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MODERN KNIGHTS

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CHARACTER CREATION

INTRODUCTION

Creating a Modern Knights character is basically a three-tiered process. First comes the Concept, the player's overall idea of what the character should be. Next the raw attributes of Traits, Scale, Hook and Effects are determined, either from the Concept or randomly. Finally, the raw attributes will determine the character's Wounds and along with the Concept guide in choosing Combat Abilities and Noncombat Abilities for the character. Thus, the character creation section of the rules is laid out in these three layers.

First the idea of the character's Concept is outlined and advice given on making a team of characters fit together.

Second the rules for Traits, Scale, Hooks and Effects are presented. Each subsection will give guidelines for how many of each a character should have. Another raw attribute, Body Type, is minor and will be covered under Wounds.

Finally, the largest section will cover the assignment of Wounds to a character and the various Abilities the character can have. A more detailed treatment will be given to Combat Abilities than Noncombat Abilities, due to the need for balance in combat. The Abilities section will also include rules for Magic, Devices and the use of Speed to recover from failures as well as optional rules on creation of the potentially powerful power-mimicking characters.

See Appendix B at the end of the rulebook for definitions of various game terms.

CHARACTER CONCEPT

The single most important part of a character is the Concept, the overall idea of what the character is like. The Concept is independent of mechanics and should be used as a guide to how the mechanics are applied to creating the character. The Concept should rarely, if ever, be subordinate to the statistics on the character sheet. If the Concept cannot be translated into these rules, the Referee should work with the player to bend the rules, provided the Concept is a good one.

The goal of roleplaying is to create a well-made character and play it well, not simply to amass power (that's rollplaying). Thus the Concept need not be very powerful, and it can bypass advantageous rules loopholes without being unplayable. It is recommended that if you have a player who is a notorious rules lawyer... or an entire group of them... that the Referee make all the characters at first. Simply solicit Concepts from the players and work them into the mechanics. This is also useful in cases where you want to start play right away without spending the first session writing up character sheets. Of course, regardless of who creates the characters, the Referee will want to make sure all the Concepts work well together and in his campaign. This isn't to say they all need to be the same, or that they all need to fit the mold of the campaign. Rather, both the characters and the campaign should be worked together (if possible) to fit. Obviously, if a player comes into the campaign late and wants a character that just can't fit into the campaign at all, it'll be hard to change the gameworld at that stage and a better idea to change the Concept.

MISFIT CONCEPTS

It's virtually guaranteed that at least one player in any group will come up with a Concept that causes trouble. Usually it will be a simple matter of the Concept being from a slightly different subgenre than the rest of the group, such as a dark vigilante type in a group of four-color heroes. When that happens, the Referee should work with the player(s) in question and perhaps modify his own plans a bit so that everything fits together reasonably well. An example of doing this is provided below.

However, sometimes a Concept comes along that doesn't work well for rules mechanics reasons. Modern Knights attempts to model as wide a variety of characters as possible, but there will still be ones it can't handle. Such badly-fitting characters, or misfits, fall into three main categories: too powerful, too weak, too weird. Each type needs to be handled in a different way.
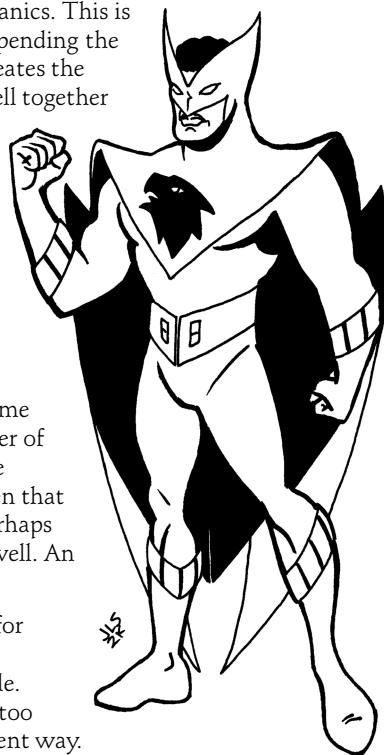
Too Powerful: This generally means too much raw power, but can also be due to a Concept that is so detailed that the standard starting allotment of powers isn't enough to craft it. This is especially true when converting old favorites from other gaming systems, more so when the system is a random-roll generation game. A Concept that is all over the place thematically can require more Abilities than starting characters get in Modern Knights. Most of the time, the player can be convinced to tighten up the Concept and cut out extraneous Abilities. If the player is too attached to the exact Concept, the Referee should suggest the player create a new Concept rather than try to squeeze a treasured character into a too-tight mold. Otherwise, the character can be defined as being at an earlier stage in his career, with less control over his abilities and less specialized applications figured out. The original overpowered Concept can be a goal to shoot for in advancement.

