown to those who dropped the bombs? If so, how did he escape? Was he perhaps away from his barracks or base, visiting family or friends on a short leave? If so, his family likely survived too. Where are they now? Maybe your syker was in a field camp somewhere when the bombs fell, one the enemy hadn't yet spotted with satellite surveillance. If that's the case, what happened to the rest of his unit? And why did they let him just walk off and leave? Or maybe your syker was in a field hospital when things went to Hell. He and all the others rose from their beds, looked around at the destruction, and just walked off.

It may sound like a simple question, but exactly how your syker lived through a war that killed over 90% of his comrades might determine many things about your hero.



Makin' Sykers

The Uses of Syker Powers

Sykers can only start with a handful of powers. That's why it's important for you, the player, to figure out what you want your syker to do with them. One of the best ways is to determine what your hero did before. This should help you develop a theme for your brainburner and choose the powers that serve him best in that role. Here are a few descriptions of the most common types of prewar sykers.

Assassin

Most syker assassins use bio- or telekinesis to kill their victims. Those who want to make a point use messy powers like *Aztec surprise* or *boneripping*. If subtlety is more important, *heartstopper* is a better choice, as are creative uses of *purge*, *chameleon*, and *skinwalker*.

Make sure your killer has a good *sneak* as well, and don't forget the value of a silent-weapon skill, such as *fightin' knife*.


Master Blaster

Pure destruction is impressive and fun at parties. Whether it's frying someone's brain, blowing a building to smithereens, or burning a hole through a hover tank, sykers wield some pretty impressive power. This is a common path for Earth sykers, especially when combined with their awesome *overkill* ability. Pyrokinesis is a natural specialization, as is sykokinesis for the *force field* power, which can protect the blaster when he's striding the battlefield like War himself.

Interrogator

What information spies can't get, interrogators often do. (This happened often during the Last War, in which prisoners were common.) They specialize in psionics and use powers such as *tattletale* and *mind reader* to gain information from their victims.

Provocateur



Provocateurs are masters at tricking people with illusions, whether they're limited ones like *skinwalker*, which changes their appearance, or ones with broader effects like *hallucination*. Judiciously used, these powers can send enemies off on wild goose chases or prevent pursuers from ever getting close to catching the syker. In a somewhat less heroic vein, they can also be

used to pull off elaborate swindles, lure somebody into a trap so he can be robbed, and the like.

Provocateurs specialize in psionics.

Sabotage

Saboteurs sneak their way into heavily guarded objectives and plant bombs, destroy sensitive equipment, or set fires. Pyrokinesis is their main weapon, but they need powers to help them reach their objective quietly as well. *Silence*, *chameleon*, and *predator* can all come in handy here.

The problem with saboteurs is they were often called on to destroy buildings that contained not only valuable military objectives, but innocent bystanders as well. These days, there are many syker saboteurs who have a guilty conscience about what they did in the Last War or on *Banshee*.

Spy

Many of the sykers' more indirect powers, such as *mindrider*, are ideal for uncovering hidden or secret information. Similarly, they can easily transmit that information from mind to mind via *psychic link*—a virtually foolproof courier system. Often, the only thing they have to worry about is enemy sykers.

Spies also make good use of sensory abilities like *mind scan*. They can't see through walls like so many brainers think, but they can see through someone else's eyes (*mindrider*) or detect many things which normal humans can't.

Psionics is their speciality of choice.

Subversive

Considered the ultimate form of power by some sykers, the ability to take control of someone's mind or play around with her personality is a dangerous one indeed. With the right powers, a syker can literally break down someone's memories and personality and rebuild her to taste. A loyal follower can be turned into a bomb-toting, suicidal killer, for example—just the sort of assassin who can get close to a target and kill him.

Subversives must be masters of psionics, and should have a decent *persuasion* as well.

While many don't trust sykers, even other sykers don't trust "mind freaks" who specialize in mental domination. They often tend to be arrogant, aloof, and have a self-righteous, know-it-all attitude that makes folks around them somewhat wary of their true intentions.

Tactics for Sykers

Sykers are powerful, no doubt about it. Anyone with sense thinks twice about taking on someone who can tear people to shreds with little more than a thought. But their power isn't limitless. Indeed, to hear them talk about it, their abilities are often severely hampered by the strain their powers cause them. But the more clever or tactically minded sykers have developed some ways to maximize their effectiveness.

Line of Sight

Most syker powers work on what's called "line of sight." That means the syker has to be able to see his target to affect him. This provides a whole passel of tactical options a clever syker can take advantage of, but it also has some limitations to account for.

The Bad Stuff

Bad news first. "Line of sight" doesn't literally mean that a syker can *brain blast* any little speck on the horizon which might be a target. It's not that good. To establish a useful line of sight to a target, the syker has to be close enough to recognize the target for what it is (a man, zombie, mutie, wormling, and so forth). The Marshal can change this to take special situations into account if something unusual comes up during the game. Most folks can recognize and distinguish a human-sized figure standing in the open at around 300 yards. The eagle eyes Edge extends the range to around 500 yards.

Second, line of sight or not, most syker powers have definite ranges. These ranges are usually defined by a syker's level of skill. An experienced syker can use his powers at a greater range than a newbie. But even if a syker has line of sight on a target, he can't affect that target with a power if the target's beyond the power's maximum range. However (and here's a bit of good news), with a few notable exceptions, syker powers don't have Range Increments. It's just as easy to hit a target at the maximum range as when the target's standing right next to the syker.

Third, the line-of-sight requirement often makes it easy to hide from sykers. Drop a smoke grenade, duck behind a rock, or hunker down inside a car. If a syker can't see you, he often can't affect you. Of course, he can always pick



up a big rock with *telekinesis* and throw it at where he thinks you're hiding, but at least he can't get hold of you with *meat puppet* and make you start clucking like a chicken.

If necessary, the Marshal may require the syker to make a *Cognition* roll to establish line of sight against a target which is difficult to see or far away.

Fourth, line of sight has to be established *directly*, with the syker's own eyes. He can't hold up a periscope or mirror and spot the target that way, or find a target with closed-circuit television, *mindrider*, or something like that. There has to be a direct line between the syker and his target. Sight enhancers, such as binoculars or a telescope work just fine because there's still a direct line from the syker to his target.

Finally, line of sight means line of *sight*. It doesn't matter if a syker has *big ears* or a nose like a basset hound, he's got to be able to see his target to affect him with syker powers. And if he goes blind for some reason, you guessed it, he can only use powers that affect him personally. All other powers are useless. No lookee, no blastee.



Makin' Sykers

The Good Stuff

All these drawbacks may make line of sight seem like kind of a raw deal for sykers. Not so! There are a lot of advantages to it as well. The main one is the ability to use cover extensively. Savvy sykers can hide behind rubble and peek over the top just enough to see their target. Or stick their head out around a corner just a bit to rip some scavs to shreds. A really clever syker might even scrounge up an old piece of bulletproof glass and use it to protect his head while he looks for targets.

But don't forget the other big advantage to line of sight: distance! Sykers don't have to get up close and personal with their enemies. They can stand 100 yards off and turn their foes' minds to mush. Between cover and range, the odds of any victims being able to mount an effective counterattack are slim. On the other hand, if any of them *do* get to the syker, he might be stuck out there all by himself. Smart sykers avoid this by picking a spot their friends can reach quickly enough to help out. The sneakiest sykers climb trees or buildings to reduce the possibility of some abomination creeping up and ripping their innards out.

Indirect Powers

Sykers are best known for their terrifying ability to cause damage—and given that they can rip peoples' bones out of their bodies or burst blood vessels, that fear is well-placed. Still, it's not something that should be relied on too much.

Far too many sykers fall into the trap of simply blasting away at the enemy, taking advantage of these powers to reduce them to bloody heaps of flesh, without exploring other alternatives. There are plenty of other ways to affect targets *indirectly*, which may serve the syker better in the long run.

Take *hallucination*, for example. Why waste several rounds dismantling foes one at a time when a clever syker can distract all of them at once with one well-conceived illusion? With a touch of *chameleon* or *skinwalker*, a syker may be able to sneak in among his targets and wreak a lot of havoc.

Similarly, *meat puppet* is an incredibly effective tool in combat. Dominate one enemy's mind, and get him to shoot his buddies! That's every bit as effective as *brain blasting* each of them one at a time, and it costs a lot less Strain to boot.



Makin' Sykers

You've Still Got a Trigger Finger

The military—whichever one your syker was once a part of—trained him in military skills for a reason. Sometimes there just isn't enough strain to get done everything he's supposed to accomplish. It's often a good idea for a brainburner to save his energy for things that can *only* be done with syker powers—things like *memory maker*, *telekinesis* and *fleshknit*. When the hero just want to blast somebody into his component atoms, his trusty assault rifle or a thimbleful of C-27 is just as good as *arson* or *brain blast*.

Make sure your character has plenty of suitable skills to go with his powers. Remember also that tools can often make up for a power you just can't afford to buy at first. A sniper, for instance, might want *itsy-bitsy spider* to help him gain the high ground. But if you can't swing it, maybe you can just buy him a grappling hook or other climbing tools instead. In other words, don't limit your character because you can't afford every power you think he should have. Find other ways to make up for any weaknesses in your hero's career.

Affecting Undead

Syker powers, by and large, work on the undead as well as the living. There are some exceptions (check out *agonizer*), but sykers can generally blast zombies and the Harrowed as well as muties and scavs.

Why is that? Because walkin' dead, Harrowed, and the like actually use magic to "activate" a portion of the brain (usually—some use other organs as their focus, but that's rare).

Powers or damage that *directly* affect functioning organs such as eyes and ears work just fine. Don't rely on poison to kill a zombie (it doesn't work), but use *blindsight* on its eyes and it's blinded. In short, if an organ is functioning, even if by magic, it can be affected by syker powers.

Mind-control powers are a little different. If the creature is simply an animated corpse, such as a walkin' dead, zombie, skeleton, or other "mindless" undead, psionic powers have no effect on them. Harrowed, vampires, liches, and other creatures with a remnant of a human soul inside are susceptible to mind control. That's revealing. It means the syker is controlling the spirit *through* the host's gray matter, something mind freaks have pondered for years.

Syker Slang

Apostate: A syker who did not take the "Oath of Unity." They have a black "A" singed on their foreheads, but no one knows how or why.

Blaster: A syker. Sometimes it means a syker with lots of offensive powers.

Brainer: Most folks mean "dumb ass." Sykers mean "dumb ass without any syker powers."

Brainburn: Damage or other ill effects from a failed use of a syker power.

Brain Junkie: A syker who overuses his powers or relies on them too much.

Earther: A syker who remained on Earth instead of going to Faraway.

Grape: Anouk (because of their purple skin).

Greenie: A new syker, one who's developed some powers but has no formal training.

Juice: Strain, the psychic energy that fuels syker powers.

Juice Junkie: A syker who specializes in sykokinetic powers.

Lifter: A syker who specializes in telekinetic powers.

Lightning: Syker powers. Used graphically more than verbally.

Lizards: Another name for anouks.

Mind Freak: A syker who specializes in psionic powers. Some use it as an insult, saying mind freaks get off on playing "peeping Tom" with other people's thoughts and memories.

Pyro: A syker who specializes in pyrokinesis.

Skinnyies: Mysterious and powerful creatures on Banshee. There is some debate over whether or not they are actually anouks.

Syko: A syker whose brain's been burned one too many times. Usually violent. Very violent.

Wine, vino: On Banshee, wine meant "anouk blood." See "grape" to figure out why.

Archetypes

Assassin

Traits & Aptitudes

Deftness 4d10

Shootin' pistol, rifle 4

Nimbleness 1d8

Climbin' 1

Fightin': brawlin' 2

Sneak 4

Quickness 3d8**Strength 1d6****Vigor 2d10****Cognition 4d6**

Search 3

Knowledge 2d12

Academia: occult 2

Area knowledge: Wasted

West 2

Blastin' 5

Mien 2d6**Smarts 3d6****Spirit 3d6**

Guts 3

Wind: 16

Pace: 8

Strain: 10

Edges:

Additional powers 2

Arcane background:

syker 3

Dinero 2:

There's
always
somebody
who needs
killing

Fortitude 1

Steel-trap mind 3

Hindrances:Intolerance -1: Can't
stand authority.

Grim servant o' Death -5

Oath of Unity -1

Vengeful -3

Specialty: Biokinesis**Powers:** Boneripping,
brain blast, brain bomb,
hallucination, heartstopper,
predator**Gear:** SA Officer's sidearm
with silencer, three full
clips, black clothes (+1
sneak), and \$17.

Personality

I've been called an assassin before. Yes, I've killed more than a few people in my time. But I prefer to think of myself the way the military did: as a hunter, someone who searches for a target, finds him, and eliminates him.

Whether it's a Black Hat commander, a Doombringer, or some Hell-spawned horror you're after, I can take him down for you. I've got the guts, the weapons, and—most importantly—the brains to do the job right.

I only have two conditions: no kids, and half payment in advance.

Quote: "Total absence of brain functions confirmed. Mission accomplished."



Archetypes

Earth Syker

Traits & Aptitudes

Deftness 1d8

Shootin' rifle 4

Nimbleness 1d6

Climbin' 1

Drivin' cars 3

Fightin' brawlin' 3

Sneak 3

Quickness 4d10**Strength 2d6****Vigor 2d10****Cognition 2d6**

Scrutinize 3

Search 2

Knowledge 2d12

Academia: occult 3

Area knowledge: Wasted

West 2

Blastin' 5

Mien 3d8

Overawe 3

Smarts 3d6

Scroungin' 3

Spirit 4d6

Guts 4

Wind: 16**Pace: 6****Strain: 15****Edges:**

Additional

powers 2

Arcane background:

syker 3

Overkill 3

Steel-trap mind 5

Veteran o' the Wasted

West (Tell the Marshal

to draw a card for this

Edge.)

Hindrances:

Cautious -3

Heroic -5

Stubborn -2

Specialty: Pyrokinesis**Powers: Arson, brain blast,**

chameleon, detonate, force

field, pyro, telekinesis, slow

burn

Gear: SA assault rifle, 30

rounds of ammo, and \$20.

Personality

Old ain't dead, kid. I know I look like some old fossil to you, but I've been blasting since you were just a gleam in your daddy's eye.

While you and the rest of the kids were away fighting lizards on Banshee, I was down here dealing with humans. That's right: humans—devious, sneaky, powerful, armed-to-the-teeth-with-the-latest-military-technology humans. Take it from me, it ain't the cakewalk you Banshee blasters had in outer space. I've got the scars to prove it.

Ever gone brain-to-muzzle with a hover tank? Or stood your ground against an assault chopper while regiments of grunts are streaming away behind you? Then maybe you've infiltrated an entire base full of commandos to take out their leader without a sound. No? Didn't think so.

So leave me alone. If I see any purple savages from outer space, I'll be sure to call you.

Quote: "Get outta my way."



Archetypes

Greenie

Traits & Aptitudes

Deftness 1d8

Filchin' 2
Shootin': SMG 3

Nimbleness 3d8

Climbin' 1
Dodge 3
Fightin': brawlin' 2
Sneak 3

Quickness 4d10

Quick draw 2

Strength 2d6**Vigor 2d12****Cognition 1d6**

Search 3

Knowledge 2d10

Academia: occult 2
Area knowledge: Wasted West 2
Blastin' 1

Mien 2d6**Smarts 3d6**

Bluff 3
Streetwise 2

Spirit 4d6

Guts 3

Wind: 22

Pace: 10

Strain: 17

Edges:

Arcane background: syker 3
Greenie
Steel-trap mind 5

Hindrances:

Bad luck -5
Big britches -3
Kid -2

Specialty: Telekinesis**Powers: Telekinesis**

Gear: NA Commando SMG,
20 rounds of ammo, and a
full spare clip.

Personality

Back off me, man, or I'll pick up a car with my mind and squash you like a bug! Huh? Oh, you're a syker. Well, okay, maybe I can't pick up a car yet, but watch me move that rock over there!

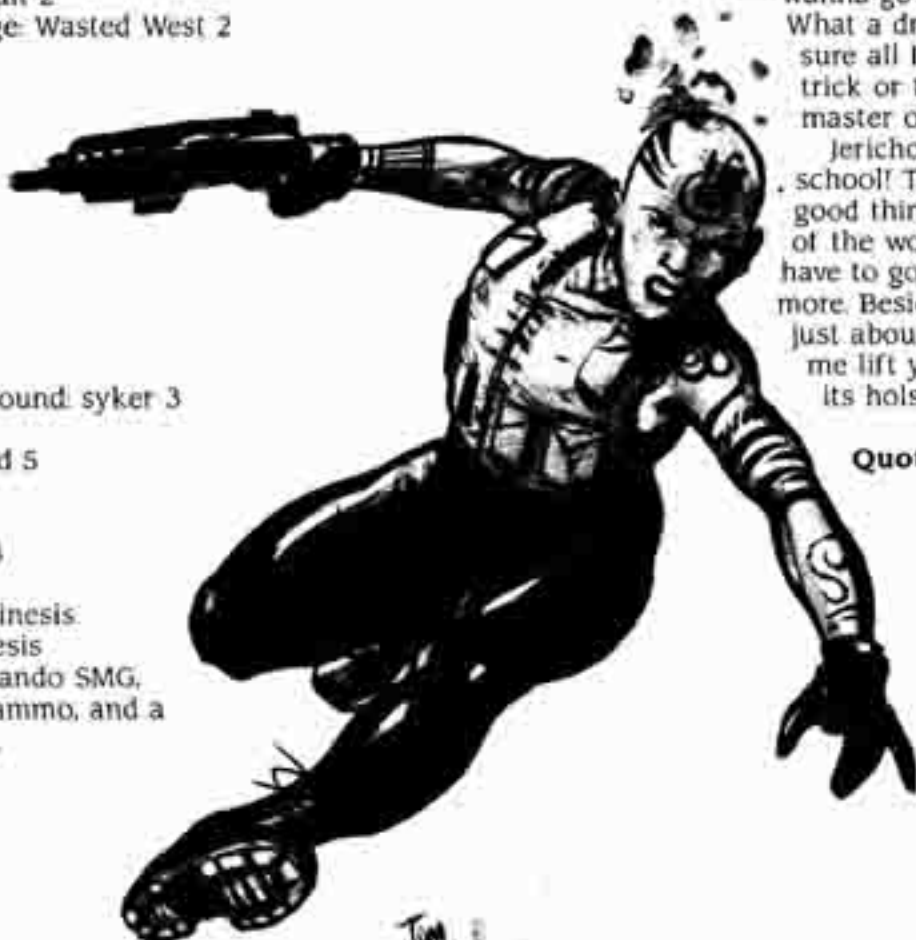
Pretty good, huh? Oh, crap!

Ow, that hurt. What was it? "Brainburn?" Never heard of it. But I have hurt myself real hard sometimes using my, um, gift. I think it's because I'm really powerful. Maybe the most powerful syker there's ever been! I just haven't learned how to control it yet.

You know any quick tips to get me over this hump? Huh? No, I don't wanna go to some school. What a drag, man. I'm sure all I need is a quick trick or two, and I'll be a master of telekinesis.

Jericho? I said, no! No school! That's the only good thing about the end of the world. You don't have to go to school any more. Besides, I think I've just about got it. Watch me lift your gun out of its holster.

Quote: "Aaiieeee!"



Archetypes

Mind Freak

Traits & Aptitudes

Deftness 4d6

Shootin' pistol 3

Nimbleness 1d6

Climbin' 1

Sneak 1

Quickness 3d8**Strength 3d6****Vigor 4d10****Cognition 3d6**

Search 1

Scrutinize 3

Knowledge 2d12

Academia: occult 2

Area knowledge:

Wasted West 2

Blastin' 5

Mien 3d10

Overawe 3

Persuasion 3

Smarts 1d8**Spirit 2d6**

Guts 3

Wind: 16**Pace: 10****Strain: 15****Edges:**

Adept 3

Arcane

background:

syker 3

Fortitude 1

Steel-trap

mind 5

Hindrances:

Curious -3

Intolerance -1: You hate authority.

Oath of *Unity* -1

Habit -3: You love to read people's minds.

Specialty: Psionics**Powers:** Meat puppet, memory maker, mind reader, mind scan, psychic link**Gear:** Police pistol, 9 rounds, 1 full spare clip, handcuffs, holster, knife, and \$52.

Personality

The mind can triumph over anything. At least, my mind can. Yours is a piece of clay for me to mold. The brain is but a chaotic mass of memories and emotions, and I am the master sculptor. I can read your mind, rearrange your memories, and make you think or do anything I want.

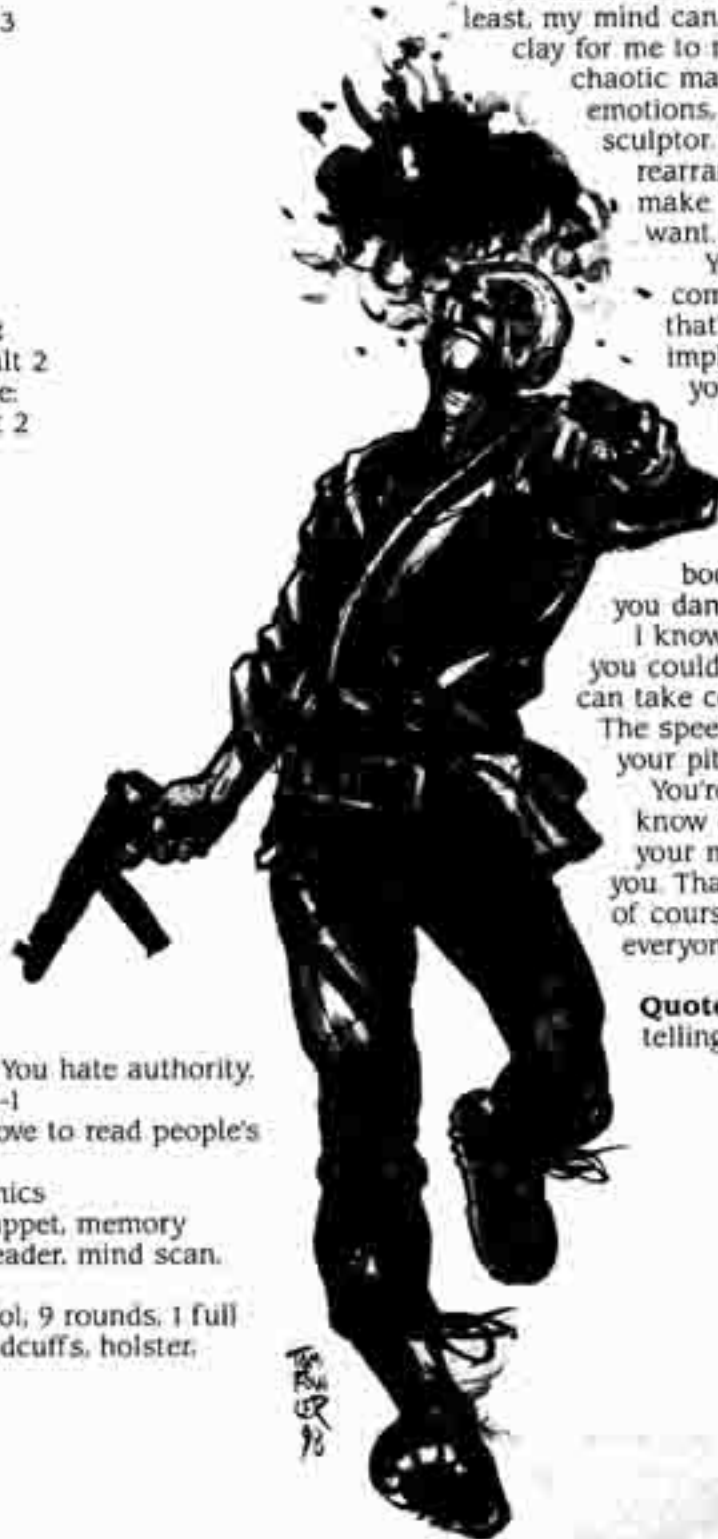
You think you're my companion. Are you sure about that? Or is it just a memory I implanted in your head? Maybe you were a bandit who tried to rob me. Or a total stranger I decided would fight my battles for me. There's no way you can be sure.

I can manipulate your body too. Try me, and I'll make you dance the lambada.

I know what you're thinking, that you could reach that gun faster than I can take control of you. You're wrong. The speed of thought is far faster than your pitiful flesh.

You're still thinking about it. I know every thought that's crossing your mind. Maybe even better than you. That angers you doesn't it? Yes, of course it does. It does most everyone. I find that amusing.

Quote: "Are you thinking what I'm telling you to think?"





Chapter Three: Syker Powers

New Powers

Here's what you've been waiting for: new syker powers, and a bunch of 'em. This chapter also includes all of the powers from the *Deadlands: Hell on Earth* rulebook for easy reference, but read them anyway. We've rewritten or expanded a few.

Just in case you don't have *Deadlands: Hell on Earth* handy, here's what the information in each power's description means:

Type is the type of power—pyrokinetic, psionic, and so on.

TN is the Target Number the syker needs to make the power work. If it says "opposed," the syker compares his roll to a roll made by his opponent. The Trait in parentheses is the one used by the opponent. The syker always uses his *blastin'*. Remember that in an opposed roll, the minimum TN is still a 5. If the syker's *blastin'* roll is less than 5, he fails regardless of what his opponent rolls. A bust for the opponent, by the way, is considered a 0.

Strain is the amount of Strain the syker must use to initiate the power. A syker does not lose Strain if he fails his *blastin'* roll.

Speed is the number of actions or time it takes to complete the power.

Duration is how long the power stays in effect. If the Duration is "1 round," the power lasts until the beginning of the next round, regardless of

when the power was first activated or used in the previous round. "Concentration" means the power stays in effect as long as the syker does nothing but take simple actions. A "#/time" means the syker must spend that much Strain on his first action each the defined time period to keep the power in effect. For example, for "1/round" the syker pays 1 Strain each round. (If the syker has no action in a combat round, he pays the Strain cost at the beginning of the round).

Range is the maximum distance at which the power can take effect. Unless a power says otherwise, the target of a blast must be in sight of the syker.

There are additional notes about some of the syker powers in the Marshal's section. No peeking!

Agonizer

Type: Biokinetic

TN: Opposed (*Vigor*)

Strain: 1

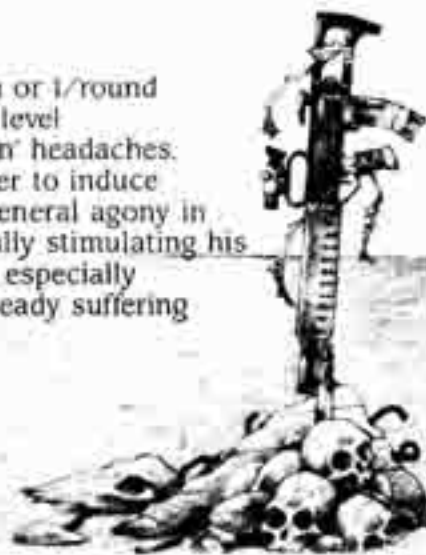
Speed: 1

Duration: Concentration or 1/round

Range: 10 yards/*blastin'* level

Talk about your splittin' headaches.

Agonizer allows a syker to induce intense headaches and general agony in another person by mentally stimulating his nerves—in a bad way. It's especially effective if a victim is already suffering from real wounds.



Syker Powers

To use it, the syker makes an opposed roll against the target's *Vigor*. For each success, the victim suffers -1 to all skill and Trait checks, just as if he was wounded.

This is cumulative with any real wound modifiers, making it possible for someone to suffer more than usual maximum -5 pain modifier. *Thick-skinned* characters or those with other ways to ignore pain can reduce their penalties a like amount.

Agonizer doesn't work on creatures which feel no pain, such as undead. (Remember that though undead do suffer from some wound modifiers, it is because it's assumed their bodies are being blown to pieces, not because they actually experience pain.)

Arson

Type: Pyrokinetic

TN: 7

Strain: 3

Speed: 1

Duration: Instant

Range: 10 yards/*blastin' level*

"Burn it to the ground."

—General Warfield, Castle Rock, 2078

Arson is one of the sykers' most potent pyrokinetic powers. It's great for cooking hot dogs, s'mores, and all those angry muties who think you should share.

When used, *arson* creates a fiery burst with a diameter equal to the syker's *Spirit* die type in yards. (In fact, some sykers like to call this power *fireball* because of its effects.) Targets within this diameter take 2d10 damage, plus 1d10 per raise. Use the massive damage rules on important characters. Goons just take damage.

Victims catch fire if they take a single wound, continuing to take 2d6 damage at the beginning of each round thereafter. The Marshal may raise or lower this amount if the bad guys are particularly dry, wet, or resistant or susceptible to fire.

If a victim of *arson* is carrying anything explosive or flammable, like spook juice, it's likely to catch fire or explode and cause further damage. The Marshal should make an Onerous (7) roll with a d10 for each explosive item when the character is first attacked with *arson* and each round the character is on fire.

See *Deadlands: Hell on Earth* for information on fire and ways for burning victims to put themselves out.



Syker Powers

Aztec Surprise

Type: Telekinetic

TN: Opposed (*Vigor*)

Strain: 3

Speed: 2

Duration: Instant

Range: 10 yards/*blastin'* level

Don't it just tear your heart out?

As a matter of fact, that's exactly what it does. Maybe you've heard of the Aztecs. They were a big tribe of Indians who used to live down Mexico way. A couple times over the past five or six hundred years they managed to get their religion into full swing.

Unfortunately for their neighbors, their religion involved lots of elaborate human sacrifices to the gods. The most common form of sacrifice was to cut a victim's chest open and rip his beating heart out.

Aztec surprise brings a taste of that extracurricular activity to the Wasted West. A very specialized form of *telekinesis*, it allows a syker to reach into a victim's chest with brain power and rip his heart straight out through his ribcage.

Such feats of carnage are tough, hence the opposed roll of the syker's *blastin'* against the target's *Vigor*. If the blaster succeeds, the victim takes 3d10 damage to the gizzards, plus an additional die per raise. Only supernatural armor protects against this insidious attack.

If the syker manages to main the target's guts, the victim's heart is torn clean out of his chest, and he dies. The syker is left with a bloody trophy of his victory to boot. If the damage is not enough to kill the victim this way, the victim simply takes the damage. His heart hurts but remains attached to all the slimy, veiny things inside.

Of course, *Aztec surprise* only works on victims with hearts and working circulatory systems. A syker can use it on a Harrowed or walkin' dead if he wants, but such a target only takes 1d10 damage because of the ripping and tearing of tissue. Removing a Harrowed's heart doesn't cause him any extra damage. Show it to him, and he'll laugh at you like Old Scratch himself before he blows a terminal hole in your head.

Yes, *Aztec surprise* can be used to remove other critical organs, but it works the same and causes the exact same damage. Use the effects covered here. If a syker wants to remove a less critical organ, he could do so, causing only 1d10 damage per success.

Backwash

Type: Sykokinetic

TN: Opposed (*blastin'* versus *blastin'*)

Strain: 1

Speed: 1

Duration: Instant

Range: 10 yards/*blastin'* level (of the host)

The sykers on Banshee developed this power to counteract the skinnies' potent mind-control powers. *Backwash* allows a syker to follow a mental link from a source (human or otherwise) under the active control or effect of another syker and strike back at the enemy brainburner "at the other end."

The *backwash* takes the form of a mental attack that surges along the psionic link between the syker, the target, and the enemy syker. This is an opposed *blastin'* roll, with the attacking syker getting a +4 bonus if the enemy syker didn't see it coming. The loser suffers 3d6 damage to the head, plus an additional 1d6 damage per raise. Note that we said "the loser"—which could be the syker who initiated the *backwash*.

The person being controlled (the host) suffers no harm from the battle raging in his head. He just acts as a "mental launching platform." Also, the syker using *backwash* need not have line of sight on his ultimate target, only on the host. Range doesn't matter either, since the controlling syker must be within range of the host for his power to work anyway.

Band-Aid

Type: Biokinetic

TN: 5

Strain: 1

Speed: Equal to amount of Wind bled per round

Duration: Permanent

Range: 20 yards/*blastin'* level

Sykers make terrible medics. Most of them were just raised too mean to care anyway. Still, while they may not be able to actually heal another's wounds, they can at least use biokinesis to stop some poor loser's bleeding.

This power can stop the bleeding of a one or more wounded areas. The syker first spends a number of actions equal to the amount of Wind being bled per round from the wounded areas to be affected. Then he makes his *blastin'* roll.

The healer can choose to let one wounded area bleed while stopping or even merely reducing the bleeding to another area as he chooses.



Syker Powers

Blindside

Type: Biokinetic

TN: Opposed (*Vigor*)

Strain: 1/target

Speed: 1

Duration: 1 minute/*blastin'* level

Range: 20 yards/*blastin'* level

None are so blind as those who will not see—or those who have been affected by this power.

Blindside allows the syker to reach into the victim's brain and shut down his optical nerve—in short, to cut off his sight. For the duration of the power, the victim is completely blind. While blinded, the victim is at -6 to any Trait or Aptitude roll which, in the Marshal's opinion, requires sight (such as *scrutinize*). Additionally, any ranged attacks (such as *shootin'* or *throwin'*) the victim makes are at another -4, for a total of -10.

Each raise on the roll increases the duration by five minutes before the syker has to start paying Strain to maintain it.

If a syker is blinded, he can only use powers with a range of "touch" or "self." This is a great way to render one helpless for a while.

Body Control

Type: Biokinetic

TN: 5

Strain: 1

Speed: 1

Duration: Concentration or 1/round

Range: Self

The human body is capable of amazing feats—if the brain will let it. And a syker's brain is capable of some pretty amazing things itself. Together they're a damned potent combination.

Body control represents a syker's ultimate control over his own flesh and blood. He can make it do things ordinary people only dream of, simply by force of will. Some examples of things which can be accomplished with *body control* are described here.

If a syker has an idea for a *body control*-like ability not listed in the table, it's up to the Marshal to decide whether or not he can do it with this power. *Body control* wouldn't let someone get bigger (increase his Size), for instance, but it might let him regurgitate on command, pass gas, burp, or command some other mastery over their body functions. You know, important stuff. No matter what, though, this power never affects mental Traits.

Agility: The syker boosts his *Nimbleness* rolls by +2 per success.

Breath Control: The syker's air requirements are reduced to one quarter of normal. Most folks can hold their breath an average of 45 seconds, assuming they were able to get a lungful of air beforehand, so this power would make that gulp of air last somewhere around three full minutes (180 seconds).

Heightened Awareness: The syker's senses become ultra-acute, granting +2 to *search* and *scrutinize* rolls per success. On the flip side of this, anything which affects the brainburner through his senses, like a flash grenade or stink bomb, gets +2 per success to its effect roll, due to his heightened sensitivity. This does not include *optical interference* or *deaf and dumb*, which affect senses through the brain.

Endurance: The syker increases his *Vigor* rolls by +2 per success.

Eye-Hand Coordination: The brainburner adds +2 to his *Deftness* rolls for each success.

Fear Suppression: The syker can override his fear response. He gains +2 per success to all *guts* rolls he has to make (or gets *guts* 1 if he doesn't have that Aptitude already).

Lightning Reflexes: The syker boosts his *Quickness* rolls, gaining +2 per success.

Pain Reduction: The syker is able to withstand pain. Success reduces the character's wound modifiers by 1, +1 for each raise achieved.

Strength: The syker boosts his *Strength*, gaining +2 per success to all *Strength* rolls.

Bogus!

Type: Psionic

TN: Opposed (*Smarts*)

Strain: 1

Speed: 1

Duration: 5 minutes/*blastin'* level

Range: 10 yards/*blastin'* level

Liar, liar, mind's on fire!

Bogus! is a simple mental trick that makes others believe the syker's little white lies. It's handy when a mind freak doesn't want to waste the strain to make a *meat puppet*, but needs to convince someone that these are not the droids he's looking for. Each raise makes the lie that much more convincing.

Bogus! isn't very powerful. If the lie is obvious, the loser gets to make a Fair (5) *Smarts* roll to realize it. Telling someone it's night when he's standing under a blazing sun is doomed to failure. Telling someone it's night when he's inside a room without any windows should work fine.

Syker Powers



Boneripping

Type: Telekinetic

TN: Opposed (Vigor)

Strain: 5

Speed: 3

Duration: Instant

Range: 10 yards/*blastin'* level

Got a bone to pick with someone? This is the best way in the Deadlands to do it, partner.

Boneripping is a limited form of *telekinesis* which sykers use to cause horrific damage to targets with skeletal structures (including Harrowed and walkin' dead).

To start the carnage, the syker makes an opposed roll with his *blastin'* against the target's *Vigor*. If he succeeds, he inflicts 5d10 damage, plus an additional +1d10 per raise. How does this happen? By literally ripping bones out of the poor schmuck's body.

Against grunts, the Marshal should just roll the damage and put the sucker down. If the attack is against an important character and the Marshal is keeping track of individual wounds, use the massive damage rules to figure out which areas of the body are affected. Any area which becomes critically wounded or maimed is

rendered useless. The bones in that area have been broken and ripped out of the target's body, leaving flabby masses of bleeding flesh. (Yuck!) Add an additional +2 to the TN of anyone attempting to heal the slab of meat for the excruciating and disgusting mess. (Young or inexperienced characters who witness *boneripping* are probably up for a Fair (5) *guts* roll, by the way.)

A syker can use *boneripper* repeatedly on the same target. If a location which has already been maimed is hit again (and the target is important enough for the Marshal to keep track of individual wounds), the attack causes 1d6 Wind per wound, but no additional wounds.

Armor does not protect the poor schmuck unless it's supernatural in origin.

Boneripping is one of those powers that really give sykers a bad name. It's really powerful, really deadly, and really, *really* gross. Should a blaster use it on someone who doesn't really deserve such a horrible death, he should expect trouble from the locals. That's okay, because there are easier ways to kill. Sykers usually use something like this only when they want to make a point.



Syker Powers



Brain Blast

Type: Sykokinetic

TN: 5

Strain: 1

Speed: 1

Duration: Instant

Range: 20 yards/*blastin'* level

Most every syker learned to rely on *brain blast* in the Faraway War or Last War. The surge of energy it produces can destroy flesh, break bricks, and rend meat with but a thought.

Brain blast is a tremendous beam of energy that streams from the syker's head to the target like a laser. The blast does not home in on the target. The syker must actually hit the poor sod to inflict damage.

The attack roll is equal to the *blastin'* roll. Simply compare it to the TN needed to hit the target. *Brain blast* is a purely physical attack, so figure in cover and any other negative modifiers due to range, wounds, running, and so on.

Brain blast has a Range Increment of 10 and a ROF of 1. It affects both animate and inanimate targets. Raises allow the syker to modify the hit location as normal.

Once a target has been hit, the syker should roll his *Spirit* as damage. (Add the dice together just like a firearm, and reroll Aces.) Add bonuses due to supernatural levels of *Spirit* to the total. Thus, a *Spirit* of 4d12+2 would add +2 to the final damage total, not to each die rolled.

Brain Bomb

Type: Biokinetic

TN: Opposed (*Vigor*)

Strain: Special


Speed: Special

Duration: Instant

Range: 20 yards/*blastin'* level

Ever wanted to bust someone's head like an overripe melon? Well, now you can.

Brain bomb is pretty much just what it sounds like: a way to get someone's head to explode. Here's the recipe.



The syker makes an opposed roll against his opponent's *Vigor* on each of his actions. This costs 1 Strain per attempt. He can keep trying as many actions as he wants (and the target stays in range and in sight). If and when he gets three total raises on the target, whether on separate tries or on one massive roll, the foe's head explodes. Don't roll damage; he's just dead. And no, there's no way in Hell the headless loser is coming back Harrowed.

The exploding melon causes 5d4 damage in a five-yard radius around the victim. Anyone standing nearby is going to be picking little bits of brain and skull out of his clothes. Young or inexperienced brainers should probably make a Fair (5) *guts* check.

This power works by actually "cooking" the brain with the body's own electricity and psychic energy. It is channeled and stored via billions of tiny neurons—of which the undead only use a few thousand or so (reconnected by magic). That means undead *and* Harrowed are unaffected by *brain bomb*—with one important exception. Harrowed sykers have rebuilt their neurological pathways. Such characters are once again susceptible to this awful ability.

Brain Slammer

Type: Sykokinetic

TN: Opposed (*Spirit*)

Strain: 1 per target

Speed: Special

Duration: Instant

Range: 20 yards/*blastin'* level

Sykers who mastered *chain brain* learned another nifty trick. With practice, they could actually bounce their powers off several minds and pick up a little extra juice in the process. The last loser in the chain gets the collective energy in one massive, brain-bursting flash.

To use *brain slammer*, the syker attacks a target with an opposed *blastin'* versus *Spirit*. If he's successful, he causes 1d6 damage. Without a raise, the power ends here.

With a raise, the brain blaster makes another attack against a second target in range. If this is also successful, he does 2d6 damage. With a raise, he gets to make another attack against a third target, and so on. Each target in the chain keeps taking damage until the syker fails the contested *blastin'* roll. Additional raises on any given target add another +1d6 to that target's damage (but not later ones).

Each new target costs the syker 1 Strain. Of course, he never *has* to attack another target if he doesn't want to.

Since the damage from the first couple of attacks is fairly small, some unscrupulous sykers use their friends to build up a really good attack. Dirty pool with a bank shot, as Sergeant Mather calls it.

Brain booster does not function with animal minds or the minds of the walkin' dead. It does work with Harrowed minds, unless the manitou has Dominion.

Syker Powers

Chain Brain

Type: Psionic

TN: Opposed (*Spirit*)

Strain: 1

Speed: 1

Duration: Instant

Range: 20 yards/*blastin'* level

Chain brain strings a bunch of minds together and slaps them silly. It's not particularly dangerous, but don't tell the victims that. Sykers use it to stun guards or race through a room of losers they don't have time to kill.

The syker picks a single target in range and rolls his *blastin'* roll versus the target's *Spirit*. If the syker wins, the victim is stunned and must make a Fair (5) *Spirit* roll to recover. If the victim is already stunned due to a wound, he rolls against that TN instead.

With a raise on the opposed roll, the syker can immediately make a second strike against another target within line of sight and the power's range. This time, the power's range is measured from the first target—not the syker. If the syker gets a raise on the second target, the power jumps again (the range is measured from the second target now), and so on.

Chameleon

Type: Psionic

TN: 9

Strain: 1

Speed: 1

Duration: Concentration

Range: Self

If you can't beat 'em, hide and blast 'em from behind. So say the sykers who use this power.

Chameleon manipulates the syker's image. It's a very difficult power to use, since the syker must contact his opponents' minds, blur out his own image in *all* of them at once, and then make sure the shadows in his mental illusion are just right, the colors match, and so on. This requires absolute concentration, so the syker can't move, use another power, or even whisper without ending *chameleon's* effect.

Characters who aren't actively looking for a syker don't even get a chance to see him. Those who are can make a *search* roll, though the syker adds +6 to his *sneak* roll. Once someone spots the syker, he can see him normally. Others can see the syker only when they win their own opposed *search* versus *sneak* roll.



Syker Powers

Detonate

Type: Pyrokinetic

TN: 5/11

Strain: 2

Speed: 2

Duration: Instant

Range: 20 yards/*blastin'* level

"Nice rocket launcher."

—"Chrome Dome" Kinkaid,
moments before a duel
with Hymie "Overkill" Tycoon

Detonate is a syker's answer to the ever-present question, "How can I possibly carry all the explosives I need?" And the answer is: Let your enemies carry them for you. Then use brain power to blow them up before those enemies ever get to use them!

To use *detonate*, a syker must have line of sight to some explosive or its container. Anything from a bullet to a stick of dynamite or grenade will do. He makes his *blastin'* roll and, if successful, causes the explosive to detonate.

If the syker can see the actual explosive (not its container), the TN is 5. It's very easy for him to excite the molecules, cause a little heat or electricity, and set the charge off.

Concealed explosives, such as those in a grenade, a bullet, or even the self-destruct charge inside an automaton, have a TN of 11. Even then, the syker must be able to see the container and recognize exactly where the explosive material is located. Use common sense. Dynamite in a bag the syker can clearly see? Sure. Dynamite behind a wall or somewhere inside a school? No way.

Bullets can be detonated even when inside a gun (assuming the syker can see the gun and is vaguely familiar with its design). The TN is 11 (as usual with an unseen explosive). Without a raise on the *blastin'* check versus a bullet, the bullet is the one in the chamber. It fires at whoever or whatever the gun is pointed at.

Use the innocent bystander rules to see if anyone was hit. With a raise, the syker gets a bullet in the magazine (assuming there is one). This ruins the gun and causes half the gun's usual damage to the user's hand (arm location). Roll all the weapon's normal damage dice, and halve the total.