Example: The Controller is an old character rolled up on a random system game that a player wants to bring into his Modern Knights campaign. The Controller has control over gravity, electromagnetism, nuclear forces, weather and his own size. After including the various tricks and stunts the character could do in the old days, the player finds he's used up 18 slots. The Referee suggests tightening up the concept into control of the Four Fundamental Forces of nature: Gravity, Electromagnetism and the Strong and Weak Nuclear Forces. After chopping out the Abilities associated with growth, shrinking and weather control, The Controller is down under 12 slots and has a few slots open to flesh out his remaining powers.

When the Concept simply has too much raw power, though, the Referee should be more firm in toning it down. A player who games for the power and nothing else can ruin the enjoyment of other players, and if the power-gamer in question can't be talked into a more reasonable character, it's perhaps better to not include that player.

Too Weak: Modern Knights tries to balance things so that all characters in a group are on a roughly equal footing. While the comics can have a group with members of wildly varying power levels and still tell a good story, it's much harder to pull that off in a gaming group. Hence, while a low-power character might be attractive in a story, it's not always the best of ideas in a Roleplaying session. The low-power character either is totally left in the dust, or dominates noncombat situations thanks to all the abilities he's been given to compensate for lack of combat power. Players should be reminded of this and convinced to bring their power levels up to match the rest of the group's (see the sample Concepts below for more on this). Still, it's possible that a player will come up with a Concept that is powerful enough but can't use up all his Ability slots. The easiest example of this is the straightforward strongman character who just hits people really hard. A few Attack Abilities, some Armor, maybe Dodge and Range, and you're pretty much done, with several empty slots to fill. Similarly, simpler concepts may not always have a Secondary Effect Group (see Effects, below). The easiest option short of modifying the Concept to allow more complexity is to just leave the slots (and Effects) blank for now. This is especially useful with beginning players. Any time the character does something which could reasonably give him a new Combat Ability (such as training with a Kung Fu master or figuring out how to use his energy blasts to confuse foes) then the slot can be filled. Be careful in giving out these powers, though, lest they be used as a deus ex machina in early sessions. At most, one or two Abilities should be filled each game session. Blank Effects can be filled in at a later time as well, but the player should have a really good reason for the new Effect.

Example: BIFF (Bionically Interfaced Freedom Fighter) is a really strong guy who hits people. That's it. BIFF has a Primary Effect of Physical and manages to use up 7 slots before running out of ideas. Still, he's easily tough enough to make it in combat, so the Referee lets him leave the Secondary Effect Group and the other five slots blank. Later on during play, BIFF gets one of his fingers broken off and discovers his entire left arm is a sophisticated weapons system (he doesn't know his origins, you see). He can only get the lasers to work right now, but the techmonger in the team says he should also be able to use electrical and magnetic attacks. This gives BIFF the Secondary Effect Group of Electromagnetic Energy and fills one of his blank slots with Attack: Light.

Alternately, if the player's certain that the character really should only have these few Abilities and no more, then allow more slots to be spent on increasing rolls with the Abilities. Try to make sure it's spread around evenly, though… letting a starting character have Attack +4 is a bad idea.

Too Weird: Some powers are just too strange and rare to be simulated well by any balanced system, and rely on good writers to make them work well in the comics. Most of the more unusual powers are Noncombat, and hence wouldn't pose much of a problem in Modern Knights. But those that are Combat Abilities need to be worked around.

Sometimes it will be necessary to create a new Ability for the Concept to work (see later in the rules for suggestions on doing this). But usually a little creativity can fit the power into the Abilities available.