Detonate only affects one device at a time, though triggering one explosive may detonate others as well. Grenades typically do not detonate other grenades, nor do bullets, rockets, plastic explosives, nukes, or similar high-tech warheads, because they are set off by directed charges or even electrical currents. Dropping a grenade on a nuke, for instance, can't set it off (even in the real world).

Fireproof

Type: Pyrokinetic

TN: 5

Strain: 1

Speed: 1

Duration: Concentration or 1/minute

Range: Self

Nothing can ruin a pyrokinetic's day faster than accidentally getting caught up in one of his own flame blasts. This little power keeps that from being a problem.

Fireproof provides a syker with virtual immunity to fire damage. Once activated, it provides the syker with light armor -25 against fire damage. A syker protected by *fireproof* can walk right through a burning building without any ill effects. *Fireproof* doesn't protect the syker against damage from smoke inhalation or other side-effects, however.

Fireproof covers any inanimate objects the character holds or carries (personal objects). Other beings, even if they're riding on his back, are not protected.



Syker Powers

Fleshknit

Type: Biokinetic

TN: Special

Strain: Special

Speed: Special

Duration: Permanent

Range: Self

A syker with this power can take a lickin' and keep on tickin'. *Fleshknit* allows a syker to heal even the most heinous wounds—even ones that would cause most sawbones to start cutting him up for parts.

Fleshknit is mind over matter to the extreme. The syker "listens" to the pain coming from one particular part of his body. Then he speeds up his metabolism, hastening clotting, producing white blood cells, killing infection, and knitting the flesh itself back together. This requires complete synchronization of mind and body, so a syker cannot heal anyone other than himself with *fleshknit*.

The TN, Strain, and time required to knit wounds back together again is shown on the table below. Each success reduces the wound level of a single affected area (guts, noggin, each arm and leg) by -1. Roll and pay the Strain cost for each area knitted.

Note that unlike most healers, sykers cannot heal Wind with this power.

Fleshknit

Wound	TN	Strain	Time
Light	5	1	1 minute
Heavy	7	2	5 minutes
Serious	9	3	15 minutes
Critical	11	4	30 minutes
Maimed	13	5	1 hour

Force Field

Type: Sykokinetic

TN: 5

Strain: 1

Speed: 1

Duration: 1/round

Range: Self

Sykers have long sought an impenetrable force field to protect them from all harm. *Force field* is a force field, but it's far from impenetrable. Fortunately, it is pretty tough, and it does protect from most harm.

Force field reduces damage from normal physical projectiles like hand-to-hand attacks, bullets, grenades, or sharpened hubcaps. It also

protects against energy attacks, including lasers, electricity, and even *brain blasts* or *Doomsayer's atomic blasts*.

Basically, if the attack directly affects the target (powers with opposed rolls), the *force field* does not work. If it creates a projectile or force that is then released at the target, the *field* does its stuff. It has no effect on telekinetic attacks such as *Aztec surprise* or mental assaults like *brain bomb*.

To use *force field*, the syker makes a *blastin'* roll against a TN of 5. If he succeeds, he creates a shield of pure sykokinetic force that acts as light armor -5 against any sort of physical attack as described above. For each raise achieved on the *blastin'* roll, the protection increases by an additional 5 points.

The field surrounds the syker only. It cannot be formed into a wall or made to protect friends and companions.

Gift

Type: Sykokinetic

TN: 9

Strain: 5

Speed: 1 minute

Duration: 1 hour/*blastin'* level

Range: Touch

Back in the old academy days, before the wars, some of the philosophically minded types who taught the classes speculated that everyone had the potential to become a syker if only certain latent genetic anomalies were properly activated. Usually this required intense training and rigorous discipline, but researchers thought there might be an easier way.

This is the power they came up with.

Gift allows a syker to give one of his syker powers to another for a short period of time, in effect storing the power in the receiver's own brain until it's used.

To give the *gift*, the syker touches the person to receive the power, pays 5 Strain, and makes a *blastin'* roll against a TN of 9.

Unless the recipient has *blastin'* himself, she gets a *blastin'* Aptitude equal to 1, +1 for every raise the syker gets on his roll. He has Strain equal to his *Vigor die* type (unless he's a syker, *Doomsayer*, or other character with his own Strain rating, in which case he uses his own Strain, whatever that happens to be).

The user can use the power for the duration of the *gift*. The syker cannot decide to take it back or negate it once given.





Syker Powers

The user, not the syker, suffers any positive or negative effects from the power's use, including brainburn from busted *blastin'* rolls.

Gift imposes a certain amount of stress on the recipient. Typically veins on his forehead bulge, and he sweats profusely. He doesn't go bald (unless he does it often), but some hair does fall out. After the duration of the *gift* expires, non-sykers are left with a splitting headache which clears up after a while (-1 on all mental Trait rolls for an hour). Sykers, but not other kinds of spellcasters, do not get these headaches. They're used to that special tingly feeling.

Hallucination

Type: Psionic

TN: Opposed (*Smarts*)

Strain: 1/target

Speed: 1

Duration: Concentration

Range: 20 yards/*blastin'* level

Hallucination is one of the most versatile, and potentially most powerful, abilities a syker can possess. It gives him the power to fill another person's mind with a detailed, realistic, believable illusion. Other people can't perceive the illusion at all—it's entirely within the target's mind—but the target can perceive it with all of his senses (even touch), and he must react accordingly.

To use *hallucination*, the syker must make an opposed roll pitting his *blastin'* against the target's *Smarts*. If he succeeds, he declares the illusion he wants the target to perceive. The illusion can be of anything, from a radical change in the landscape, to mistaking a slaving mutant for a beautiful girl. Of course, the more fantastic the illusion, the more likely it is the target can disbelieve it.

In any case, *hallucination* can't cause damage to the target. That's right, not so much as a single point of Wind. Of course, the target may spend his own Strain, Wind, or other energy trying to attack or escape from the illusion, but if an illusory bloodwolf takes a swipe at him with its claws, it does no damage. At that point, the jig is pretty much up unless the victim is *really* clueless.

The same goes for an illusion which does something extremely inappropriate or incorrect, like a spouse who doesn't recognize the target, or a wormling quoting Shakespeare.

When these things happen, the target gets a *Smarts* roll to figure out what he's seeing is an illusion. The TN is set by the Marshal, and just depends on the loser's experience with such things and the degree to which the *hallucination* went out of line.

In any case, whether the target realizes he's dealing with a mirage or not, the illusion lasts until the syker stops concentrating. Even if a character knows an image is a *hallucination*, it doesn't disappear. This can be very distracting, even if the victim knows the image isn't real.

Just imagine a blue monkey jumping up and down on your back. Sure, you know it's an illusion, but the damn thing's telling dirty jokes and slinging *caa-caa* at your friends. The Marshal should apply a small modifier to the sufferer's actions until the syker gives the poor schmuck a break.

Heartstopper

Type: Biokinetic

TN: Opposed (*Vigor*)

Strain: 3

Speed: 3

Duration: Instant

Range: 10 yards/*blastin'* level

Heartstopper isn't as messy (or as fun) as something like *boneripping* or *Aztec surprise*, but it's just as deadly. Sykers use this when they want to kill without leaving obvious signs of their handiwork.

It takes three actions for a syker to sync with the target's body rhythms. Once he does, he makes an opposed roll against the poor sucker's *Vigor*. If the syker wins, the victim suffers a heart attack.

The victim must make a Hard (9) *Vigor* roll immediately. Add +1 to the TN for every raise the syker got on his *blastin'* roll. If the roll is made, the victim suffers 3d6 Wind.

If the first *Vigor* roll is failed, the victim suffers 3d6 Wind, his *Vigor* is permanently reduced by -1 step, and he must make a second Hard (9) *Vigor* roll. If this one is failed, the poor schmuck keels over dead as a doornail unless someone else makes an Incredible (11) *medicine* or supernatural healing roll within 2d6 rounds. If the victim's *Vigor* ever falls below 1d4, he dies automatically.

Heartstopper doesn't just cause heart attacks, though that's definitely the most common use. It might actually reflect any biokinetic attack that shuts down critical body functions, such as the lungs, oxygen to the brain, and so forth.

Syker Powers

Here, Doggie!

Type: Psionic

TN: Opposed (*Smarts*)

Strain: See below

Speed: 1

Duration: 5 minutes/*blastin'* level

Range: 20 yards/*blastin'* level

What *meat puppet* does for people, *here, doggie!* does for animals—not just dogs, but all sorts of animals.

Like *meat puppet*, the animal does whatever it's told, including attacking its master, throwing itself off a cliff, or even leaping into a fire.

The syker doesn't have a mental link (unless he establishes one with a separate power), so he must give commands verbally.

Here, doggie! doesn't work on human/animal crossbreeds (such as bloodwolves and shraks), on ancient races now awakened (such as croakers), on any creature which has human or near-human intelligence (this determination is left to the Marshal), or on abominations. We're talking fuzzy bunnies, chipmunks, and the occasional mutated Kodiak here friends.

Here, Doggie!

Strain	Animals
1	Up to six vermin (rats, squirrels)
2	Up to four cats or small dogs
3	Up to two large dogs
4	Anaconda, grizzly, tiger
5	Great white, whale

Itsy-Bitsy Spider

Type: Telekinesis

TN: 5

Strain: 1

Speed: 1

Duration: 1/10 minutes

Range: Self

You can climb more than a waterspout with this nifty trick.

Itsy-bitsy spider uses telekinesis to press the syker's hands, feet, or other body parts to a wall or ceiling. It does so with such force that it allows the brainburner to climb vertical or even inverted surfaces, as long as there is some sort of solid surface to stick to.

The syker climbs at his normal rate (2 plus his *climbin'* Aptitude level), plus one additional yard per round for each raise. He can scale any surface with this power, no matter how slick or smooth.



Juice

Type: Sykokinetic

TN: 7

Strain: Special

Speed: 1

Duration: Permanent

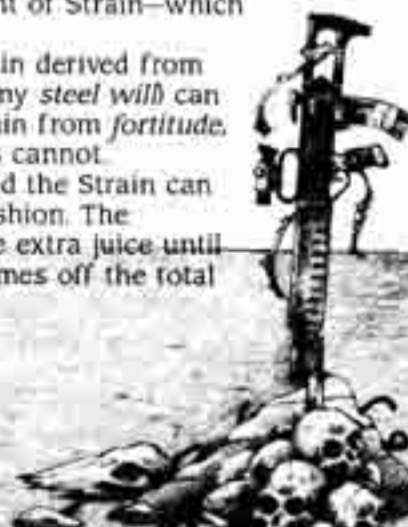
Range: Touch

"Juice" is syker slang for Strain—the energy that fuels their powers. A syker with *juice* can lend energy to another syker or even a Doomsayer or other character who uses Strain.

The syker must declare how many points of Strain he wants to give, then he touches the recipient and makes a *blastin'* roll. If successful, he spends 1 Strain to use the power and then loses the declared amount of Strain—which the recipient gains.

Only "real" Strain (Strain derived from the *Vigor* die type plus any *steel will*) can be donated this way. Strain from *fortitude*, drugs, or Banshee stones cannot.

The syker who donated the Strain can recover it in the usual fashion. The recipient gets to keep the extra juice until it's used up. It always comes off the total first.



Syker Powers

Lunacy

Type: Psionic

TN: Opposed (*Smarts*)

Strain: 5

Speed: 1 minute

Duration: Permanent

Range: 10 yards/*blastin'* level

Want to see something really scary? Get hit with this power and you will! *Lunacy* inflicts a phobia, neurosis, or other form of madness onto the syker's unfortunate target.

To get the ball rolling down the slippery slope of madness, the syker makes an opposed roll against the victim's *Smarts*. If he is successful, the target suffers an insanity of some sort. With each raise, the insanity gets that much closer to the intended effect the syker is looking for, and the victim goes further off the deep end.

Lunacy isn't really a combat power. It's more useful in roleplaying situations. The syker needs to be clever about how he uses it. He should also save it for major villains. It's rarely worthwhile to waste the effort on goons.

Lunacy only works on humans and the Harrowed. It has no effect on monsters.

Here are some common insanities:

Delusion: The victim believes the next preposterous statement he hears is totally true. Bloodwolves are our friends? Absolutely. Assuming the delusion doesn't get the schmuck killed, most folks quickly disassociate themselves from the weirdo.

Depression: A dark mood overcomes the victim. If he was already deeply troubled, he may look for the easy way out. Most people aren't so cowardly. In a tense situation, they throw themselves into the fight with fatalistic fury. Outside a tense situation, the target becomes gloomy and full of despair. He gives up most everything and becomes a virtual recluse.

Paranoia: The victim suddenly feels like everyone is out to get him. Most thugs run away. Major villains won't trust other major villains, and distance themselves from their minions, whom they suddenly deem as so incompetent that they're going to get him killed.

Phobia: The victim suffers a phobia of some sort. The Marshal must choose what this is, based on the victim's personality.

With a single success, it is a minor phobia. A major phobia is inflicted with one or more raises. When the object of his fear is nearby, the victim suffers a penalty to all his Trait and Aptitude rolls (-2 for a minor phobia and -4 for a major). Unless he has a

good reason, the victim tries his best to avoid the feared object. The syker himself may be the subject of the phobia if he's given the bad guy enough grief. For goons, have them make a Foolproof (5) guts check, modified by the minor or major phobia penalty and circumstances. If they fail, they run. Major villains don't usually turn tail and run, but they do look for ways to quickly eliminate or avoid the source of their fear.

Psychotic: The target goes blood simple. He flies into a homicidal rage and attacks everyone around him, starting with the enemy and then working his bloody way through his friends.

Neurosis: The victim picks up a new and terrible facet to his personality. The syker chooses a Hindrance to inflict on his victim. A success inflicts a 1- to 2-point Hindrance, a raise is worth a 3-point Hindrance, and two raises nets a 4- to 5-point Hindrance.

Manipulator

Type: Psionic

TN: Opposed (*Spirit*)

Strain: 2

Speed: 2

Duration: 10 minutes/*blastin'* level

Range: 10 yards/*blastin'* level

If you're the kind of person who likes to toy with the emotions of others, this power is just the thing for you.

Manipulator allows a syker to enhance or alter another character's emotions. This isn't like *meat puppet* or other forms of mental domination, though in some cases it is just as useful. With *manipulator*, a raging mutant can become a calm, happy mutant, or that beautiful girl at the end of the bar can be "persuaded" to think your syker's bald head is a real turn-on.

The syker's *blastin'* roll is modified depending on the situation. Feeling lust or sadness in the middle of a firefight is easily ignored by even the most brain-dead moron. If the syker is trying to enhance an existing emotion—say, to push a person who's already pissed off into a murderous rage. He suffers no modifiers. If the syker is trying a reversal of emotions, such as turning a sad or angry person into a happy one or making a character hate someone he loves, he should subtract -4 from his roll (or more, if the Marshal deems it appropriate).

If the syker succeeds, the degree of success reflects the intensity of the emotions evoked. Basic success means the emotion is aroused to a low or average level. One raise indicates strong

Syker Powers

emotions—rage or depression. Two or more raises indicates extreme emotion—murderous rage or ravenous lust, for example.

The syker does not actually have any control over what the victim does in such an emotional state. That's up to the Marshal. For example, a character afflicted with fear may run screaming in terror—or he may lash out blindly at the syker. It all depends upon the circumstances.

Meat Puppet

Type: Psionic

TN: Opposed (*Spirit*)

Strain: 5

Speed: 2

Duration: Concentration or 1/round

Range: Touch, but see below

A mind is a terrible thing to waste—but it's a wonderful thing to take control of.

Meat puppet is one of the most feared syker powers: the ability to take control of another person's own body. It allows the syker to contest the victim for control of his very mind. The syker rolls his *blastin'* versus the target's *Spirit*. If he wins with no raises, the two continue to struggle. Both characters roll again on their next action, although the syker spends no Strain. When he finally gets a raise, the victim becomes the brainburner's plaything.

Once established, the syker's control is absolute and lasts as long as he keeps concentrating. He can make the victim do anything he wants, up to and including committing suicide and other truly repulsive acts. The victim does not get to make any more rolls to oppose the control.

The only catch is the syker must have some way of communicating orders to his flunky. *Meat puppet* does not provide any telepathic means of delivering orders. A *psychic link* can be used to give instructions, but it must be established first, since otherwise it would require the syker to break concentration. There's a small downside to this, however. Establishing the link gives the victim a warning that something weird is coming, so he gets to add +2 to his roll when resisting the *meat puppet*.

Meat puppet doesn't control a victim's thoughts, just his actions (which can include activating powers). The victim is fully aware he's being controlled and can try to think of ways to escape his predicament. Sykers and other spellcasters who use only their minds can use their powers at a -4 penalty. Whether or not this helps just depends on the situation.



If the syker takes over someone with such supernatural powers (like another syker), he can also use them, though at a -4 penalty. Smart mind freaks waste their enemy's juice before they can fight back.

Regardless of whether it is used at range or by touch, *meat puppet* is so stressful that both the syker and the victim develop extremely odd-looking bloodshot eyes—a dead giveaway to anyone who's familiar with syker powers. A Fair (5) *scrutinize* tells someone there's something weird going on. Whether or not he knows what it means depends on his experience.

Abuse of *meat puppet* is one of the highest crimes a mind freak can commit. It's gotten plenty of sykers lynched by angry townsfolk or beaten to a pulp. Some honorable sykers even make a point of seeking out those who misuse this (and other) powers and teaching them a lesson.

Oh, and in case this ever comes up (which, knowing you players, it just might), if two or more sykers try to *meat puppet* the same victim at the same time, the one who gets the highest result on his *blastin'* roll succeeds. The others are out of luck.



Syker Powers



Medic!

Type: Biokinetic

TN: By wound level

Strain: By wound level

Speed: Special

Duration: Permanent

Range: Touch

It's far easier for a syker to harm than to heal. Want a heart stopped? No problem. There are a thousand ways to do it. Want one healed? That's much harder. The syker has to insinuate his powers into the patient's system and speed up the work of various healing processes—a far more complex undertaking.

Medic uses the syker's mental power to stimulate and enhance a person's natural healing power—tough to do when it's not the syker's own body. The effect is to use the syker's *blastin'* roll just like *medicine: surgery*. Check out the rules for **Healin'** in the *Hell on Earth* rulebook.

The TN for treating a wound is the same as it is for a regular sawbones. The Strain is equal to the wound penalty of the wound being treated. And no, it doesn't matter if the patient is *thick-skinned* or under medication and technically suffers no wound penalties. Sheesh!

Note that this isn't instant healing like *fleshknit*, a Templar's *lay on hands*, or even a Doomsayer's *touch*. It's simply a way for a syker to act as a normal physician. At best, it can cure one wound—if administered within the "golden hour"—and increase a brainer's natural chances of healing over time. Again, check out the main rulebook if you need to "bone up" on your healing rules.

The advantages of *medic* over the *medicine: surgery* Aptitude are few, but occasionally critical. First, *medic* takes half the time it takes a surgeon to treat the same wound. Second, the character doesn't actually have to have the *medicine* Aptitude to treat a wounded hero.

A syker can use this power on herself, and she actually gets a +4 to her roll to do so because it's easier to get in tune with her own body than someone else's. Of course, *fleshknit* is a much more powerful way for her to heal her own wounds.



Memory Maker

Type: Psionic

TN: Opposed (*Smarts*)

Strain: Special

Speed: Special

Duration: Permanent

Range: Touch

We can remember it for you really cheap—wholesale even!

Memory maker allows a syker to create new memories in a target. The main use of this power is to change an existing memory. This is done to change someone's opinion about something, hide complicity in a crime, set the victim up for fake blackmail, or any number of schemes. This is one reason why people are often so very suspicious of syker "mind freaks." They can't be sure if what they think, feel, and remember is true.

The difficulty and Strain of changing a memory depends on how long-lasting or important the memory is, as indicated in the Memory Maker Table. Subtract these modifiers from the syker's opposed *blastin'* roll.

Note that newer memories are easier to replace than older ones. That's because if an old memory is even present, it's important. Remembering you just left the fridge open five seconds ago isn't so critical (unless it gives you skunky beer).

The Marshal has to gauge the modifier by comparing the new memory to the table. Is it the sort of thing a character is likely to remember for years? If so, it's modifier is -8. If it's something that would be forgotten after a few days, then the modifier is -2.

To use the power, the syker must keep touching his target for the amount of time indicated in the table under "Speed." In the old days, this was a great power for female seductresses, if you catch our drift.

The length of the memory to be changed or implanted also affects the syker's roll. This means a syker trying to zap the fact that he was in a room for a few minutes shouldn't have much trouble. If he tries to convince some waster that the poor sod's an entirely different person with a lifetime of false memories, that's a much tougher trick to pull off.

The victim of *memory maker* occasionally experiences visions of the truth when important items or people trigger such reactions. When that happens, he can make an Incredible (II) *Knowledge* roll to remember one detail of the true past.

Every raise the syker got on his original roll, however, increases the TN of this roll by +2. Eventually, such "glimpses" might allow a character to recover his lost memories. This is entirely up to the Marshal. Other than that, only intense therapy or a power like *peace of mind* can restore the lost memories.

Syker Powers

Memory Maker

Modifier	Speed	Memory Age/Length
0	2	Minutes
-2	10 seconds	Hours
-4	1 minute	Days
-6	10 minutes	Months
-8	1d4 hours	Years
-10	1d6 hours	Decades, or important memories (details about the victim's love or children, the facts of a traumatic event he witnessed)

Mental Armor

Type: Psionic

TN: 5

Strain: 1

Speed: 1

Duration: 1/minute

Range: Self

All your mental armor drags me down.

—Bush (a prewar band)

As much as sykers enjoy blasting other folks, they don't like to be on the receiving end of the same treatment. So they developed this power to protect themselves from each other (and, on *Banshee*, from the mysterious skinnies).

Mental shield provides a syker with protection against supernatural powers that directly affect the host. It doesn't affect *brain blasts* since those create energy and then hurl it at the target. It works against powers like *Aztec surprise* or *heartstopper*, since they directly affect the syker.

This is the equivalent of light armor -5, plus an additional 5 points for every raise on the *blastin'* roll. A syker who gets two raises has the equivalent of light armor -15.

When applied to non-damaging powers, such as *meat puppet*, *mental shield* adds +2 to the syker's resistance roll per success.

Against supernatural powers that are resisted and cause damage, *mental armor* works both with the resistance roll and as armor.

Mind Reader

Type: Psionic

TN: Opposed (*Knowledge*)

Strain: 1

Speed: 1

Duration: 1/round

Range: 10 yards/*blastin'* level



This is what you've been waiting for, friends: plain, old mind reading.

With this power, the syker knows everything his target is thinking at that moment. Each raise he gets on his opposed *blastin'* versus *Knowledge* roll gets him deeper into the gray matter. A single success means the syker just gets surface thoughts. A raise nets him the feelings behind those thoughts as well. With two or more raises, the syker can dig way down into the victim's psyche and glean information about subjects the target isn't currently thinking about.

Non-sykers get a single Incredible (II) *Smarts* roll to realize something strange is going on. Sykers get to roll every round someone is in their head.

Mind Scan

Type: Psionic

TN: 5/9

Strain: 1

Speed: 2

Duration: Concentration or 1/round

Range: 1 mile/*blastin'* level

Why use your eyes when all you need to find someone is your mind?



Syker Powers



Mind scan is one of a syker's chief sensory abilities. It allows him to "scan" an area for a particular mind. The TN is 5 for a specific location, and 9 if he's scanning an area for any minds (a great way to detect hidden foes). *Mind scan* works on any being or creature with a thinking brain (it works by detecting brainwaves).

If searching for nonspecific brainwaves, the syker detects the number of living beings within an area of effect five yards in diameter, anywhere within range. This is a good way to feel out a room before entering. With a raise, the syker instantly recognizes any known minds within that area.

If the syker is successful and searching for a specific target, he locates the mind within a few yards. A raise tells him exactly where the target is. Even so, *mind scan* cannot be used to substitute for line of sight or to attack the target with other syker powers. It could be used to direct other types of attacks, such as *brain blast*, through a wall or other cover, however.

Below are several modifiers, based on familiarity, for when *mind scan* is used to locate a specific individual.

Seeking a Stranger: The syker is trying to find the mind of someone he's never even met or mentally contacted before. Modify the syker's roll by -4.

Seeking an Acquaintance: The syker is trying to find the mind of someone he has met only briefly. No modifier.

Seeking a Friend: The syker is trying to find the mind of a friend or someone with whom he's had mental contact on one or two occasions. Add +2 to the syker's roll.

Seeking a Close Friend: The syker is trying to find the mind of a close friend or someone with whom he's had extensive mental contact. Add +4 to his roll.

Seeking a Relative: The syker is trying to find a blood relative (not his wife—unless he's from Arkansas). Add +6 to the *blastin'* roll.

Seeking a Syker: Add +2 to the syker's roll. These guys stand out like beacons (unless they're using *mental armor* to hide.)

Mind Transference

Type: Psionic

TN: Opposed (*Spirit*)

Strain: 5

Speed: Special

Duration: 1 hour/*blastin'* level

Range: Touch

Don't like your body? Take someone else's for a test drive. And you don't even need one of those mad-science "bzzt" things.

It sounds like something out of one of those old late-night horror shows, but it's true. Sykers can transfer their minds into another person's body! This arcane process, one of the most complex and rarest of syker powers, is known as *mind transference*.

To use *mind transference*, the syker must make physical, flesh-to-flesh contact with the victim and make an opposed roll pitting his *blastin'* against his victim's *Spirit*. The process takes two minutes per the victim's *Spirit* die type (four minutes for d4s, six minutes for d6s, and so on).

If the roll fails or the victim wins the contest, the power fails, and the syker suffers *brainburn*, even if he didn't go bust. That's the risk of pushing the syker's mind outside his body. If the syker truly goes bust, the Marshal should add +4 to the roll on the *Brainburn* Table.

If the syker succeeds, his mind and mental energies switch places with the victim's. The syker still has his own mental Traits and related Aptitudes, as well as all of his syker powers (but never Harrowed powers). He uses the victim's

Syker Powers

corporeal Traits and Aptitudes. The same goes for the victim. He's got his own mental Traits and Aptitudes, but he's stuck with the syker's corporeal abilities.

Since the syker's powers go with his mind, he can even use *mind transference* on another mind while in the first victim's body! That can make for a bunch of very mixed up minds and bodies.

If either body is slain, the minds instantly snap back to their original locations. When this happens, both characters must make an Immediate Incredible (II) stun check.

Naturally, because the syker doesn't want his victim damaging his (the syker's) body, he typically has a friend restrain him before using this power. Thus, the victim is *really* trapped until the power wears off or the syker turns it off. Obviously, it's not a good idea to use *mind transference* on a syker or other rascal with supernatural powers who can ignore ordinary bonds.

When the duration of the power passes, the syker shuts it off, or either of the bodies die, the syker's and victim's minds instantly snap back into their own bodies, regardless of how far apart they may be. Cruel sykers may arrange to turn the power off just after they pitch themselves off a cliff or put the victim's body in some equally dangerous situation.

Mind transference only works on living humans and the Harrowed. It doesn't work on inanimate objects such as machines, even those with artificial intelligence. Nor does it work on the walkin' dead or even "humanoid" monsters.

Like *meat puppet*, *mind transference* leaves signs around the eyes of the victim and syker. Blood vessels within the eye burst, coloring the eye a dark, reddish-black which unmistakably indicates that all is not as it should be. Your hero had better find a pair of sunglasses if he doesn't want folks to know what's going on.

Mindrider

Type: Psionic

TN: Opposed (*Smarts*)

Strain: 1

Speed: 2

Duration: 1/10 minutes

Range: Touch, then 100 yards/*blastin'* level

Sykers were used primarily as spies until their mentors realized how great they were at assassination, sabotage, and pure mayhem. That espionage background is where *mindrider* came from. It's a lot like clairaudience and clairvoyance all rolled up into one.

To use *mindrider*, the syker links with his target by touching her. Then he makes a *blastin'* roll versus the victim's *Smarts*. If he's successful, he gets in the target's mind and can see and hear everything she can. After the link is established, the syker does not have to remain in sight of the target, just within range.

A character with a *mindrider* in his cranium can make a Hard (9) *Smarts* roll on contact and every 10 minutes to notice something's wrong.

Once the target makes the detection roll, she gets the feeling she's being watched and subconsciously (or consciously, if she's familiar with sykers) tries to eject the rider from her mind. This requires a raise on an opposed *Smarts* roll (not *Smarts* versus *blastin'*). This roll may be attempted every 10 minutes.

Mindwipe

Type: Psionic

TN: Opposed (*Smarts*)

Strain: 1

Speed: 2

Duration: Permanent

Range: 5 yards/*blast* level



Syker Powers

Sykers never get embarrassed. Why?

Because if they do something stupid, they just scramble your memories and make you forget it—if they don't just kill you, brainer.

(Note: We've changed this one quite a bit since the last time you saw it, so pay attention!)

Mindwipe causes a target to forget the last few minutes. It can't make new memories—that requires *memory maker*—only create a "blackout" in which the target remembers nothing.

To use this power, a syker makes an opposed roll with his *blastin'* versus his opponent's *Smarts*. With a success, the target forgets the last five minutes. Every raise extends the blackout another five minutes.

Most victims don't seem to notice the blackout. They don't even know something's missing. If the Marshal feels the victim would be suspicious (like all his buddies are suddenly dead, or his beer's now warm), he gets a *Smarts* roll to realize something's up. The TN depends on how obvious the memory loss is. Of course, only someone who knows the ways of sykers might figure out exactly what happened.

Negator

Type: Sykokinetic

TN: Opposed (*blastin'*, *faith*, etc.)

Strain: 1

Speed: Special

Duration: Instant

Range: 20 yards/*blastin'* level

Negator is a handy power. It interrupts and negates another character's supernatural effect. It works on sykers, Doomsayers, and other characters who cast their powers like spells. That means it works on a *bolt o' doom*, but does nothing to counteract a radrat's radioactive bite or a toxic zombie's goo-bomb. Sorry, Charlie.

Negator is considered a "vamoose" action. It can be used at any time by discarding your highest card, a card up the sleeve, or a Red Joker.

Once that's done, the opponent gets his casting total as usual and spends any chips he cares to. (Yes, the character should know he's about to be opposed. This means he can spend chips to raise his total.) The syker merely makes a *blastin'* roll against that total, and if successful he negates the power. If this happens, both casters lose only a single point of Strain. If used against a huckster, make sure to handle the rolls before any cards are drawn.

Nightmare

Type: Psionic

TN: Opposed (*Spirit*)

Strain: 1

Speed: 1

Duration: Concentration

Range: 10 yards/*blastin'* level

There are all sorts of terrifying monsters creeping around the Wasted West, but none of them are as frightening as the terrors locked within a survivor's own mind.

Nightmare allows a syker to inflict an illusion of a sleeping victim's greatest fear. If the target is a posse member or other character with a character sheet that describes his worst nightmare, that's what **nightmare** makes him experience. Otherwise, the Marshal can simply make something up or just gloss over the details. In either case, the syker doesn't experience the dream, but he knows what it's about. That can give a syker a decent insight into the loser's psyche should he later choose to exploit it.

To use **nightmare**, the syker makes an opposed roll against the victim's *Spirit*. If the victim suffers from *night terrors*, he actually gets a +4 bonus to his roll and can ignore any current modifiers for lack of sleep. These tortured souls have suffered nightmares at the hands of manitous. There's little more a syker can show them.

At any rate, if the syker succeeds, the victim begins living out his greatest nightmare. If the syker merely succeeded in the opposed roll contest, the victim acts out the illusion in his head. With a raise, the dream seems so real, the dreamer actually acts out certain aspects of his dream. This may cause him to do something dangerous, such as skinning his pistol and firing wildly all around him—which could have definite negative consequences for the syker and his friends.

With two or more raises, the **nightmare** is so terrifying the victim suffers a 4d6 roll on the Scart Table (just as if he'd failed a *guts* check).

In any case, characters do not rest well the night they are affected by **nightmare**. They suffer a -1 penalty to everything they do the next day. This is cumulative over several nights, up to a maximum of -5, just like *night terrors*.

Nightmare only works on sleeping humans. It has no effect on most undead, though it works on Harrowed when they've gone dormant.



101

Syker Powers

One-Man Army

Type: Sykinesis

TN: 5

Strain: 3

Speed: 1

Duration: 1/round

Range: Special

Remember the story of Sergeant York? This is the power that earned him nearly two centuries of fame and renown. This nifty trick turns one syker into a whole army of make-believe brainburners.

One-man army allows a syker to create illusory duplicates of himself. The number of duplicates (dupes) is equal to 2d6, plus 1d6 for every raise achieved on the *blastin'* roll. The dupes appear within 20 yards of the syker, but can be in front of him, behind, to the side, and so forth. Fortunately, the illusion is "smart" enough to adjust to the terrain. The dupes won't appear half inside a tree, hovering over a nearby gully, and so forth. They can also maneuver around such obstacles as long as the course is relatively simple.

One-man army works by taking a sykokinetic snapshot of the light energy around the syker, then reproducing it over and over around the brainburner. These kinds of powers are very tough to manage, illusions that push the limits of what sykinesis can do. That's why the duplicates created by the power mimic the syker *exactly*. The syker's brain just can't handle much more. Shoot one, and you don't see any blood. Shoot the real syker, and the rest bleed just like him. It is obviously an illusion to anyone who can see several duplicates at once, though that doesn't help opponents figure out which figure's real and which one's not—especially if the illusion is presented at night or similar circumstances.

Unless an observer gets clever somehow, the Marshal should randomly determine where attacks are directed. Roll the die closest to the number of dupes. If the result is a 1, the syker was hit. If there are seven duplicates, for example, the Marshal should roll a d8. On a result of 1, the real syker is the target.

The dupes are purely visual and auditory. They cannot be felt or affect the real world in any way, and the syker can't see things from their point of view. If the syker talks or makes noise, sound emanates from all the clones.

Animals or characters with some sort of supernatural smelling ability can tell which syker is the real thing with a Fair (5) *search* roll.



"The Paralyzer"

Type: Biokinetic

TN: Opposed (Vigor)

Strain: 2

Speed: 2

Duration: 5 minutes/*blastin'* level

Range: 5 yards/*blastin'* level

Freeze, and I'll shoot you when I feel like it.

"The Paralyzer." Sound like a wrestler?

Actually, it was. Back in the late 1990s, a professional wrestler in the Confederacy won some oversized belt or another by supposedly putting his opponents in a secret move. He called himself "The Paralyzer"—actually killed a few people too. Eventually, an undercover Texas Ranger exposed the wrestler as a syker. That was a big deal at the time because it was illegal for a syker not to register with the authorities.

But enough background. The power works by simply pinching off vital nerves. The poor brainer then lays on the floor—unable to move except for an occasional twitch—at the syker's less-than-tender mercies. Each raise on the syker's roll extends the duration an additional five minutes.



Syker Powers

Peace of Mind

Type: Psionic

TN: Opposed (*Knowledge*)

Strain: 5

Speed: 1d6 hours

Duration: Permanent

Range: Touch

"There is no one more terrible than the desperate."

—Suvorov, 1799 (often quoted by syker commandos)

There's a great truth to this ancient quote. During the Faraway War, many sykers were afflicted with madness. Some suffered from brainburn. Others bore the taint of contact with the mysterious skinnies. In either case, the few sykers with this power were asked to step in and rescue their comrades' minds from the brink of insanity. Those who couldn't be saved were ordered hunted down and executed by OK Warfield for the danger they could cause the rest of his troops.

This power gives a syker the ability to heal or correct mental disorders suffered from brainburn, insanity induced by syker powers, and the harsh realities of the Wasted West. It's also handy for negating syker abilities like *memory maker*.

A syker can never use this ability on himself.

To use *peace of mind*, the syker must touch the target on his temples while he probes his mind for 1d4 hours, not-so-gently correcting and repairing the imbalances and damage that led to his condition. He then makes an opposed roll against the target's *Knowledge*.

Even "friendly" lunatics must attempt to resist. The brain just doesn't like visitors. If the syker doesn't even get a Fair (5) success, nothing happens.

If he gets a Fair (5) success but does not beat the target's roll, the victim's condition is too ingrained to ever be cured by supernatural means (unless the condition is caused by a supernatural power—in which case the syker can try again; it just takes another 1d6 hours).

If the syker is successful over the basic TN and the patient's opposed roll, what happens next depends on what kind of condition the syker is trying to heal.

The Harrowed: Sykers like to live dangerously. Messing with a manitou is the most dangerous trick of all. We can't tell you much, but if your Harrowed friend is acting weird and your hero's feeling brave, give it a try.

Mental Hindrances: Mental Hindrances include phobias the character started the game with, but not those induced by the Scart Table (which are covered below). These are long-term phobias, neuroses, or personality quirks long ingrained into the patient's psyche. To cure someone of a mental Hindrance, the syker must simply beat the victim's opposed roll. The syker must subtract the Hindrance's value from his own *blastin'* roll. If the patient is a player character, he must immediately buy off the Hindrance at a cost of double the original value in Bounty Points. Note that most characters shouldn't buy off their Hindrances. After all, that's who they are. A character who loses all the quirks that make him who he is might just wind up an empty shell.

Phobias: For phobias induced by horrific situations (the Scart Table), the syker's *blastin'* roll is modified by -4 for a minor phobia and -8 for a major phobia. The syker cures the victim by mentally projecting images of the fear into his mind—not a lot of fun for the victim. In fact, the experience is so horrible it inflicts 3d6 damage to the victim's head for a minor phobia and 4d6 for a major phobia. Each raise the syker gets on his roll reduces the damage dice by 1d6.

Supernatural Effects: The last condition *peace of mind* can cure is of the supernatural variety. This power can undo the effects of such powers as *meat puppet*, *memory maker*, *mind transference*, and similar abilities stemming from black magic, Domsayer powers, and even weird technology (though, in the latter case, the device needs to be disabled or removed first). In these cases, the roll is resisted by whoever implanted the effect. Obliterating a false memory implanted via *memory maker*, for instance, would pit the healer's *blastin'* against the enemy syker's *blastin'*. The enemy syker or other opponent doesn't usually know this is happening (unless he can sense such things). The opposed roll just represents how well the ability has taken hold of the host's mind. The Marshal should roll the enemy Aptitude normally, spending his own chips if he wants. If the enemy syker can sense what's going on (through *mindrider* or a similar power), he must spend any chips for the resistance roll himself.

At any rate, assuming the syker's successful, the enemy's control, presence, or influence is kicked out and negated. A *meat puppet* with a *mindrider* inside, for example, regains control of his own body, and the enemy syker's *mindrider* comes to an abrupt end.

Syker Powers

Predator

Type: Sykokinetic

TN: 5

Strain: 1

Speed: 2

Duration: 1/round

Range: Self

Sykers worked a long time to find a power that would render them invisible. *Chameleon* was the best they could do for a long time. The problem with that power is that the syker can't move, or more importantly, make an attack without giving up the ghost—so to speak. Eventually, sykers gave up on rendering themselves invisible psionically, and turned to the more chaotic but powerful sykokinesis.

Predator, named after an old vid series, bathes the syker in sykokinetic energy that literally bends light around him, rendering him practically invisible. "Practically" because there's a faint outline around the brainburner's figure that can be detected if someone is looking for it.

This is a very powerful ability, though the juice used to control it gets expensive quickly: 1 per round for every five seconds if not in combat).

Characters not looking for the syker shouldn't even get a chance to notice him. Those who know someone's about can spot the syker with an opposed *search* versus *sneak*, but the brainburner gets to add +6 to his roll. Don't forget to add in any additional modifiers for darkness, cover, and so forth. Subtract from the syker's roll if he's standing in water or is otherwise making visible imprints on his surroundings.

The same modifiers apply to hit the syker with a missile or melee attack while he's invisible.

Of course *predator* doesn't render the user scentless, nor does it make him silent. Animals can detect the syker at half the usual modifiers.

Psychic Link

Type: Psionic

TN: 5

Strain: 1/target

Speed: 1

Duration: 1 hour

Range: Touch to initiate, then 1 mile/*blastin'* level

Psychic link is better than radio headsets. It's more reliable, and you don't have to worry about interference from background radiation—unless it's enough to kill you, that is.

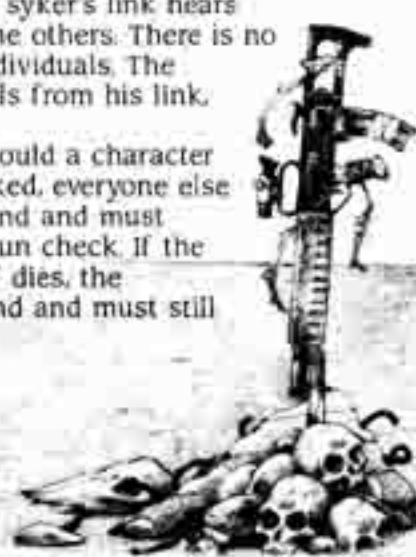


A syker uses this power to stay in touch with his posse over a long distance. Before he and his companions go their separate ways, the syker need only make a single Fair (5) *blastin'* roll, touch each companion, and pay 1 Strain each.

Even when the posse passes out of sight, the syker remains in mental contact with them, allowing the entire group to communicate until the power's duration expires or the syker (not his friends) voluntarily shuts the *link* off. The *link* continues to function regardless of the distance or obstacles between the characters. If one of the friends (not the syker) is knocked out or goes to sleep the *link* is still maintained.

Only conscious thoughts are transmitted. Everyone included in the syker's link hears what is transmitted by the others. There is no "whispering" to select individuals. The syker can drop individuals from his link, however.

One last drawback. Should a character die while psychically linked, everyone else in the link suffers 1d6 Wind and must make an Incredible (11) stun check. If the controlling syker himself dies, the characters suffer 3d6 Wind and must still make the stun check.



Syker Powers

Psynergy

Type: Psionic

TN: Special

Strain: 1

Speed: 2

Duration: 2/round

Range: Touch

The sykers on Banshee developed this power to fight fire with fire. The skinnies had ways to pool their powers and use them to greater effect, making it difficult to counteract them or to match their attacks with corresponding strength. *Psynergy* allowed the Banshee blasters to respond to the skinnies in kind.

(By the way, it's pronounced "sin-er-gee," bub. Like "synergy." See, it's a pun. Oh, never mind. Scavenge a dictionary if you've never heard the term, friend.)

Psynergy allows a syker to link one or more other sykers together to increase the power of their attack. In order to do this, the sykers hold hands, then turn the chain to face the target. Every syker in the chain must touch flesh with another. If the chain is broken, those cut off from the leader do not contribute to the overall effect.

To use *psynergy*, the syker makes a *blastin'* roll against a TN equal to 5 plus the number of sykers he is linking up with. For example, if there are six sykers in a *psynergy* link (the syker running the link, and five others), the TN is $(5+5=) 10$. If successful, he manages to create the link. The linked sykers may now all combine a particular power and launch it at a target with greater effect.

Every syker in the link must possess the power (thus, the power most commonly used with *psynergy* is *brain blast*, which almost every syker knows). Only the lead syker needs to know the *psynergy* power.

The lead syker directs the power. If it requires an opposed roll or a roll to hit, he is the one who makes it. He receives +2 to such rolls for every syker linked by *psynergy*, thus potentially adding raises and greater damage, control, or whatever to the result.

The Strain cost for the power is the same as usual (and establishing the *psynergetic* link costs 1 as well). The sykers share the burden of the combined power, dispersing the cost from the controlling syker outward. That means the controller pays 1 point, then the person to his left and right pay a point, then the next brainburners to his left and right pay a point, and so on. Odd points of Strain can go to the left or right as the controller chooses.

A *psynergetic* link can be maintained for more than one round, provided the controlling syker (and him only) pays the Strain cost for maintaining it. The syker running the link had best have plenty of Strain, because *psynergy* eats it faster than a shrak eats swimmers.

Purge

Type: Biokinetic

TN: Special

Strain: 3

Speed: 10 minutes

Duration: Permanent

Range: Self

Only a syker would use a healing power to kill. An old syker assassin's trick is to poison a drink, then pour both himself and his unsuspecting victim a glass from the same bottle, canteen, or other container. The syker then uses *purge* to flush the poison out of his system while his victim lies gurgling in the dirt.

That was the old days. In 2094, sykers don't have too many folks to assassinate. There are still plenty of people who need killing, but real assassinations are few and far between. The real



Syker Powers

use for *purge* these days is to remove diseases, poisons, radiation, and other nastiness before they set in and make carve themselves out a home.

A syker can *purge* most toxins within 12 hours of the time they get into his system, without harm. After that, or in less time if the syker's blood has been pumping faster than usual (the Marshal's call), the toxin has set in, and the poor fellow's out of luck.

Purge only works if the syker is still alive. It doesn't do much good against very fast-acting poisons unless the syker applies it immediately (within a few seconds) after the poison enters the system. In that case it postpones the effects long enough to *purge* it.