Example: Chance's main (and only real) power is luck. Insanely good luck of the type which makes you suspect he's got invisible pals around helping him out. And while Speed Points can simulate part of this luck, they can't handle probability-mangling events like pianos falling out of passing planes onto opponents. One option for simulating this is to use the Magic rules and treat his luck effects as "favors" of random chance. But this gives him limited combat endurance, since there's only so many times he can "push his luck" using Magic Favors. So Chance takes Dodge to simulate various events that make him harder to hit, like that pigeon landing on the villain's gun at the wrong moment and throwing off the shot. Then he convinces the Referee to give him a Secondary Effect Group of "Luck Effects." Any Effect is possible in this Group if Chance's player can describe how it happens. The easiest Effect is Physical: things fall on the opponent. A wall socket shorting out at the wrong moment could be an Electrical Attack. And so forth. Chance then buys a Group Effect Attack to use this sort of event in combat.

If the Concept takes too many Abilities to properly simulate, it may be necessary to come up with another Concept. Just remember, not all characters in the comics would make good roleplaying game characters, so don't be too disheartened if you can't transfer your favorite hero or villain into Modern Knights rules.

Finally, if the Referee thinks a particular Concept is really good, but no amount of work can make it fit into the mechanics, then change the mechanics to make it work. A good Concept is more important than point-mongering and dice-rolling... if you have to break a few rules to make it work, go for it. If it takes at least 15 slots to make a great concept work, then let the player have 15 slots to start with, just charge it against future advancement. If the character is a bit on the weak side but seems playable, let him play. And if the power is too weird to fit the current list of Abilities, make up a new one. The important point is to have fun and tell a story... not make the books balance.

SAMPLE CONCEPTS

Here's an example of a group of Concepts and a Referee's intended gameworld, and how they can be made to work together.

Dave's the Referee, and wants to run a campaign set in the current year in a major US city. He has a few major villains lined up, and has decided that while the government may not always be friendly to the players, it's not outright evil or out to get them.

Ben likes playing obsessed vigilantes fighting a corrupt establishment (he plays a lot of cyberpunk-type games). His Concept is of a brilliant gadgeteer who spends a lot of his time breaking into government "Black Labs" and foiling their vile plans.

Chris reads a lot of "gothic" comics and wants a shadowy manifestation of angst that is really powerful and has lots of magical abilities but rarely interferes overtly.

Sarah hasn't read comics since she was a kid, but still likes the idea of the pure and noble hero. Her Concept is for a patriotic avenger who's supported by the government and smashes evil with her strong right arm and her blazing sword of truth.

Andrew is a real manga fan and really wants to play a hyperkinetic martial artist who is part of a mystical race that once ruled the Earth and may try again in the near future. His character has rejected his heritage and fights to stop his people from destroying humanity with his psychopowers and martial arts.

Obviously, just throwing these four together will result in a major mess. Not only are all the characters apparently different power levels (Ben's is Paranormal, Sarah's and Andrew's are Supernormal, Chris's is Cosmic: see the Scale section for explanation of what these terms mean) but they all have conflicting worldviews... and none really fit with the background Dave wants. Time to work with the players on altering some details.

Dave makes some changes first. He decides that one of his pre-planned villains has a secret identity that is high up in the US government structure and who uses federal resources for his own plans. He also establishes a superhero team from the 1970s which beat back a demonic invasion at terrible cost. No real changes are needed for Andrew's character, but Dave decides the character's race is still building strength right now. He may later link this race to the 1970s invasion, or leave that a red herring. Now he goes to the players with his suggestions.

To Ben, he suggests that the character is mainly after this one guy (but may not know yet of the guy's supervillain sideline), not the whole government, and that Ben's character was experimented on by the guy's minions in some kind of super soldier project. Ben likes the idea of having a specific focus, plus it brings his character up to Supernormal level.

To Chris, he pitches the idea that his character was part of that 1970s team and was one of only two survivors (being Cosmic). In fighting off the invasion, he lost most of his power and was cut off from his home reality. Chris thinks it sounds a little hokey, but agrees to go with it, dropping the power level. In addition, the character now has a little more reason to want to take action with the team... if he's going to be stuck in this reality, he has more of a stake in keeping it in shape.

Next, Sarah is told that her character is the daughter of another of the 1970s heroes, inheriting her father's strength and his sword, but working as a free agent after a bad experience with the government (perhaps directly related to Ben's character's nemesis). She was raised on the old ideals, and is still very "four color" in nature, but she's not totally out of place.