The TN to *purge* poisons, diseases, radiation, and other toxins is shown on the table below. In the case of radiation, a successful *purge* returns all Wind lost due to radiation poisoning (see the *Deadlands: Hell on Earth* rulebook). Of course, if the syker is still exposed to radiation once *purged*, it just starts building up again.

Purge

TN Toxin

- 3 Colds; most nonfatal poisons.
- 5 Common viruses.
- 7 Most natural poisons such as snake venom; infections.
- 9 Radiation; chronic infections; potentially lethal viruses (ebola, lassa, Marburg).
- 11 Supernatural diseases such as Tummy Twisters, the touch of a faminite, or any plague or illness started by Pestilence, Famine, or their minions.

Pyro

Type: Pyrokinetic

TN: 5

Strain: 2

Speed: 1

Duration: 2/round

Range: 10 yards/*blastin'* level

"Cook! Cook!"

—Beavis

Pyro is pure pyrokinesis: the ability to create fire and flame.

With it, the syker creates a dancing flame about the size of an average campfire. He can then move the fire about at will, causing it to roast anything and everything in its path. Think of it as all the heat from an *arson* blast

concentrated in one smaller but more intense flame, causing more damage to anyone who contacts it.

The syker can move the fire anywhere within range and line of sight, up to his *blastin'* level in yards each action. It flares up on each of the controller's actions, causing 3d6 damage to its current target, whatever that might be.

If the target is a thug (the Marshal is not keeping track of individual wounds), just treat this damage normally. If the Marshal is keeping track of a target's wound areas (he's a hero or important villain), the damage is centered on one body area of the controller's choosing.

Flammable materials in contact with the flame have a one in six chance each action of catching fire. Highly flammable materials (like ghost rock or gasoline) light automatically. See *Deadlands: Hell on Earth* for information on fires and ways to put them out.

Shh!

Type: Biokinetic

TN: 5

Strain: 2

Speed: 1

Duration: 1/10 minutes

Range: 10 yards/*blastin'* level

Every now and then, despite a syker's best efforts, someone spies him going about his dirty business and decides to be a tattletale. *Shh!* shuts the blabbermouth up real quick.

Unlike *silence*, which actually creates a field which dampens sound, *shh!* locks up a target's mouth and vocal cords by sending neural impulses from the brain to the victim's jaws and throat. All the victim can do is make odd grunting, moaning, or barking sounds. It's frustrating and quite deadly when some flunky can't tell his commanding officer what he wants to know—not to mention the fact that he sounds like a wounded seal.

Of course, someone afflicted by *shh!* can still write, point, draw pictures, or play charades to get his point across, but by the time such a message is conveyed, the syker commando is usually long gone—or standing behind the recipient of the message with a loaded TSAR rifle.

For every raise on the syker's *blastin'* roll, she can affect one other person within range. Roll that person's *Vigor* as usual. If the syker gets another raise, he can attack another target.



Syker Powers



Silence

Type: Sykokinetic
TN: 5
Strain: 1
Speed: 1
Duration: 1/10 minutes
Range: Self

Commandos, assassins, and saboteurs are sneaky types for one simple reason: Every nation on Earth executed special operatives when they were caught. Needless to say, the sykers quickly learned how to hide (thus the *chameleon* power) and sneak. The problem, however, was that many of the things the sykers did once they got in position made loud bangs. Hence the need for *silence*.

Silence cloaks the syker in a field of absolute silence by creating a interfering field of sykokinetic energy around the syker and whatever he's holding. This field dampens sound waves emitted from the blaster and anything he holds.

The brainburner can run, shout, fire a weapon, or otherwise perform any action which would normally produce noise—but he makes no noise at all. If he's *sneakin'*, an

opponent relying solely on sound to detect him has no chance of doing so. If the opponent does have a chance to perceive the syker through means other than sound (seeing him or smelling him, for example), *silence* simply adds +4 to the syker's *sneak* rolls.

It's important for a syker to keep this power's limitations in mind, however. While it makes firing a gun absolutely silent, it doesn't stop the crack of a bullet as it breaks the sound barrier (it's too far away from him to be affected by *silence*), nor does it mask the noise of the bullet hitting its target. If the syker uses *silence* to sneak up close and stab someone, the victim's scream of pain can be heard loud and clear. In short, only the syker's actions and noises made by objects he can hold in his hands are *silenced*, not the consequences of those actions.

If he suddenly needs to shout for help, the syker can turn off the power at any point.

Skinwalker

Type: Psionic
TN: Special
Strain: 3
Speed: 1
Duration: 1/hour
Range: Self

Nearly 200 years ago, during the Great Rail Wars, a Rail Baron named Simone LaCroix captured a number of hideous creatures called skinwalkers and used them against his foes. The governments of both the North and the South studied the shapeshifting dopplegangers, but never could figure out their secrets. When sykers created this power, their mentors named it after the old horrors (some of which might still sit, starving and immortal, in secret underground labs, by the way).

Skinwalker allows a syker to take on the form, image, and voice of someone else by means of a potent illusion. To use the power, the syker merely has to beat the TN and pay the cost in Strain. The TN depends on how much the syker knows about the person he's imitating, as shown on the table below.

The syker can only alter his appearance, not create complex illusions. For example, if the person to be imitated is carrying a rifle, a syker using *skinwalker* to imitate him does not have a rifle unless he has something to disguise as a rifle (such as a stick). The Marshal must decide what elements the syker can disguise and what he cannot, but in general, physical features, clothes, hair, and the like are included in the

Syker Powers

illusion. *Skinwalker* covers all senses. The syker looks, sounds, smells, and feels like his victim until the end of the power's duration, or he decides to drop it.

Skinwalker doesn't allow for extreme changes in weight or height. Both features can be altered by about $\pm 10\%$. *Skinwalker* does not allow the syker to appear to have wings, six arms, or other features not commonly found on humans, but it does allow the imitation of "cosmetic" effects, such as radiation burns, boils, tattoos, and the like.

Characters who are able to recognize the imitated person don't usually notice the disguise and have no chance to notice or see through it, unless the *skinwalking* syker does something out of the ordinary for the imitated person. Characters who know the imitated person will get a chance to know something is wrong after any unusual or suspicious action. The Marshal can modify this roll, based on the situation.

This is an opposed *scrutinize* roll versus the syker's *performin'*, since the syker must try to act like his victim and convince the doubter he is who he says he is. Even if someone catches on to the disguise, it does not disappear, so it might be hard for him to convince others of the lie.

victim's adrenaline has already kicked in, such as in very tense situations like combat, sex, or running a marathon (and you know how much that happens these days).

Here's how it works. Assuming the victim is relatively calm, the syker enables the power by making a *blastin'* roll versus the target's *Vigor*. Subtract -2 from the victim's roll if he was already at rest. If the syker is successful, the victim falls into a deep sleep.

The sleeper can be awakened normally, though he rolls at -2 to do so, with another -2 per raise the syker got on his *blastin'* total. Most victims sleep 1d4 hours. Others remain in the Land of Nod for much longer, particularly if they were very tired already. Guards on watch late at night are almost always sleepy unless they have a good reason not to be. Solitary guards in quiet

outposts are also good targets. Boredom is a syker's friend.

Sleepy-bye has no effect on most undead, automatons, and creatures that do not sleep. It can affect the Harrowed, however, since they do sleep.



101

Skinwalker

TN Familiarity

- 3 Intimate
- 5 Close friend; studied in-depth
- 7 Friend
- 9 Acquaintance; studied casually
- 11 Someone the syker's met once or twice

Sleepy-Bye

Type: Biokinetic

TN: Opposed (*Vigor*)

Strain: 2

Speed: 1

Duration: See below

Range: 20 yards/*blastin'* level

You are getting sleepy—very, very sleepy.

Sleepy-bye is the pacifist's way to get by: guards most brainburners would kill. It allows the syker to cause a victim to fall quickly and cleanly asleep. Essentially, the syker reaches into the victim's mind and shuts off the parts that keep him awake.

Since this power uses a victim's natural sleep endorphins against him, it has no effect when a



Syker Powers



Slow Burn

Type: Pyrokinetic

TN: 7

Strain: 1/AV

Speed: 1/AV

Duration: Concentration

Range: 20 yards/*blastin'* level

Sykers were rarely expected to duke it out with a tank, but their teachers wanted them to have a big can of whup-ass if they did, so this is the power they came up with.

(**Note:** We've made *slow burn* a whole Hell of a lot more powerful. Make sure you notice that it now does xd10 damage instead of the xd6 listed in the *Deadlands: Hell on Earth* rulebook.)

Slow burn allows a syker to take out even the most heavily armored targets, though it requires a little time and risk. To do so, the syker "probes" the target with a visible beam of crackling energy, determining the strength of its armor, and then releases an armor-piercing (AP) bolt of psychic energy to take it out.

If a target gets behind cover before the blast is released, the power ends, but the syker does not pay any Strain.

The target must have at least 1 level of Armor (not light armor) to be affected. The power's Speed is equal to the Armor Value of the target. On the last action of concentration, the syker makes his *blastin'* roll against the power's TN and the TN to hit the target with a Range Increment of 20. The syker adds +1 to the attack roll (not the *blastin'* roll) for each action spent probing, up to the target's Armor Value.

If both totals are successful, a blast of superheated energy bursts from the syker's head. This blast has an AP value equal to the target's Armor, and it causes xd10 damage, where x is the target's Armor Value.

This counts as "real" damage against vehicles. Don't divide it as is done with small arms. Check out the vehicle rules in the *Deadlands: Hell on Earth* rulebook. A syker can make a called shot with this power by applying the modifier to her attack roll (but not the *blastin'* result).

It can be used against personnel, as long as they are wearing some sort of body armor, but *brain blast*, *boneripping*, and many other powers are usually more effective, especially since the target can always just dive into cover to escape the inevitable blast.

Syker Powers

Sturm und Draug

Type: Sykokinetic
TN: Opposed (*blastin'*, *faith*, etc.)
Strain: 0
Speed: 2
Duration: Instant
Range: 5 yards/*blastin'* level

Sturm und drang ("storm and stress," named by the German syker who developed it) steals Strain from another syker, Doomsayer, or other Strain-using spellcaster.

Here's how it works. The syker makes an opposed roll against another syker's *blastin'*, a Doomsayer's *faith*, and so on. The winner steals 1d4 Strain from the victim, +1d4 Strain per raise. Unlike damage and Aptitude checks, this is not an open-ended roll.

Only real Strain is stolen—not potential Strain gained should the target have *fortitude*, drugs, or Banshee stones. Once the target's Strain hits 0, no more can be taken.

Drained Strain is recovered by the victim in the usual manner. The Strain remains with the juice-thief until it is used (it's taken away first) or the duration of the power expires, at which point it vanishes instantly. Once used, the extra Strain cannot be recovered by the syker. It's a one-shot deal.

Sykers like to call other sykers with this power "vampires."

Tattletale

Type: Psionic
TN: Opposed (*Spirit*)
Strain: 2
Speed: 5 minutes
Duration: 5 minutes
Range: 5 yards

Commandos rarely have time to stage elaborate interrogations. *Tattletale* allows a syker to drag information from a foe's mind without the poor schmuck realizing he's been violated.

A syker who engages his opponent in conversation and uses this power can get the target to talk about things he ordinarily would not. Even better, the target remembers the conversation, but forgets he revealed anything he wasn't supposed to. Unless the syker botches his *blastin'* roll, the victim never has a clue this power was used on him.

Each use of *tattletale* is an opposed *blastin'* roll versus the target's *Spirit*. The syker gets some amount of information with each success. The Marshal must determine exactly how much based on the situation.

Telekinetic Storm

Type: Telekinetic
TN: 5
Strain: 2
Speed: 1
Duration: 1/round
Range: 20 yards/*blastin'* level

The Wasted West is filled with junk, rubble, trash, and the wrecked remains of a civilization stupid enough to bomb itself back to the Stone Age. In the hands of the right people, such as junkers, these scraps can become weapons. Sykers have a more direct way of using the crumbling fragments of the old world.

To use *telekinetic storm*, the syker need only make a *blastin'* roll against a TN of 5. If he succeeds, it creates a maelstrom of swirling debris a number of yards in diameter equal to the syker's *Spirit* die type. The syker can center the storm anywhere up to the range of the power. Everything within the storm suffers 2d6 damage as it is hashed by flying debris, plus an additional 1d6 damage per raise on the *blastin'* roll. Treat this as massive damage if the Marshal is using wound locations for those inside.

Obviously, this doesn't work in an area without substantial rubble or other dangerous debris. If the debris is particularly sharp, hard, or otherwise deadly, the Marshal should add damage or other effects as well. Throwing a box of nails into a *telekinetic storm* might make the damage 2d6+2 per round. If there are radrats in the storm, they probably bite anyone they slam into as well. The Marshal should use common sense and reward creative uses of this chaotic power.

Telekinesis

Type: Telekinetic
TN: 5
Strain: Special
Speed: 5
Duration: 1/round
Range: 20 yards/*blastin'* level

Ever need an extra pair of hands? This nifty power might do it for you.

Telekinesis is possibly the most versatile and useful power in a syker's arsenal. It allows a brainburner to manipulate physical objects at range with mental power. It doesn't create an invisible block, hand, or wall of force; it simply manipulates existing matter, such as a boulder or a person.



Syker Powers



To use *telekinesis*, the syker makes a *blastin'* roll against a TN of 5 and spends his Strain. If successful, he gets a hold on the target object. A syker's *Strength* with *telekinesis* is equal to his *Spirit*, plus +1 step for every raise achieved on the *blastin'* roll.

The power works at a range of 20 yards per *blastin'* level. If a syker tries to move an object beyond that range, he drops it at once. Once he has a hold on the object, he must also maintain line of sight to it to maintain the power.

An object being held with *telekinesis* can be moved at a Pace equal to the syker's *Spirit* die type, as modified by the weight being lifted. (If it becomes an issue, see the main rulebook for more information on carrying loads.) The syker can move the object away from himself, toward himself, to the side, up, down, you name it. He can also let go of the object at any time—such as when he's lifted it a couple hundred feet off the ground. Can you fly, mutlie?

Sykers can also perform manual skills with *telekinesis*. For example, a syker could throw a grenade, steer a car, or shoot a pistol. When a brainburner wants to use

telekinesis to perform such a task, he simply uses that skill with his *Knowledge* die type. If he wants to drive a car by remote, for instance, he makes a *Knowledge/drivin'* car roll. If he doesn't have the concentration or Aptitude, he subtracts the appropriate Aptitude as usual. These attempts do count as "actions," though a syker may perform an action with his mind and a normal action at the same time by applying a -2 modifier to each.

Finally, a syker can use *telekinesis* to lift himself into the air or catch himself while falling. In both cases, the syker can move himself or slow himself down by his *telekinetic Pace* (as described above).

If falling, don't try to do the math. Use this "cheat" instead. For every point of *telekinetic Pace* the syker has, knock $1d6+5$ off the damage he'd take from the fall. If the damage is reduced to 0 or less, the syker catches himself before he hits the ground.

One last thing: *Telekinesis* is not a "force field." It cannot block attacks that a pair of hands couldn't block, it can't hold liquids or gases, and it can't reach inside someone and squeeze a vein or plug an artery. (For the latter, the character must learn a more narrow and specialized power such as *boneripper* or *Aztec surprise*.) It can only pick up and manipulate tangible matter. Got it? Good.

Third Eye

Type: Sykokinetic

TN: 5

Strain: 1

Speed: 1

Duration: Concentration

Range: 20 yards/*blastin'* level

There are more things in this world than can be seen with the naked eye. Fortunately, some sykers have a third one that can see some of the things lurking out there.

Third eye causes a large, luminous eye, which looks much like a pale searchlight, to open in the middle of the syker's forehead. This eye is able to detect all supernatural powers, energies, emanations, or effects by bathing it in sykokinetic energy. Harrowed, undead, or characters under the effect of someone else's power all show up under the syker's probing *third eye*.

Additionally, the syker can identify the type of power being used if he makes an *academia occult* roll based on the table below. For example, *third eye* can see that someone is being

controlled with *meat puppet*, a syker is sweeping an area with *mental scan*, a *psychic link* is in existence between people, and so on.

Third eye can also detect trace energies left on a victim's brain or body by damaging syker powers. A syker can use *third eye* to look at a corpse and determine that it was killed with *brain bomb*, for example (like he couldn't tell on his own!).

Third Eye

- TN** **Type of Power**
- 3 Syker power the syker knows
 - 6 Unknown syker power
 - 5 Doomsayer or Templar power
 - 9 Archaic powers (huckster or witch)
 - 11 Evil magic (Marshal-only powers)

Trance

Type: Biokinetic

TN: 5

Strain: 1

Speed: 1 minute

Duration: Special

Range: Self

Trance allows a syker to put himself in a virtual coma for a defined period of time. During this time, the syker appears to be dead. He breathes less than once a minute and so shallowly that it requires a Hard (9) *medicine* roll to detect the fact that the syker is still alive. During the time the syker is in a *trance*, weapons which try to affect him through his breathing (such as some gases and biowarfare agents) do not, he does not have to eat, and he is immune to extremes of temperature until they reach the point where they physically damage his flesh. Of course he has no other immunity from damage. Any mutie can run him through with a rusty shiv.

The syker must define the length of time he remains in a *trance* before he activates the power. This can be a set time period, such as "three weeks," or the occurrence of a specific event, such as "at the third sunrise," "the next time rain falls on me," or "when Bob says 'Wake up!'" The condition must be objective, however, not *subjective*. The syker can't say, "when something bad is about to happen." The power has no judgment.

When the condition or event occurs, the syker wakes up. If he's been in a *trance* for a day or more, he is ravenously hungry and must eat soon or suffer the consequences.

Creating New Powers

Maybe you've got an idea for a cool new syker power or a better way to blast muties into tiny pieces. Syker powers are by nature mysterious and unfathomable, and new ones are being developed all the time. There's no problem with creating new powers if you want to.

The list of powers described above certainly isn't exclusive or exhaustive. We bet a lot of you, having gotten this far, have come up with ideas for syker powers of your own that fit your particular character. That's great, and we encourage it! So here's how to create them.

Theme and Nature

As you've seen in the descriptions above, there's a certain nature to syker powers. For the most part, they aren't the usual psionic fodder you find in other games. They're harsher, more lethal, more brutal. Remember that most powers were created by the military or by syker commandos in military service.

The power must also make sense within a particular category. Telekinesis can't make a character fly at the speed of light. It just takes too much mental energy. It can make him fly at a reasonable Pace, however, as shown in the *telekinesis* power. Think about how the power works and what some of the limits are based on those we've listed in this book.

When you're coming up with new syker powers, stick to this sort of feel. There are definitely some types of powers sykers should have and some they shouldn't. Think *The Road Warrior* meets *Scanners*. Although the powers which fit into this framework are often extremely powerful—as deadly as the best weapons available—there are some things which a syker just shouldn't be able to do. Syker powers are not a substitute for magic or comic-book psionics. Be creative, be clever, be lethal, but don't go beyond the boundaries set by other powers.

Here are some guidelines for turning your idea into a working syker power.

Type

The type of power should be fairly easy to figure out. Moving things around has to be a telekinetic power. Shutting down body functions is biokinetic. Messing with a victim's mind is certainly psionic. How do

Syker Powers

you summon demons or conjure items out of thin air with a syker power? Well, you can't. Neither fits within the categories we've established.

Target Number

The target numbers for syker powers are based on *blastin'*. The typical TN is 5, but this may increase to 7 for difficult or particularly effective powers, or even 9 for powers which, like *chameleon*, have to affect a lot of minds at once.

Most syker powers that directly affect another person or that person's mind are opposed rolls. Here are the different types of categories and the skills or Traits they're normally opposed with.

Opposed Rolls

Category	Skill or Trait
Biokinesis	Vigor
Psionics	Knowledge, Smarts, or Spirit
Pyrokinesis	Spirit
Sykokinesis	Blastin' or Spirit
Telekinesis	Spirit or Vigor

Strain

The more powerful and effective a power is, the more Strain it costs. The maximum Strain cost for a power is normally 5. If a power calls for greater Strain, it's probably too powerful!

Speed

Syker powers intended for use in combat are usually Speed 1, occasionally Speed 2 or more for particularly effective powers. Powers which aren't usually used in combat are often listed in minutes or even hours.

Duration

Combat powers are usually "instant," or have effects which are "permanent." In some cases, the duration is based upon the syker's *blastin'*. Increments such as one minute, five minutes, or one hour per level of *blastin'* are often appropriate for such powers—but be careful when using such durations, since they tend to give sykers a lot of long-term effect while freeing them up to do other things. Consider using "concentration" or a set Strain cost per round instead for highly effective powers.

Range

Except for powers which are "self" only or which require the syker to "touch" his victim (and there are plenty of those; many syker powers simply don't work over a distance), a power's range is usually based on the syker's *blastin'*. For the average power, 20 yards per level of *blastin'* is a good range. For more powerful abilities, 10 or even 5 yards per level of *blastin'* is more balanced.

Marshal Law

The last, and most important, thing to get is the Marshal's official approval for your new syker power. His word, as always, is final. He checks for powers which are likely to unbalance the game, make the syker too effective, or don't fit the syker feel.

Do everyone a favor, and don't come up with powers you know aren't up to snuff. Think about it. You can easily design a power that kills, with a rationale that makes it nearly impossible to defeat, but where's the fun in that? Tell you what. When you get the urge to do something like that, just say you did, and your character wins every battle he ever fights in. Fun, huh? Okay. Now let's reboot and start over in a game with some challenge. Okay, brainer?