Finally, Andrew is told that it is not yet time for his character to take up arms against his people, that right now he simply seeks to hone his skills against whatever evil he can find. He stumbled across Ben's character by accident and after they stopped trying to kill each other, the two became occasional partners. Andrew is also asked to tone down his character a little bit for the time being, give him a little common sense (the original Concept would charge into any battle without thought).

Thus, four very different characters are tied together with reasonable excuses to team up (Ben and Sarah share a common nemesis, Chris's character feels somewhat fatherly towards Sarah's character, Ben's and Andrew's characters are buddies, Chris's character might be able to help Andrew's in the use of his psychopowers) and they all fit into the world reasonably well. As the campaign progresses, there may be even more links established between the characters... perhaps Ben's nemesis is trying to summon back the demons that were repelled in the 1970s or Ben's character turns out to be a half-breed of Andrew's character's race (explaining why the supersoldier process worked on him and not on any of the other subjects). Once the Concepts are in place, there are lots of possibilities.

Another thing to consider is what bases are covered by the team. In this example, all the major bases (hand combat, ranged combat, magickal lore, intrusion skills, etc.) are pretty much covered. In less well-rounded teams (such as those composed of all mages or all martial artists) the Referee may ask one player (usually an experienced one) to change his Concept to fill any gaps in the team's abilities.

Now, not everyone will have a Concept coming into the game. Some players may need some inspiration from the dice. Thus, in the Hooks, Traits and Effects sections there will be random tables for determining these attributes. However, the player should develop a Concept before moving on to choosing combat abilities for his character, and must have a Concept to fit the character's noncombat abilities into.

Villain Concepts

While there's a strong bias in the "Superhero RPG" genre towards heroic characters, a bias included in the name itself, Modern Knights does not restrict players to heroes. Of course, it's a good idea if all the players have characters on the same side of the conflict, which will tend to make villainous groups rare (since you have to get everyone in agreement to play the baddies).

The two main differences in making a villain character are in the Hook (see below) and in that villains will tend to have cruel and unusual powers more often than heroes. Sucking someone's lifeforce away is more a bad guy's racket. Advancement will also work slightly differently, since villains strive for different goals, but there is no rule that says the villains must lose (just make sure they lose when they're trying to destroy the world, though, unless you're willing to start a new game).

The rules will focus on the superheroes more than the supervillains, but the darker side will not be totally ignored.

RAW ATTRIBUTES

TRAITS

Traits are the raw potential a character is made of, either by birth or by "origin story." Characters rarely ever add new Traits, although they can develop the Traits they have to higher levels.

Traits represent areas where the character is somehow better than others at his Scale. Those not possessing a Trait don't necessarily lack the attribute, they simply aren't markedly endowed with it. A character may be somewhat strong, but still not have Brawn.

There are six Traits: Brawn, Empowered, Fast, Invulnerable, Mind and Tech. Three of them enhance a character's basic combat ability in a fairly straight-forward way while the other three give the character greater overall flexibility. Most player characters will have three or four Traits determined by their Concepts, but those without a Concept in mind can roll on the following tables:

d10 Roll	Number of Traits
1-2	Any three
3-7	Any three, plus Brawn
8-0	Any four

d10 Roll	Trait
1-2	Empowered
3-4	Fast
5-6	Invulnerable
7-8	Mind
9-0	Tech

This represents how strong guys are quite common in most comic book worlds. If the Referee wants a different balance, simply swap Brawn for one of the other Traits. Alternately, you can use a d6. Rolling a 1-3 gives you three Traits, 4-6 gives you four Traits. Then roll a d6 for each trait, re-rolling repeats: 1 = Brawn, 2 = Empowered, 3 = Fast, 4 = Invulnerable, 5 = Mind, 6 = Tech.

TRAITS EXPLAINED:

Brawn - One of the raw power Traits, this gives even untrained characters a fair chance in hand to hand combat because of their natural abilities and strength. At higher Scales, it generally means the character can toss cars or even buildings around. Brawn adds greatly to a character's Wound total and also gives free Attack: Blunt and Grab: Blunt abilities (see Abilities).