Syker Powers

Syker Powers

	Type	TN	Strain	Speed	Duration	Range	Summary
Arson	Pyrokinetic	7	3	1	Instant	10 yards/level	2d10 damage (fireball, diameter equal to Spirit).
Aztec	Telekinetic	Vigor	3	2	Instant	10 yards/level	3d10 damage to guts, rips out heart.
Backwash	Sykokinetic	blastin'	1	1	Instant	10 yards/level	Attacks a syker through a door.
Band-aid	Biokinetic	5	1	Special	Permanent	20 yards/level	Stops bleeding.
Blindside	Biokinetic	Vigor	1 each	1	1 minute/level	20 yards/level	Strikes foe blind.
Body control	Biokinetic	5	1	1	Concentration or 1/round	Self	Trait & Aptitude bonuses.
Bogus!	Psionic	Smarts	1	1	5 minutes/level	10 yards/level	Makes lies believable.
Boneripping	Telekinetic	Vigor	5	3	Instant	10 yards/level	5d10 damage.
Brain blast	Sykokinetic	5	1	1	Instant	20 yards/level	Damage = Spirit.
Brain bomb	Biokinetic	Vigor	Special	Special	Instant	20 yards/level	Explodes heads.
Brain blammer	Syko	Spirit	1 each	Special	Instant	20 yards/level	Blasts many foes, 2d6 damage.
Chain brain	Psionic	Spirit	1	1	Instant	20 yards/level	Stuns many brains.
Chameleon	Psionic	9	1	1	Concentration	Self	Makes invisible, immobile.
Detonate	Pyrokinetic	5/11	2	2	Instant	20 yards/level	Fires explosives.
Fireproof	Pyrokinetic	5	1	1	Concentration or 1/minute	Self	Renders syker immune to fire.
Fleshknit	Biokinetic	Special	Special	Special	Permanent	Self	Heals the syker.
Force field	Sykokinetic	5	1	1	1/round	Self	Physical armor.
Gift	Sykokinetic	9	5	1 minute	1 hour/level	Touch	Lends a syker power.
Hallucination	Psionic	Smarts	1 each	1	Concentration	20 yards/level	Creates illusion in foe's mind.
Heartstopper	Biokinetic	Vigor	3	3	Instant	10 yards/level	Causes heart attack.
Here, doggie!	Psionic	Smarts	Special	1	5 minutes/level	20 yards/level	Controls animals.
Itsy-bitsy spider	Telekinetic	5	1	1	1/10 minutes	Self	Allows syker to climb sheer walls.
Judge	Sykokinetic	7	Special	1	Permanent	Touch	Lends Strain.
Lunacy	Psionic	Smarts	5	1 minute	Permanent	10 yards/level	Induces madness.
Manipulator	Psionic	Spirit	2	2	10 minutes/level	10 yards/level	Manipulates emotions.
Meat puppet	Psionic	Spirit	5	2	Concentration or 1/round	Touch	Controls target.
Medic	Biokinetic	Special	Special	Special	Permanent	Touch	Heals others' wounds.
Memory maker	Psionic	Smarts	Special	Special	Permanent	Touch	Falsifies memories.
Mental armor	Psionic	5	1	1	1/minute	Self	Supernatural armor.
Mind reader	Psionic	Knowledge	1	1	1/round	10 yards/level	Reads thoughts.
Mind scan	Psionic	5/9	1	2	Concentration or 1/round	1 mile/level	Searches for target minds.
Mind transference	Psionic	Spirit	5	Special	1 hour/level	Touch	Swaps minds.
Mindrider	Psionic	Smarts	1	2	1/10 minutes	100 yards/level	Tap another's senses.
Mindwipe	Psionic	Smarts	1	2	Permanent	5 yards/level	Erases memories.
Negator	Sykokinetic	Special	1	Special	Instant	20 yards/level	Cancels a power.
Nightmare	Psionic	Spirit	1	1	Concentration	10 yards/level	Induces nightmare.
One-man army	Sykokinetic	5	3	1	1/round	Special	Creates clones.

Syker Powers

More Syker Powers

	Type	TN	Strain	Speed	Duration	Range	Summary
The Paralyzer	Biokinetic	Vigor	2	2	5 minutes/level	5 yards/level	Paralyzes foe.
Peace of mind	Psionic	Knowledge	5	1d6 hours	Permanent	Touch	Cures insanity.
Predator	Sykokinetic	5	1	2	1/round	Self	Mobile invisibility
Psychic link	Psionic	5	1 each	1	1 hour	Touch	Mental link.
Psynergy	Psionic	Special	1	2	1/round	Touch	Links syker abilities
Purge	Biokinetic	Special	3	10 minutes	Permanent	Self	Purges body of foe
Pyro	Pyrokinetic	5	2	1	1/round	10 yards/level	Starts fires.
Shh!	Biokinetic	5	2	1	1/10 minutes	10 yards/level	Silences foes.
Silence	Sykokinetic	5	1	1	1/10 minutes	Self	Silences syker.
Skinwalker	Psionic	Special	3	1	1/hour	Self	Disguises syker.
Sleepy-bye	Biokinetic	Vigor	2	1	Special	20 yards/level	Puts foe to sleep.
Slow burn	Pyrokinetic	7	1/AV	1/AV	Concentration	20 yards/level	Armor-piercing blast.
Sturm und Drang	Sykokinetic	Special	0	2	Instant	5 yards/level	Steals Strain.
Tattletale	Psionic	Spirit	2	5 minutes	5 minutes	5 yards	Loosens foe's tongue.
Telekinetic storm	Telekinetic	5	2	1	1/round	20 yard/level	Creates a storm of debris.
Telekinesis	Telekinetic	5	Special	5	1/round	20 yards/level	Moves things mentally.
Third Eye	Sykokinetic	5	1	1	Concentration	20 yards/level	Spots supernatural.
Trance	Biokinetic	5	1	1 minute	Special	Self	Induces Trance.

Powers by Type

Divination

Band-Aid
Body Control
Brain Bomb
Fleshknit
Heartstopper
Medic
The Paralyzer
Purge
Shh!
Sleepy-Bye
Trance
Blindside

Psionics

Mindrider
Bogus
Chain Brain

Chameleon
Hallucination
Here, Doggie!
Lunacy
Manipulator
Meat Puppet
Memory Maker
Mental Armor
Mindwipe
Mind Reader
Mind Scan
Mind Transference
Nightmare
Peace of Mind
Psychic Link
Psynergy
Skinwalker
Tattletale

Pyrokinesis

Arson
Detonate
Fireproof
Pyro
Slow Burn

Sykokinesis

Backwash
Brain Blast
Brain Slammer
Force Field
Gift Juice
Negator
One Many Army
Predator
Silence
Sturm und Drang
Third Eye

Telekinesis

Aztec Surprise
Boneripping
Itsy-Bitsy Spider
Telekinetic Storm
Telekinesis



Chapter Four:

Syker Tech

Sykers are typically graduates of military training academies and veterans of the battlefields of the Faraway War or Last War (take your pick). And if there's one thing the military loves, it's toys: military hardware. From guns to armor to hover tanks to killer satellites, the military of late 21st century Earth had it all. And some of it was specifically designed for use by sykers or in support of syker-dominated operations.

Most of the syker tech used by Earth sykers was destroyed or used up during the Last War, but there are still a few goodies lying around or in the hands of scavvies. And who knows what wonders may be hidden in government facilities so secret the bombs never fell on them?

Banshee sykers were, if anything, even better equipped, since they'd been fighting since long before the Last War began. Their battles with the mysterious skinnies became a gold mine for military hardware corporations (such as Hellstromme Industries) looking to sell the UN forces some new piece of experimental hardware that would help the Legion turn the tide. Most of their hardware got left behind, of course, but a few unique items managed to find their way back to Earth or were found in stockpiles that never made it off-planet to Banshee in the first place.

So let's go salvaging, friend, and find out what kinds of toys are out there for your syker to play with!

Sykertropic Drugs

Sykers and their masters discovered early on that certain kinds of drugs enhance syker functions. Indeed, in the earliest days of syker development, some proto-sykers often required drugs to be able to use their powers. Without them, the powers were so weak or so debilitating that blasting wasn't feasible.

Sykers soon freed themselves from those particular chains, but they never forgot that drugs could be used to enhance what a syker could already do as well as spark it to life. Some researchers at the syker academies experimented in this field almost exclusively, striving to develop the perfect syker pill. The drugs they created were eventually given the name of "sykertropic" drugs.

Unfortunately for the surviving sykers, all of those researchers are nothing but radioactive dust now—at least as far as anyone knows. But the knowledge of how the drugs work, and sometimes even how to make them, still resides in the pulsating craniums of sykers themselves.

Sykertropic drugs do nothing for trainers. Even Doomsayers cannot use sykertropic drugs to boost or recover their own Strain, though if they're foolish enough to try the drugs, they can certainly become addicted to them.



Syker Tech

Amanitrol

Amanitrol was one of the very first sykertropic drugs. Initially developed by German chemists in the 1890s, and further refined during World War I and later on in the Cold War period, amanitrol is derived from certain types of mushrooms and fungus. These plants are common in pretty much all parts of Europe, eastern North America, and the Pacific Coast, and are easily grown in greenhouses or similar facilities elsewhere.

Thus, the main virtue to amanitrol is this: It's easy to cultivate and make. Even in the Wasted West, there are lots of folks with access to the necessary equipment. Heck, any syker with the *medicine* Aptitude or an appropriate *academia* Aptitude can make a dose of it with as little as four of the right mushrooms or fungi, a bit of flour, potable water, a frying pan, and a source of heat. It won't be the best amanitrol ever created, but it will suffice.

Here's how to make it. A syker makes an Incredible (II) *scroungin'* roll to find the ingredients in the parts of the world named above. This takes 2d6 hours. Each raise reduces the time by one hour.

Once the ingredients are gathered, the syker has to cook it into a liquid or powder. This takes a Fair (5) *academia: chemistry* roll and four hours of time. This produces one dose. Up to four doses can be cooked up in a gallon container.

Effects: Amanitrol makes it easier for sykers to concentrate. When using the drug, the syker can take normal actions *while* concentrating on a single power. Alternatively, he could concentrate on two powers and take only simple actions.

Average-quality amanitrol is any amanitrol produced in a lab by someone who knows what he's doing. One dose takes 1d6 rounds to kick in once ingested, and it lasts 2d6 minutes after.

Low-quality amanitrol is crudely cooked up (as described above), made in a lab by someone who's not aware of the correct procedures, or was made before or during the Last War and has lost some of its potency over time. It lasts only 2d6 rounds.

There is no such thing as high-quality amanitrol.

Side-Effects: Amanitrol makes it easier to concentrate by dulling the senses. Reduce the character's *Cognition* and *Quickness* by -1 step each when under its influence.



Axor

Axor is sometimes called "brain food" by veteran brainburners because it temporarily increases their mental powers. It was developed in the mid-20th century by a Mexican chemist, Reynaldo Borrero de Pedroza. For the first couple of decades after its development, axor was a well-kept secret of the Mexican government. It gave the Mexicans a significant edge in the syker spy wars, and they didn't want to blow the advantage.

But all good things must come to an end, and in 1988, a Confederate syker named John Morrison clashed with a Mexican syker along the border and killed him. On his adversary were several doses of axor. The CSA quickly learned the secret, and eventually, so did everyone else.

Axor, being cheap, easy to make, and easy to store, was stockpiled in vast quantities by nations who used sykers. Since it's virtually impossible to make in the Wasted West (it requires some manufactured chemicals which no one's set up to make anymore), sykers are still working off of these stockpiles, some of which were destroyed in the Last War. Most were, however, looted long before the bombs fell. A few may remain to be discovered. Fortunately for sykers, it stores well for a long, long time without becoming spoiled (the Hostess Twinkie™ of sykertropics!).

Effects: Axor increases a syker's *blatin'* by +2 for 2d6 minutes.

Side-Effects: There are no records of any syker ever becoming addicted to axor in any way. It's completely safe, so you shouldn't worry about that badge. Really.



101

Green Bird of Heaven

This drug, which is actually purplish-blue and not green at all, was developed by Chinese scientists (hence its flowery name) in the year 2020. It has the effect of soothing a resting syker and increasing the rate at which he regains spent Strain.

Green bird comes in the form of sticks of incense. The syker must light the incense while in an enclosed, still space and breathe the fumes while he rests or meditates.

Green bird is fairly common on the Pacific coast (particularly in the ruins of Shan Fan), but it's rare anywhere else in the Wasted West. If a syker could manage to get over to the Far East somehow, he could obtain it there too.

Government stores in that part of the world were raided by bandits during the Last War, and it's easily found on the black markets of Asia.

To make it requires both an Incredible (II) *scroungin'* and an Incredible (II) *academia: chemistry* roll, as well as a complete lab with burners, mortar and pestle, and so forth. The *scroungin'* part takes 2d6 hours, minus one hour per raise on the roll, and must be done in dry, mountainous areas. (That's where the weeds are found.) Cooking it takes three hours per dose to bake it onto a stick (to then be burned as incense).

As mentioned above, green bird must be used in an enclosed, still space or the effect is lost. It gives off a distinctive odor when burned which most sykers recognize with a Foolproof (3) *Cognition* roll.

Effects: Green bird of Heaven doubles the rate at which Strain is regained. It is cumulative with meditation.

Side-Effects: Many users of green bird report that they often suffer headaches after they finish inhaling it. It is not known to be addictive, either physically or psychologically.



101

Red

Unlike most other sykertropic drugs, this one originated on Banshee and was discovered by a syker in the field rather than some researcher in the lab. Seeking a native substitute for his beloved pipe tobacco, a member of the Hammerhead squad, Corporal Fred Vickers, tried drying and grinding up the leaves of a reddish-brown Banshee plant. It didn't smoke much like tobacco, but Vickers was amazed to discover that he felt much more vital and energetic after using it. What's more, he was a lot less tired out when he used his syker powers. Without meaning to, he'd stumbled on what he claimed was the secret of how the skinnies were able to use their powers so strongly and so often.

The few field researchers available on Banshee began researching the properties of this plant as soon as Vickers took his findings to his superiors. They soon discovered that the sykoactive chemicals inside it were able to stimulate the centers of the brain which channel psychic energy from the Hunting Grounds. While these chemicals weren't reproducible in a lab for some reason, they could easily

Syker Tech

be used if the plant's leaves were reduced to a powdered or liquid form and then ingested. Some sample plants were also sent back to Earth and were able to grow in Earth soil.

Because of the dark-reddish color of the powder and liquid derived from the plant, the drug quickly became known as "red" to sykers in the field. Soon "Give me some red!" was the cry heard among syker squads before they went into battle, because red increased—sometimes dramatically—a syker's Strain capacity.

When the sykers bugged off of Banshee, many took large supplies of red, or even the actual plants, with them. While a lot of this stuff got left behind on the *Unity*, a good bit of it made it to Earth in the hands of the sykers. Today, red plants are being cultivated at the Jericho academy and probably some other places as well, but it will be a long, long time before the supply is self-sustaining.

Meantime sykers have to make do with what they've already got in drug form. This has led to more than a few fights, raids, and other disputes over the drug, since sykers covet it, and many are addicted to it. No one has yet found any of the secret government farms where the nations of Earth grew their own red plants from the samples sent back by Banshee botanists. It's feared that all the plantations were ghost-rock bombed out of existence, but some sykers keep searching, hoping to find that mother lode of this powerful drug.

Effects: Red stimulates the psychic centers of a syker's brain, increasing his capacity to channel psychic energy without causing undue stress or harm to himself.

In game terms, red provides a temporary increase in a syker's Strain. The extra Strain can be used to fuel syker powers until it's all used up or the drug's effects wear off.

The amount of Strain increase, and how long it lasts, depends upon the quality of the drug, as indicated in the Red Effects Table.

High-quality red is a highly refined form of the drug which was produced in Earth government labs before and during the Last War. Making it is beyond the capacity of most folks in the Wasted West. Most of the red available on Earth is of average quality. This includes the red currently being produced at the Jericho academy. (The school lacks the advanced lab facilities needed to produce high-quality red.)

Low-quality red is picked right out of the ground, or is made from average- or high-quality red which has been diluted ("cut"), or which has deteriorated over time. Sykers sometimes refer to it as "pink."

Red is usually eaten or ingested as a dry powder, though it can also be distilled into a liquid as well. It can be smoked, but it only imparts 1 Strain for 1d6 minutes in this form because so little of it gets into the syker's bloodstream.

Red Effects

Quality	Strain	Duration
High	2d6	1d4 hours
Average	1d6	1-2 hours
Low	1-3	30-60 minutes

Side-Effects: It was quickly established by the military on Banshee that red is not physically addictive. That's the good news. The bad news is that it is psychologically addictive. Sykers often come to depend on it to boost their Strain so much that they feel they cannot function properly—or at all—without it. If your syker's like this, he can take a *hankerin'*. He suffers an additional -1 to all *blastin'* rolls whenever *hankerin'* penalties would come into play.



102

Fortunately, it's fairly difficult to develop a *hankerin'* for red. Provided a syker uses it no more than once a week, he generally does not become addicted to it at all. If he uses it once a day or more, the chances are much higher. The Marshal has rules for determining whether a syker becomes addicted to the stuff.

Zebra

Zebra was cooked up in a lab somewhere in the Confederacy in the late 1960s, but it eventually found its way into the hands of sykers everywhere.

Like amantol, it dulls the senses, making it a little harder to blast, but drastically reducing the effects of brainburn. Earthers ate the stuff like candy before using their *overkill* abilities in the Last War.

Effects: Zebra comes in a pill that lasts for 2d6 hours. During that time, rolls on the Brainburn Table are made at -4.

Side-Effects: Reduce the hero's *Cognition* and *Quickness* by -2 steps for this time.

Hardware

Sykers don't rely on their powers alone. In fact, the older ones—which is usually to say, the smarter and more clever ones—often learn to rely on their powers only secondarily. Their first line of attack is always a normal weapon, typically a firearm of some sort.

However, when it comes to sykers, "normal" isn't an entirely accurate term for their weapons. Some fire bullets and so forth, just like the typical soldier's weapons, but are enhanced by the sykers' own powers to make them deadlier and more accurate. A lot of syker weapons technology was lost during the Last War, but every now and then you run into a syker who still has some of it—and maybe one day someone might come across a hidden bunker or arsenal or two which escaped the ghost-rock bombs.

Banshee Stones

When the sykers on Banshee first encountered skinnies, they were amazed at the mysterious aliens' raw power. It wasn't until after the Red River campaign that they found out one of the secrets behind their abilities.

All the skinnies had these greenish-purplish crystals on thongs around their necks or mounted in headbands, tiaras, or other such jewelry. The sykers took samples of them and tested them and found out that this particular mineral—one the colonial geologists didn't even recognize—enhanced syker powers.

The geologists christened it "sykolite," but the sykers took to calling it "Banshee stone." They couldn't ever find any naturally occurring stones, but they took them off dead skinnies whenever they could. Some skinnies even wore necklaces with several Banshee stones, though there was no proof that carrying more than one offered any additional benefit. Incredibly, even with Banshee stones and red, the sykers of the Legion were never able to truly match the skinnies power for power. Only with the aid of thousands of heavily armed conventional troops and high-tech war machines were they able to drive them back into their hiding places in the mountains and jungles of Banshee.

Many Banshee sykers took their stones home with them. After all, most weren't too big, and their owners rarely took them off anyway. With Banshee effectively cut off from Earth for the foreseeable future, Banshee stones have become

far more valuable than diamonds or even ghost rock to sykers. On rare occasions, they are traded or given as gifts, but most sykers who have them hold onto them with a death grip.

Effect: Banshee stones are like little Strain batteries. They hold Strain that, once used, returns very slowly. And while sykers can't quite figure it out, using one makes them feel just a little—well—dirty. They can't explain why, and most don't let it stop them from doing so, but there's definitely a feeling that using a Banshee stone is just a little wrong somehow.

Banshee stones contain 2d6 points of Strain. It takes a whole day for a single point of Strain to return. If the stone's Strain is reduced to 0, it loses 1 Strain permanently.

Banshee stones are about the size of golf balls and are dark, speckled gray in color. When used, they exude a puff of dust and a moan like wind through a hollow tree.

Banshee sykers have legends about larger Banshee stones—ones so large they could not be easily moved. According to a few wild rumors by fleeing colonists, the skinnies used these in massive assaults on colonial fortifications.

Such a Banshee stone would be an asset beyond price to any syker who maintained a base of operations (the Jericho school, for example). However, so far as is widely known, no Legion syker ever actually saw such a stone, much less brought one back to Earth.



101

Books

There were a number of books written about sykers before the Last War. Most were top-secret, used only in government academies. A few, however, were written by hacks, sykers who managed to avoid former schooling and develop their powers on their own.

Below are a few examples of the books a syker might run across and what kind of information she might find inside. All of the official government books listed below contain all the powers listed in the *Hell on Earth* rulebook. Other powers (such as the new ones in this book) have a percent chance of being listed in a particular book. When a syker wants to learn a new power, simply roll 2d10 and read them as percentiles. (One die is the "tens" die and the other is the "ones" die. Read 00 as 100.)





Keep track of which powers are *not* in a particular book as the syker tries to learn a new one. Don't try to come up with the list of powers when the book is found.

The price a syker would pay for each is given at the end of the book's description.

A book can only be read once by a syker. Learning a power found in the book takes 2d6 hours and 5 Bounty Points as usual.

CSA Psychic Warrior Operations Manual: This book was used by the CSA Proving Ground in Texas. It's very thorough, and it has a 50% chance of having any desired power. (\$5,000)

Psychic Warrior Handbook, US Army: The US Army handbook deals less with powers than with Strain. It has a 25% chance of describing any particular power, but once read, it increases a syker's Strain by +1 permanently. (\$5,000)

The Book of Five Rings: Curiously, a syker who reads this ancient book learns to better coordinate his mind and spirit. Increase his *blazin'* by +1 immediately and for free. (\$3,500)

I Think, Therefore You Die: This strangely named book came out in the mid-1990s. Its author was later discovered to be the leader

of a dark cult dedicated to killing with the mind. It has a 25% chance of describing any biokinetic power that causes damage. At the Marshal's whim, particularly messy damage-causing powers have a 30% chance of being found within the pages of this gruesome tome. (\$2,000)

Fire! A young girl set fire to a number of homes in New England sometime in the early 1980s. Fifty years later, a psychologist realized the girl was a very talented but undiagnosed pyrokinetic. His book contains the girl's raw testimony at her hearing (and later execution) by the US Agency. A syker has a 25% chance of learning any pyrokinetic power from this book. (\$1,000)

Learning Machines

Just before the Last War ended, academies in both the North and the South successfully implemented a new machine that could teach a syker a specific power in minutes.

To use the arcade-sized machine, a syker inserts a dataslug coded with information and instructions for a particular power. Then he inserts a metal prong directly into his temple (taking 1 Wind) and waits. In just a few seconds, the power is downloaded into his brain, and he can begin using it. The best part is these powers cost only 1 Bounty Point! Consider it a perk for finding such a valuable piece of salvage, amigo.

There's only one catch. Learning machines are cutting-edge, prewar technology, and they weren't entirely perfected before the war began. When a character uses one, he must make an opposed *Spirit* roll versus the strength of the machine (determined by drawing a card). If the syker loses, read the difference as damage. Yowch!

Machine-Head

A few decades back, researchers found ways to translate syker's mental commands into recognizable electronic signals. After a few accidental electrocutions and subsequent improvements, a device called the "machine-head"—manufactured exclusively by Hellstromme Industries, of course—went into production.

This small box features a cerebral needle that plugs into the syker's temple and makes contact with the brain. It then funnels the syker's thoughts out through the datacord and into the machine-head unit, usually worn on the belt. A standard datajack runs from the box to any machine that accepts dataslugs.

Syker Tech

The syker can then control the machine as if he were its CPU, giving him almost instant access to its memory, data, and—most importantly—functions. A syker can, for instance, plug into the computer of a car to steer it like a race-car driver at top speed. More importantly, he can maneuver a military vehicle like a pro, all while operating its sensors and firing its weapons. He can also hijack a computer and steal secrets, disable the alarms in a building, or even fly a fighter even though he's never taken a flying lesson in his life.

In essence, the syker can control *any* function of a device that has a central processing unit and a dataport. That means it doesn't do him any good in a car with no electronics, or with a keypad lock that uses passcards instead of dataslugs. Assume the syker can produce any internal function automatically. If he needs to make a roll (such as *drivin'*, *flyin'*, and so forth), he uses his *blastin'* skill instead (which is usually much better for a syker).

The syker can also enable several functions each action at only a small penalty. If he wants to fire an automated gun and drive, he can. If a function requires a *blastin'* roll to operate, roll separately for each. Also, for each function enabled on the same action, the syker subtracts -1 from *all* his rolls that turn. A syker who takes control of an old military base's master computer, for example, could fire three different automated guns at -3 to each of his three *blastin'* rolls (used in place of *shootin'*).

Taking control of most electronic devices requires a Fair (5) *blastin'* roll, then 1 Strain for every 10 minutes of use. If the device has an AI, this is an opposed roll against its *Knowledge*.

PAW

The Psionic Amplification Weapon is basically a huge cannon that fires psionic energy at its target. The energy is collected via wires inserted into the syker's skull where it makes contact with the brain. From there the energy travels into a huge coil forged from Banshee stones—the only mineral known to have this capability. When enough energy is built up, the syker presses the trigger and fires the burst at a target.

The PAW's blast is entirely dependent on the syker's mental reserves. The more juice he puts into it, the more damage it does.

In order to use the PAW, a syker merely jacks in and points it at the target. Jacking in costs 1 Wind. A syker cannot recover Wind or Strain while hooked up to the machine.

Every point of Strain he cares to commit, up to the maximum available to him, is channeled through the gun, causing 1d10 damage per Strain point. Put in 12 points of Strain, and welcome to 12d10 damage, bucko.

Of course, the blast still has to hit. For this, the syker uses *shootin'* cannon. Do not use *artillery* with the PAW, as it is a direct-fire weapon.

The PAW is a field gun. It must be towed by a vehicle, as it weighs just over 400 pounds.

Spook Juice

Spook juice makes it easier to conduct energy from the Hunting Grounds. What a surprise, right? The *Wasted West* sourcebook has more detail on getting drunk off spook juice, but here are the basics.

When someone drinks spook juice (or any other alcoholic drink mixed with some form of ghost rock), he makes a Fair (5) *Vigor* roll. Each shot after the first adds +1 to the TN. If the roll is made, the character just keeps getting toasted (and quickly). After a number of shots equal to half the character's *Vigor* die type, his *Strength* and *Vigor* go up +1 step. Congratulations, your hero is now "buzzed"—hard!

If and when the roll is failed, he *really* gets toasted. The lush immediately takes 4d6 Wind and his *Nimbleness*, *Deftness*, and *Cognition* drop a step. This Wind is recovered at the rate of 1 per hour instead of one per minute. A character can double his recovery by drinking strong coffee or other sobering agents.

Don't make additional *Vigor* checks after the first one is failed. If the character keeps drinking, each shot now automatically causes 1d6 Wind but doesn't lower his Traits any further.

Anyone who drinks a decent amount of spook juice gains a limited ability to peer into the Hunting Grounds. Up to one hour after getting buzzed, the character sees a dim, glowing aura around anything supernatural, including Harrowed, sykers, or characters under the influence of something supernatural. Once, this fades, so do any other benefits.

Sykers and Spook Juice

When a syker is buzzed, it's easier to contact the Hunting Grounds. He adds +2 to his *blastin'* rolls for the next hour. It doesn't matter if he keeps drinking. He's already as open to the influences of the Hunting Grounds as he can get.

Syker Tech

TSAR

Pictures of sykers often show them carrying odd-looking assault rifles.

Superficially, these devices of destruction don't really look all that different from ordinary assault rifles. Inside the high-tech casing, however, that firearm is actually a TSAR: Telepathically Sensitive Assault Rifle.

The top part of the rifle is completely ordinary. It fires standard 5.56mm ammo from a 30-round magazine. See the table below for its statistics.

Below the weapon's standard barrel sits a gyrojet launcher. This is the real meat of the TSAR.

Manufactured exclusively by Heilstromme Industries, the TSAR uses the syker's incredible powers and the weapon's electronics to lock in on a target's brainwaves, and then fire a gyrojet round at it. The gyrojet heads directly for the target it was locked onto, zipping around corners or through even heavy cover to strike home. As you might imagine, this was a great weapon to use against skinnies, so almost every syker in the Legion was issued one.

To fire the gyrojet, the syker only has to point the gun at a chosen target for two actions (allowing the weapon's system to get a lock), make a Fair (5) *blastin'* roll, and—if successful—spend 1 Strain. The round then streaks to the target and automatically hits it in the head for 7d10 damage. (This includes the bonus dice for the head shot.)

The only chance a character has to avoid the shot is to play a dangerous game of chicken with the incoming round. (This, of course, assumes that the target knows he's being fired upon.) To do so, the character must make an Incredible (11) *dodge* roll (spending his highest card as usual with a vamoose).

The gyrojet works on Harrowed, but not other types of undead.

A syker must be plugged into the TSAR via a sharp prong attached to a retractable cord. The prong goes in through temple and actually makes contact with the brain. This hurts like Hell and causes 1 Wind. The syker cannot recover Wind or Strain while jacked in.

Both Earth and Banshee sykers used TSARs, but they were far more common in Faraway than they were on Earth.

Syker Tech

Item	Price	Effect
Amanitrol	\$100/dose	Allows syker to perform actions while concentrating.
Axor	\$100/dose	Adds +2 to syker's <i>blastin'</i> rolls.
Green bird of Heaven	\$50/dose	Doubles Strain recovery.
Red		
High-quality	\$200/dose	Adds +2d6 Strain for 1d4 hours.
Average-quality	\$100/dose	Adds +1d6 Strain for 1d6 hours.
Low-quality	\$50/dose	Adds +1d3 Strain for 1 hour.
Zebra	\$50/dose	Gives -4 on Brainburn Table rolls for 2d6 hours.
Banshee stone	\$1,000/Strain point	Functions as a recharging Strain battery. Very rare.
Spook juice	\$10/gallon	Adds +2 to <i>blastin'</i> rolls once the user's buzzed.
Learning machines	\$250,000+	Teaches new powers to sykers.
Dataslug for machine	\$5,000	Each slug contains one power.
PAW	\$100,000	Syker cannon. See stats below.
Books	See text	Teach sykers new skills and powers.
Machine-head	\$4,000	Allows syker to interface with machines.
TSAR	\$3,000	Syker assault rifle. See stats below.

Syker Weapons

Weapon	Ammo	Shots	Speed	ROF	Range	Damage	Cost
PAW	Juice	—	1	1	50	Xd10	4000
TSAR	5.56mm	30	1	9	10/20	3d8	\$1/round
	10mm Gyro	6	2	1	50 yards/level	7d10	\$100/gyro



Chapter Five: Syker Secrets

If you've gotten this far, pard, you'd better be a Marshal. As usual, this is where you find out the truth about the earlier sections of this book. Sit back, read on, and learn about all the deviltry you'll soon be inflicting on your posse.

Banshee

You have to wait for *Deadlands: Lost Colony* to find out more about Banshee, the strange events going on there, and how the skinnies get such awesome powers. We hope we've given the syker players in your posse enough information for now to get the feel of a brainburner who's supposedly fought in this alien environment. If they ever forget, just remind them that they probably hate authority, hate the skinnies more, and hate the apostates even more. They also feel a brotherhood with their fellow sykers, both because of the things that happened to them on Banshee, and the fact that most never had any other family.

The Apostates

The apostates are the bad seeds of the surviving Banshee sykers. War hardens and changes some people, and sometimes even makes them like doing the horrible things they have to do to survive. The apostates are that sort of veteran. They came to enjoy destroying others and shedding their blood with syker powers, and

are unwilling to promise never to do it to any given person. They feel nothing of the loyalty they once might have felt to other sykers. They answer only to themselves.

To a man, the apostates (of whom at least a dozen made it back to Earth alive) are powerful individuals. Their powers are honed by years of combat on Banshee and fueled by their unholy lust for destruction and chaos. Even other powerful sykers have difficulty coping with them. Here's what a typical apostate looks like.

Profile

Corporeal: D:3d10, N:3d8, S:3d6, Q:4d8, V:2d10
Climbin' 2d8, dodge 3d8, fightin' knife 2d8,
drivin' car 4d8, shootin' pistol 4d10, shootin'
rifle 4d10, sneak 3d8

Mental: C:3d10, K:3d12, M:3d8, Sm:3d8, Sp:3d8
Academia: occult 3d12, area knowledge: Weird
West 2d12, blastin' 6d12, language: English 2d12,
guts 3d8, overawe 3d8, search 3d10, survival:
desert 3d8

Wind: 18

Strain: 14

Edges: Arcane background: syker 3,
fortitude 1, the stare 1, steel-trap mind 4

Hindrances: Apostate -3, mean as a
rattler -2, stubborn -2, vengeful -3

Specialty: Varies

Powers: Various

Gear: TSAR assault rifle, a Banshee stone,
three full spare clips, and a large knife



Syker Secrets

The Unity Disaster

The *Unity* was attacked by some very strange creatures. None of the civilians, and only one of the Unforgotten Fifteen, made it off the ship. What later happened to that one survivor, and the secret of the creatures themselves, is something we're holding onto for another day.

But trust us, it's worth it. We haven't let you down so far have we?

The Unforgotten Fifteen

Not all of the sykers who stayed behind on the *Unity* did so for altruistic reasons. See, there were many treasures on board that ship: personal possessions, cash, and perhaps even priceless—and powerful—alien artifacts. Any one of these things might have been reason enough for a greedy syker to risk her life, but now they were all there together and unprotected.

Several of the Fifteen, of course, were true heroes making the ultimate sacrifice to save ungracious civilians, but a few were just greedy bastards looking to escape with some loot.

Again, the full story will be revealed as the tale of *Deadlands: Hell on Earth* rolls on.

Captain Lydia Mazzuchelli

The reports of Captain Mazzuchelli's death are exaggerated. Well, okay, a little exaggerated. She did, in fact, die. The biker gang mentioned in the main text caught her by surprise, beat her to a pulp, dragged her back to their hideout, and abused her until she died. But she didn't stay dead. She was too eaten up with rage to do that.

Two days later, she came back Harrowed, waking up by the side of the road where the gang had tossed her body.

Since then, she's been stalking the bikers, learning about her newfound powers, and planning gruesome revenge. Anyone who gets in her way or tries to protect the gang is likely to suffer the same fate.

Profile

Corporeal: D:3d8, N:3d6, S:2d6, Q:3d10, V:4d8
Climbin' 1d6, dodge 4d6, shootin': pistol, SMG, MG, rifle 4d8, sneak 5d6

Mental: C:2d10, K:3d12, M:3d10, Sm:3d8, Sp:4d10
Academia: occult 3d12, academia: military science 3d12, area knowledge 2d12, blazin' 6d12, leadership 5d10, scrutinize 2d10, search 3d10, survival: desert 3d8

Wind: 16

Strain: 13

Edges: Arcane background: syker 3, fortitude 1, steel-trap mind 5, tough as nails 1, "the voice" (commanding) 1

Hindrances: Night terrors -5, oath of *Unity* -1, pacifist -3, vengeful -3

Specialty: Telekinesis

Powers: Aztec surprise, brain blast, chameleon, detonate, fleshknit, hallucination, itchy-bitsy spider, psynergy, slow burn, telekinesis

Harrowed Powers: Spook 1, marked for death 1

Gear: SA Officer's Sidearm, 25 rounds of ammunition, and a Kevlar vest. (She's still looking for her TSAR rifle.)

The Wendigos

The Wendigos didn't know as much about the skinnies as Sergeant Mather and others thought. But that didn't stop OK Warfield from throwing them at Castle Rock anyway. That's why they took such high casualties. In fact, there would only be three Wendigos today if Warfield hadn't quickly reinforced the squad over the next few months with survivors of other decimated squads.

Wendigos also know something about red. Check out **Red Zombies** on page 102.



The Jericho Academy

Daniel Marin was a member of the Black Lightning squad back on Banshee. A devoted family man, he was devastated when he returned to Earth to discover that his wife, children, and other relatives had been slain by the ghost-rock fireball that reduced New York City to a big pile of rubble. Grief-stricken and without purpose in life, he drifted aimlessly across the Wasted West, not really sure if he wanted to live.

Then, one day, as he was passing through a small town, he found a group of "upstanding citizens" about to beat, rob, and kill a young bald man. Recognizing the young man as a syker, Marin rescued him and spirited him away from his attackers. He soon found out from the boy that while he had some psionic ability, it was raw and untrained. He didn't know as much as he really should to survive as a syker.

Marin took the boy under his wing and began training him. Before the wars, greenies had been identified quickly—often through genetic tests before they ever manifested powers—and sent to an academy. But the academies had gone up in ghost-rock mushroom clouds years ago. Marin realized there were plenty of other "greenies" out there who weren't as lucky as this kid. They'd be hounded, left to twist in the wind, or simply get themselves killed because of their own ignorance.

Suddenly he had a new purpose in life: the training of young new sykers. He and the kid wandered for a bit, looking for other new sykers and offering them a place in their group. Before too long Marin had five followers and was giving serious thought to trying to found an actual school.

When the group came over a hill in Nevada one day and saw the ruins of a couple of old military barracks, Marin knew he'd found a place to establish his school. Marin and the students constructed a crude defensive palisade around the compound with old cement posts and chunks of ruined buildings. It wasn't pretty, but it was enough to keep the mutants out.

Since then, the Jericho Academy, as Marin calls it, has grown. He put the word out to other Banshee vets, and they began sending new students his way. A couple of older sykers even came to help teach.

As the school's compound has expanded (and a couple of new buildings have been built by the students), the wall has been expanded and improved. Thanks to some judicious salvaging

and purchases, several heavy machine-guns were placed on the walls to help with the school's defense. Some threats can't be *brain blasted* away, after all.

At present, the academy has about two dozen students. The course of study is a minimum of a year, but it can often last longer. Marin hopes to extend and expand the curriculum as the school becomes more established and attracts more students.

Daniel Marin

Corporeal: D:3d8, N:2d8, S:2d8, Q:3d8, V:4d8
Climbin' 1d8, dodge 3d8, shootin' rifle 4d8, sneak 5d8

Mental: C:2d8, K:4d10, M:3d6, Sm:3d12, Sp:3d8
Academia: occult 3d10, academia: military science 3d10, area knowledge: Wasted West 2d10, blastin' 6d10, language: English 2d10, persuasion 5d6, scrutinize 2d8, search 2d8

Wind: 18

Strain: 11

Edges: Arcane background: syker 3, fortitude 1, steel-trap mind 3, tough as nails 1, "the voice" (soothing) 1

Hindrances: Night terrors -5, oath of *Unity* -1, pacifist -3

Specialty: Psionics

Powers: Brain blast, chameleon, fleshknit, hallucination, memory maker, manipulator, meat puppet, psynergy, telekinesis


Gear: SA Officer's Sidearm, 25 rounds of ammunition, and a Kevlar vest.

The Compound

There are four large buildings in the compound (in addition to the crude guard towers spaced irregularly around the wall): the dormitory (one of the Quonset huts), the classroom building (the other Quonset hut), a mess hall and kitchen, and a garage/workshop/storage shed for the academy's few vehicles and other equipment. In addition, there are a couple smaller buildings, such as the outhouse and Marin's private quarters.

What Marin doesn't know is that he's sitting on top of a treasure trove. The barracks he found were just the last surviving structures of an old United States top-secret military base. Buried underneath a few tons of rubble are labs where military experiments were conducted and advanced and new weapons developed. If he ever finds this out, he should have no trouble developing

Syker Secrets



and defending his academy. On the other hand, if someone else—say, General Throckmorton—finds out about it, that person might descend on the school with the intent to slaughter everyone there and recover the militech.

Marin's Staff

Daniel currently has five veteran sykers on his staff. You met both Sergeant Kristina Dupry and Sergeant Mather in Chapter One of this book.

Dupry teaches bio- and telekinesis. Mather specializes in brute force—*brain blasts* and the like—but he rarely teaches. His powers allow him to travel the deadly wastes and seek out greenies for the school. Though he doesn't tell Daniel about it, he also goes out of his way to hunt down any apostates he hears about.

Major Dundee was a Canadian intelligence officer. He "majored" in powers like *mind reader* and *tattletale*, which he used to great effect as an Earther in the Last War. He's a sneaky sort who always seems like he's up to something, keeps the door to his room locked, and is very private about his role in the war. All this bugs the curious Lieutenant Ivanova to no end.

Lieutenant Ivanova is Russian, and she served with the Star Swans on Banshee. Her speciality was seduction and assassination, something she doesn't talk much about. She concentrates on teaching powers like *predator* and *skinwalking* these days. She's in her early 40s, but still as beautiful as the Volga in summer.

Corporal McKenzie is a Canadian pyro who served with the Firewalkers. He's the smartass of the group. He uses toilet humor and jokes about violence to cover up his grief over the things he did on Banshee. When he gets drunk, he frequently tells whoever he's with the morbid details. The students never see this side of him. They know him as a wisecracking, savvy veteran, so he's more like a brother to them than any of the others.

The students are mostly orphans from all over. These kids have as many different backgrounds and personalities as you'd expect, though most of them are "troubled," to put it lightly.

Many of the students were recruited after they were thrown out of their communities when one of their powers went awry. (It's the easiest way to spot a budding syker.) They're all looking for family, and Marin and his crew are it.

Jericho

This small town is roughly five miles east of the school proper. There are about 400 souls there. The people like having such powerful sykers nearby, and they treat them and their students well. In return, the sykers have adopted the town, and all the raiders in the area know that the place is under their guard.

The Garden

One of the students' primary duties is to take care of the garden. There Marin and his crew grow red, as well as the ingredients for amanitrol and green bird. He doesn't really advertise the fact (it might draw too much unwanted trouble), but anyone who makes an Onerous (7) *streetwise* roll might find out that the academy sells the stuff.

The Learning Machine

Recently, Sergeant Mather came across a scavenger hauling a Gruntex 3000 learning machine with three dataslugs containing one power each. Mather traded for them, and now they're locked up tight at the school. We'll leave it to you to decide what the three powers are.

If your posse's syker earns Daniel's trust, he lets her use it for only \$500. He might even rent it out for free if the syker performs some valuable task for the school, such as recovering a lost student, picking up a suspected greenie, or recovering another dataslug or syker textbook.

How Green Is My Brain?

Some of you Marshals may be asking why there were no sykers in the Weird West. Good question. The truth is there were—sorta.

Greenies were what's known as *tempests* in the Weird West (see *Hucksters & Hexes*). Their powers were shaped by the perceptions of the time. The brain can only be made to channel energy from the Hunting Grounds in ways it can comprehend. Folks back in the Weird West had never heard of psychic powers, so tempests' powers resembled magical spells instead of "traditional" psychic powers. Once these abilities were researched and scientific theories were applied to them, they gradually mutated into "true" psychic abilities: syker powers.

Syker powers are now shaped by common comprehension of and belief in these psychic powers, so they don't look anything like hexes—and never will, unless the way of thinking about them changes.

Powers

Nightmare

When successfully used on a Harrowed, *nightmare* causes the hero to make a Dominion test. The Harrowed's roll is at -4 due to how this power amplifies his usual nightmares.

Peace of Mind

If used on a Harrowed, the manitou fights back. Roll its *Spirit* to resist the syker's *blastin'*. If the syker is merely successful, nothing happens. If he gets a raise, he cures whatever ailment he was trying to—or he can restore 1 point of Dominion to his undead friend.

Should the manitou win, it inflicts its *Spirit* on the syker as damage. Roll all the thing's *Spirit* dice together and add them, just like a firearm (not like a normal Trait or Aptitude check). If the manitou wants to take control, this is a good time for it to do so. It has to spend a chip as usual, but it gets +4 to its roll.

Sleepy-Bye

When successfully used on a Harrowed, *sleepy-bye* causes an instant Dominion test. This is in addition to making the dirt-napper nod off.

Syker Tech

Axor

Axor is, in fact, completely safe. The badge is just there to scare your posse, Marshal. Feel free to toss in an occasional minor effect (like a headache) to keep the heroes scared. Yeah, we know it's cruel, but we gotta have our fun too!

Green Bird of Heaven

Users of green bird must make a Fair (5) *Vigor* roll immediately after they stop using it. Failure means they develop a headache that ranges from annoying to severe. Roll 1d4. That's the penalty the migraine inflicts to all the hero's Trait and Aptitude rolls for the next 1d6 hours.

Banshee Stones

Unknown to sykers, Banshee stones aren't entirely mineral in nature. Sykolite is actually alive. How? That's one of our *Lost Colony* secrets (and a big key to the mystery of the skinnies!).

For now, all your syker needs to know is that the stone stores Strain like a battery and even regenerates it.

Using a Banshee stone feels a little "dirty" because the sykers are draining life force from something else. They might suspect this by the way it issues a very faint groan and a wisp of dust (actually life energy). Don't worry—the syker isn't doing anything evil—but you can let him worry about it from time to time by emphasizing the way the stone reacts when it's used.

Ordinary use of a Banshee stone doesn't kill it, but a syker who drains it to 0 actually reduces its total maximum Strain. When this happens, the stone shudders and groans louder than usual (though it's still barely above a whisper). This actually does kill some small portion of the stone's life force, hence the permanent reduction in Strain.

If the stone is ever reduced to 0 permanent Strain, it lets out one last, audible scream and goes inert forever. Nice paperweight.

There are ways to increase a Banshee stone's reserves too. But we can't tell you about that just yet. None of the sykers who returned from Banshee know either.



Syker Secrets

Red

It's a lot easier to become addicted to red than sykers think. Every time a syker uses it, the Marshal secretly makes a Foolproof (3) Vigor roll for him. Failure equals psychological addition. Furthermore, any time the syker goes bust on a *blastin'* roll while under the effects of red, the Marshal makes a Fair (5) Vigor roll. Again, failure leads to a red jones.

In either case, this is equivalent to a 3-point *hankerin'*. Once a syker's got this monkey on his back, he's in trouble. The addiction can be bought off with Bounty Points or corrected with the *peace of mind* power. As much fun as that's not, it's not even the real problem.

Red Zombies

Red is actually an insidious spiritual poison. Every time a syker uses it, he kills a tiny piece of his soul! What red really does is tap into his very soul and leech psychic energy from it, destroying some small part of it in the process.

Those who are addicted to red eat away at their own souls even faster. As they die, their skin turns slowly red—a dead giveaway to other sykers who have experienced red themselves.

Eventually, a syker who uses too much red consumes his soul in its entirety. At that point he dies and returns from the grave as a *red zombie*. Red zombies look more or less like normal walkin' dead, but their skin has a very distinctive reddish tinge—and they've got syker powers. Not the sort of things you want to run into out in the wastelands.

How long it takes for a red-using syker to become a red zombie is up to you, Marshal. It's not really important for extras (unless the posse finds out the truth and has to rush to save a friend), but it may be extremely crucial for sykers in the posse. Either way, you shouldn't arbitrarily turn posse sykers into red zombies without giving the players a chance to find out what the Hell (literally) is going on and how to reverse this insidious drug's effects.

The Wendigos

The Wendigos knew all about red, but were sworn to secrecy. Warfield didn't want the Legion to give the stuff up until the skinnies were defeated. The Wendigos kept their secret and hunted down anyone reportedly addicted before anyone else could see the horrible end.

Most still keep the secret, since red is hard to come by these days anyway. A few, however, have finally decided to speak up and warn their fellow sykers of the drug's dangers.

Red Zombie

Corporeal: D:3d8, N:3d10, S:3d8, Q:2d10, V:3d10
Climbin' 1d10, dodge 1d10, fightin' brawlin' 4d10,
shootin' rifle 4d8, sneak 3d10

Mental: C:3d8, K:2d10, M:4d10, Sm:3d6, Sp:3d8
Academia: occult 2d8, blastin' 4d10, overawe 4d10
Wind: 18

Strain: 10

Size: 6

Powers: Brain blast, brainwash, chameleon, empathic manipulation, juice, psychokinesis, skinwalker.

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Undead.

Syker Powers: Red zombies have whatever powers the Marshal needs them to. Since "combat" sykers need red most, their powers tend toward destruction and violence.

Gear: Red zombies can use gear just like living humans. However, they cannot use TSAR rifles or similar syker tech, including sykertropic drugs—except red, which eerily enough still works just fine.





Brainburn

Syker powers are strange and mysterious things. Not only do they involve the unfathomable power of the human brain, they mingle with that power the arcane energies of the Hunting Grounds!

And here's a secret only a few brainburners suspect: Their powers are not science-fiction psionics. They're actually manifestations of the same powers used by hucksters, mad scientists, witches, monsters, and any other being that channels arcane energy from the Hunting Grounds.

All those different spellcasters use their incredible abilities in ways that are familiar or make sense to them. Sykers came from a mix of huckster abilities and Far Eastern meditation. Thus they manifested "psychic powers." They think the power is channeled through their brains, so it is. They also think in terms of biokinesis, psionics, pyrokinesis, sykokinesis, and telekinesis, so that's how their powers are formed. And if a desired ability doesn't fit into the frame years of training and thousands of case-studies have constructed, they just can't do them—at least until there's some unique, phenomenal, well-known breakthrough that changes the way they "think" (pun intended).

Sykers draw their power by opening a channel to the Hunting Grounds and focusing it through their minds. Sometimes they screw up and draw too much or too little energy, can't release it properly, or can't open the channel in the first place. This is what happens when a syker goes bust. The Brainburn Table gives you the game effects of these deadly slipups.

Another way to suffer brainburn is for a syker to "redline" his abilities. The harder he pushes, and the more power he tries to draw, the greater the chance to suffer brainburn. That's what happens when characters fail their *Vigor* or *Spirit* rolls when using *fortitude*, *overkill*, or a greenie's ability to pump more juice into a power for effect.

The Manitou's Revenge

The manitous are jealous their role in granting magical powers to greedy humans has all but vanished in the last 200 years. Many of these creatures lurk in the Hunting Grounds, waiting to see the lightning flash of a syker power in use. And if a manitou happens to see a syker screw up, it jumps in and make things much, much worse.

Flaws

Manitous can increase the damage, Wind, or Strain loss—those things are already reflected in the more severe results on the Brainburn Table—but their favorite trick is to taint a power with an additional, unintended effect. These are called "flaws."

Flaws for each and every power included in this book are detailed on the following pages. If the Brainburn Table refers you to a power's particular flaw, check this section. Of course, you can always make up a new flaw if ours doesn't make sense in a particular situation, or if you just have a particularly devilish idea for one of your own. Just remember to think like a manitou. Be as devious as you want.

The Nasty Part

Flaws assume the power goes off and has some unintended effect. That's okay if the flaw occurred because the syker used *overkill* or the greenie special ability and succeeded, but what if he failed his *blastin'* roll too, or got brainburn because he went bust on a regular *blastin'* roll?

That's why we included the entry "Juice Pig" on the Brainburn Table. Tell your player that's the result he got and let him make a new *blastin'* roll. He can even spend chips on the roll if he wants.

If the syker character's new roll fails, whether because he goes bust or the new target successfully resists, the power simply fails. Tell the player what almost happened and watch him sweat.

If the roll succeeds, it works against the hapless hero by applying his new *blastin'* total to the flaw effect. Very often, the flaw turns the power against the syker or his friends. If it is a resisted power, have the new target make his roll *after* the brainburner—that way you might trick the syker character into burning some chips on the roll.

That's why it's important to get the player to make the second roll. The power has to succeed, or it's not going to be able to have any effect on the new target.

It's especially funny to watch a syker work real hard at a massive *brain bomb* only to have his buddy's head explode instead of the villain he thought he was dueling with.

Well, funny for you anyway—if your sense of humor runs to the sick side.





Syker Secrets

Individual Power Flaws

Arson

If the syker goes bust on his *blastin'* roll, the fireball explodes at ground zero—right where he is, in other words. He and anyone near him take the damage. Substitute this result for the standard Brainburn Table roll.

Aztec Surprise

Roll a die. On an odd result, the syker misdirects his attack and uses the power on a friend (if one's in range). On an even result (or if there are no other targets), he uses the power on himself.

Backwash

The syker takes damage as usual for losing the contest, and so does the host.

Blindside

The syker goes blind instead.

Body Control

The syker pushes his body too far. Treat whatever bonus he was shooting for as a penalty. For breath control, the syker suffers a shortness of breath and loses 1d6 Wind.

Bogus

For the next 1d6 hours, every important thing the syker says sounds like a preposterous lie.

Booneripping

Roll a die. On an odd result, the syker misdirects his attack and uses the power on a friend (if one's in range). On an even result (or if there are no other targets), he uses the power on himself.

Brain Blast

The syker flinches just before releasing the blast, targeting a random friend instead. If there are no friends, it hits something combustible. (Yee-haa!) Failing that, it hits any other random target in range.

Brain Bomb

Secretly choose a random ally (or bad guy if there are no friends in range). The syker misdirects his attack and uses the power on that character. The syker doesn't know this, however, so make the ally's Vigor rolls for him while pretending it's for the

targeted bad guy. The ally can make a Fair (5) Smarts roll to figure out that his bald friend straining like he's passing a stone and his own sudden headache are related for the player might simply realize it on his own. If he communicates that, the syker must make one more roll before stopping. Hopefully, that's enough to keep him from detonating his friend's head.

Brain Slammer

The attack races around the area, affecting every single human brain in range, including the syker and his companions, for 2d6 damage each!

Chain Brain

The more people there are in the chain, the greater the feedback the syker suffers when he screws up. If the syker ever goes bust on any *blastin'* roll involved in *chain brain*, the Marshal should roll once on the Brainburn Table for each victim in the chain at that point.

Chameleon

The syker only thinks he's hiding. This can be a painful mistake to make, and the people he's hiding from are sure to alert him to his error.

Detonate

If the syker is carrying anything highly explosive (more than bullets), one of the items explodes.

If not, roll a die. On an odd result, one of his bullets explodes just as described under *detonate*. On an even roll, the syker detonates the biggest bullet (or missile, or rocket, etc.) in range and creates a sykokinetic funnel that directs the bullet right to him! It hits the poor brainburner automatically.

Fireproof

The syker thinks he's immune to fire damage, but in fact he's just made himself extra flammable. When he touches or is hit with flame, he takes double damage from it. This effect lasts as long as the power would if it worked normally—five minutes per *blastin'* level—and cannot be shut off until then. Hope you like your sykers extra crispy!

Fleshknit

A flawed *fleshknit* roll worsens the injury by 1 Wound Level and prevents it from being healed with *fleshknit* at all. Better break out some bandages, partner. The poor scav's got to heal the old-fashioned way.

Syker Secrets



Force Field

Ooh. This one's nasty. The field actually adds energy to incoming attacks. Whenever the hero is hit, the damage is increased by the amount of the field's "protection."

Gift

Gift is fraught with peril for the recipient of the syker power. The theories about latent syker potential are not entirely correct. While it's true that something of the sort exists, only in those who can actually become full-blown sykers is the genetic potential strong enough for the brain to be able to handle the strain of using syker powers with relative safety. In short—if the character being given the *gift* doesn't have the *arcane background Edge* (of any kind), he suffers the effects listed below.

The recipient can't know this, but when he uses the power, he automatically suffers brainburn.

Hallucination

If you ever needed a reminder that manitous sometimes jump into the syker's energy stream, this is it.

The *hallucination* actually becomes real! The first thing the syker describes manifests in the flesh, then the power instantly ceases, meaning the syker has no control over the hallucination after the initial creation. The illusion itself is real forever! If the syker made an illusion of a bloodwolf, it's real. If he made himself look like a girl, he'd better scavenge some bras.

Heartstopper

Roll a die. On an odd result, the syker misdirects his attack and uses the power on a friend (if one's in range). On an even result (or if there are no other targets), he uses the power on himself.

Here, Doggie!

The animal(s) turn feral and attack. They don't stop until they're dead (or their new chew toy stops fighting back).

Itsy-Bitsy Spider

The power works for only 1d4 minutes, then cuts out automatically. (The syker cannot maintain it.) Hope he wasn't too high.



Syker Secrets

Juice

The syker takes that much Strain from the recipient and promptly loses it to the void. It's gone, but the recipient can recover it normally.

Lunacy

The syker suffers the *lunacy* Roll randomly (they're numbered on the Brainburn Table) or choose the character's poison.

Manipulator

The target swings wildly in the opposite direction. If the syker was trying to calm someone, for instance, it sends her into a blind rage.

Meat Puppet

The syker actually becomes the target's *meat puppet* for 2d6 minutes. The target knows this fact instantly. (Perhaps a little manitou whispered it in his ear.)

Memory Maker

The syker paints the memory in his own mind. Worse, he also forgets he just did it.

Medic

Of course it actually causes an additional wound per success on the new roll.

Mental Armor

The armor acts as a psychic intensifier instead. Attacks the power normally would block have their damage increased by the amount of armor the power should have provided. The syker also subtracts his usual bonus from his resistance rolls.

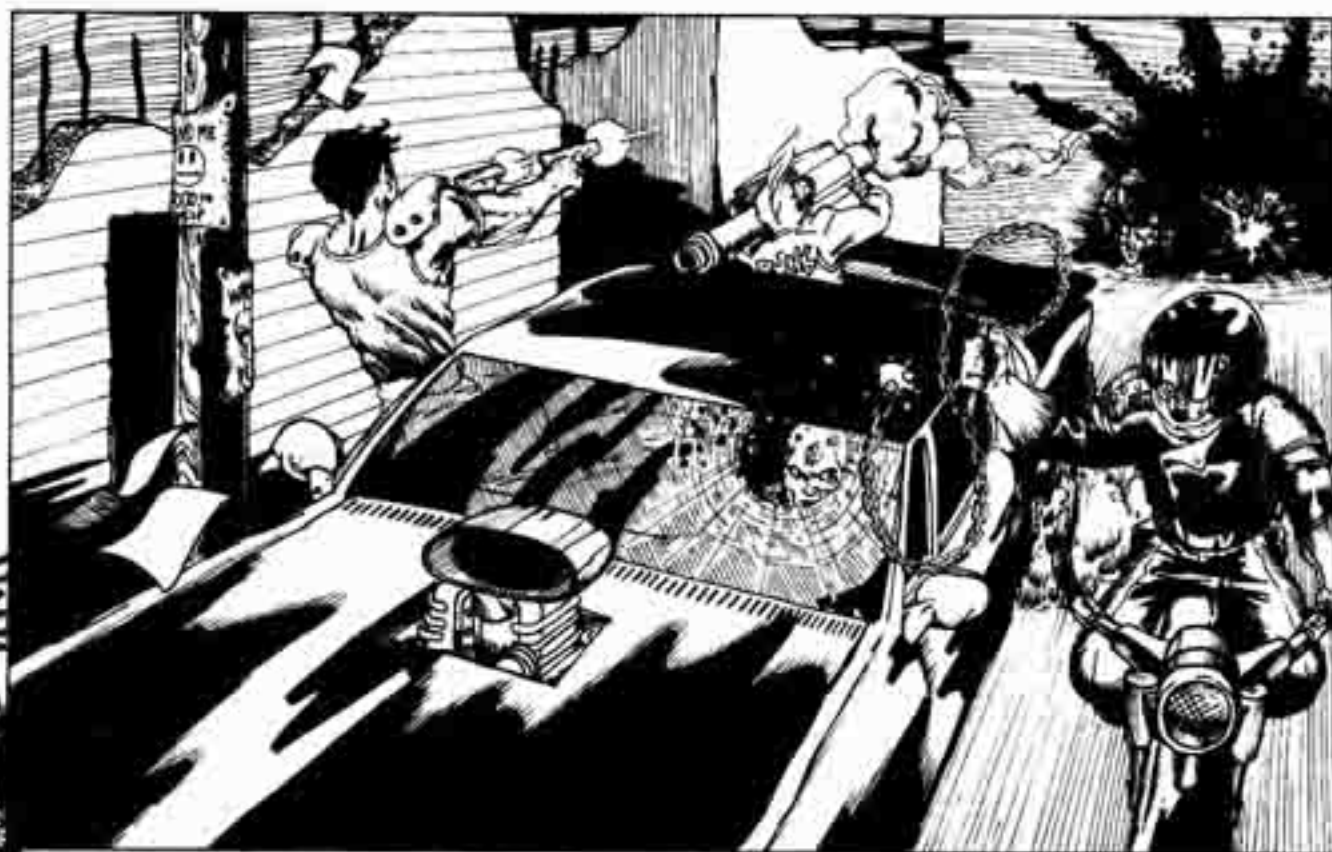
Mindrider

The target gets to see and hear through the syker's eyes.

Mindwipe

The syker accidentally wipes some portion of someone else's mind. Roll a die. On an odd result, one of the syker's friends is affected (if one's in range). On an even result (or if there are no other targets), the syker is affected.

The target loses -1 level in whatever Aptitude he used last (or a random one if the Marshal isn't sure what that would be). For the syker, this is his *blastin'*.



Syker Secrets

Mind Reader

The target reads every thought in the syker's head for the duration of the power.

Mind Scan

The syker beams out a telepathic message telling his targets exactly where he is.

Mind Transference

This power is more dangerous than its description leads sykers to believe. Roll a die. On an odd roll, the syker's brain becomes discorporeal. This means the syker's mind has been temporarily shunted out of his head and into the Hunting Grounds. It takes him 4d4 days (reroll Aces) to find his way back.

On an even roll, the swap is permanent.

Negator

The syker amplifies the enemy power instead. Roll a Fair (5) *blastin'* roll for the syker, and if he gets any raises, they are applied to the enemy's effect.

Nightmare

The victim suffers his nightmare as usual—the manitous don't want to pass that up—but they're also waiting for the syker the next time he beds down. He's affected by the power the next time he goes to sleep.

One-Man Army

The syker's brain can't properly process the dupes. They look like bad graphics on a slow computer. He looks normal. Guess who gets shot at?

"The Paralyzer"

Roll a die. On an odd result, the syker misdirects his attack and uses the power on a friend (if one's in range). On an even result (or if there are no other targets), he uses the power on himself.

Peace of Mind

Roll a die. On an odd result, the patient's insanity is made far worse than it already is. The Marshal must figure out exactly what this means, but we're talking rubber rooms and straitjackets, friend.

On an even result, the syker picks up the victim's disorder (whatever he was trying to heal). If the victim was Harrowed, the brainer becomes psychotic (the personality of the manitou).

Predator

As with *chameleon*, the syker only thinks he's invisible.

Psychic Link

The power works normally for 1d10 minutes. Then the manitou gets involved. For best effect, separate any players whose characters are using this power. Then let them tell you, the Marshal, what they're saying to the others. The manitou can then twist those words however it wants. It can say whatever it wants, when it wants, as well as twisting real mental messages.

Psynergy

Every syker in the chain suffers a tremendous buildup of raw, supernatural energy. The outermost sykers take 2d6 damage to the head. The next two sykers inward (toward the controller) take 2d6+1 damage, the next two take 2d6+2, and so on.

Purge

The syker actually hastens the conditions. Halve the effect time of the pathogen.

Pyro

The fire goes wildly out of control. Roll deviation as if for a grenade 2d6 times. That many fires erupt. They don't move after that unless they spread normally. The syker cannot control them without a second use of *pyro*, in which case he extinguish one per action.

Shh!

The target becomes twice as loud.

Silence

One minute after he enables the power, the syker becomes twice as loud.

Skinwalker

The syker only thinks he looks like someone else. Even if he looks in a mirror, he sees himself as his target. To others, however, he looks completely normal.

Sleepy-Bye

Roll a die. On an odd result, the syker misdirects his attack and uses the power on a friend (if one's in range). On an even result (or if there are no other targets), he uses the power on himself.



Syker Secrets



Slow Burn

The blast builds up as usual, but just as the syker is about to release it, it goes astray. It hits something or someone else with its full intensity. Randomly determine a target for the attack. Friends are first priority. If there are no friends in range, the syker fries a bystander.

Sturm und Drang

The syker gives all his remaining "real" Strain to the opponent. The recipient keeps the Strain until he uses it.

Tattletale

The opponent isn't going to say a thing. In fact, he *can't*. Consider him under the *shh!* power for the duration of the *tattletale* ability. Of course, the syker may not know why his subject won't talk, meaning he's beating up the poor schmuck for nothing.

Telekinetic Storm

The storm erupts around the syker, and it even follows him around for the power's duration! It moves at Pace 6, meaning he might be able to outrun it if he's fast enough.

Telekinesis

Whatever the syker was lifting, he draws directly to him at great speed—so fast in fact, that it hits him in the head. The damage of the attack is the power's strength (the syker's *Spirit* plus any raises). Most objects act as clubs, but if the syker was whipping a lawn mower around like pinwheel, he's in for a whole new world of hurt.

Third Eye

The syker goes blind for the duration of the power. While blind, he can only use powers with a range of "self" or "touch."

Trance

The Marshal has two options if a syker goes bust on his *blastin'* roll for this power. The easy way out is just to say he doesn't enter a *trance* for some reason. He's not able to focus his mind properly or what have you.

The far more wicked (and thus appealing) option is for the syker not to wake up when he wants to. He might go on "sleeping" for days or even years beyond when he expected to come out of the *trance*. He's due for a rude awakening!

Syker Secrets

Brainburn

1d20 Effect

- 1-4 **Brain Strain:** The syker can't seem to make contact with the Hunting Grounds. The effort tires him tremendously however. He suffers 3d6 Wind.
- 5-6 **Juice Pig:** Most unexpected. The syker makes the power work, but for whatever reason, he discovers he needs more juice. He gets to try to use the power again (and in fact, he must). If it is a resisted roll, the target rolls again as well. If the syker fails at this second *blastin'* roll, nothing happens (even on a bust).
If he succeeds, the power works, but it requires 50% more Strain (round up). If the syker doesn't have the Strain to spend, the power works anyway, but he takes 1d4 damage to the head for every point of Strain over what was available. The brainburner can use any special abilities (such as *fortitude*) to provide the juice if he needs to (though that may send him to the Brainburn Table once again).
- 7-8 **Reverse Polarity:** The syker loses concentration and somehow reverses the flow of energy to the Hunting Grounds. He loses 2d6 Wind and 1d6 Strain. If his Strain total is reduced below 0 by this roll, the syker takes 1d4 damage to his head for every point of Strain he comes up short.
- 9-12 **Flaw:** The power works, but not quite as the syker intended. Every syker power has a specific flaw described on pages 103-107. The Marshal can use this flaw or make up one of her own that fits the unfortunate syker's particular situation.
- 13-14 **Brainburn:** The syker's mind feels like it's on fire as an overload of energy from the Hunting Grounds is trapped in his head and cannot channel out. Draw one card. Use

the Traits and Coordinations Table from the *Deadlands: Hell on Earth* rulebook to determine the damage to the syker's head area. (Do not add "bonus dice" for the head, by the way.)

- 17-19 **Insanity:** The syker opens the channels to the Hunting Grounds and, by accident, stares into the very depths of Hell. Part of the syker's very soul is forever changed by the weird effects, and he goes just a little insane. The Marshal can make something up or simply roll on the subtable below. The descriptions of these mental maladies can be found on page 64.

1d6	Insanity
1	Delusion
2	Depression
3	Paranoia
4	Phobia
5	Psychosis
6	Neurosis

- 20+ **Melonhead:** This is the mother of all brainburn. Supernatural energy from the Hunting Grounds flows into the syker's head, but the brainburner screws up the release. Bad.

The syker makes an opposed roll against a "skill" determined by a draw of the cards (as in **Brainburn**). Keep the total secret, Marshal, and let the syker spend any chips he wants to before you reveal the total. If the hero wins, he releases the power as if it had 5 raises over the opponent or TN (whichever is higher).

If he loses, the power races around inside his noggin for 1 entire round (five seconds) before exploding his head like a grenade in a melon. The syker is dead forever, and the shrapnel from his obliterated cranium causes 5d4 damage to everyone within a 5-yard Burst Radius.