Empowered - Another raw power Trait, Empowered characters have a wider array of Attack ability than most others, especially in finding new uses for old powers. Slightly harder to take out than normal, their true benefit lies in Attack ability modifiers, which can be applied to more than a single power at once (see Abilities). Instead of having one Explosive attack, for instance, character can use any of his attacks as Explosive (provided it fits his Concept). In addition to this flexibility, Empowered characters have an additional Primary Effect to start with, plus another Primary Effect for every bonus level taken to this Trait (see Advancement). A character with Empowered +2 would therefore have 4 Primary Effects.

Fast - A more flexible Trait, Fast means the character has quick reflexes and can sometimes snatch back success out of what could have been a failure. At higher scales this indicates blinding speed as well. Fast does not add to Wounds, but allows characters to spend ability slots on Speed Points which can be cashed in during combat to re-roll failures.

Invulnerable - The third brute Trait, the character who is Invulnerable is very hard to take out of combat. Aside from many extra Wounds, the character can also buy much broader and better Defense abilities for less cost than other characters. Defense abilities which are normally purchased against a specific Effect can be bought against an entire Effect Group by the Invulnerable character.

Mind - Strong willed and possibly psychic or magickal, the character with this Trait can ignore many effects of pain and can spend his ability slots on Magic Favors (see Magic) to manipulate the forces of nature.

Tech - The last flexible Trait, Tech means a character has a quick and nimble mind and can invent implausible devices on short notice. Tech characters frequently take the Devices Secondary Effect Group (see Effects) so as to get the best use out of their ability to spend slots for Devices (see Devices). Tech characters are also generally the only ones allowed to take advanced scientific and mechanics skills.

Characters who have Brawn, Empowered and Invulnerable will be the "combat monsters" of the game, able to shine on the battlefield. But they will often be left out of the action when there isn't combat going on, during times when Fast, Mind and Tech are more useful. Remember, it's not who has the most power in combat, it's about having fun roleplaying.

Scale

Scale is the attribute that determines the general power level of a character. It tells you how much actual damage the character's attacks do, as well as how much damage they can sustain. There are four basic Scale levels, with the possibility of more above that in really cosmic games. Ideally, all characters in a group should be the same Scale.

Scale	Name	Wound Level 1
1	Normal	Bruise
2	Paranormal	Flesh
3	Supernormal	Bone
4	Cosmic	Metal

The column labelled "Wound Level 1" gives the Objective Wound Level that corresponds to the characters Subjective Wound Level 1 (see Wounds). As you can see, the larger the scale, the more damage a character is simply able to ignore, as any Wound of Level 0 or below has no real effect on a character. In the event of Scale 5+, simply raise the Wound Level 1 by the appropriate number of notches.

Explanation Of Scales

Normal: A regular person, who can be in pain for days from a rough basketball game. If he's really well-trained, he can break boards with his bare hands and do a few other neat combat effects, but Normals rarely have real "Superpowers." A bullet will usually drop a Normal, even if it doesn't kill him.

Paranormal: The level of action movie heroes and "street level" superheroes, those at this Scale can generally shrug off punches from Normals and can even take a bullet or two before it starts to really impact their performance. Real superpowers start to kick in at this level as well, and highly trained Paranormals can kick through metal doors in a pinch.

Supernormal: The standard "Superhero" level of power. Bullets only sting a little unless aimed really well, an exploding shell is needed to really make someone at this Scale sit up and take notice (or lie down and play dead). The full range of powers should be available at this level, and Supernormals can knock over buildings with a good shot.

Cosmic: A true man of steel, the Cosmic character can essentially ignore anything a Normal can do to him and has to be careful in fights lest he destroy the neighborhood.

Scale Differences

You'll note that Scales have numbers as well as names. This is so that Scale Differences can be easily calculated.

The Scale Difference between two characters is the Scale number of one minus the Scale number of the other. The rules will specify which to subtract in any given case.

Example: When hitting a target, damage is shifted by a number of levels equal to the Scale Difference of the attacker minus the target. So if a Supernormal is using what is to him a Level 1 attack on a Normal, the actual damage is shifted up (3 - 1) two Levels to a Level 3 attack on the Normal. The Normal takes a Bone Wound.

Sometimes Scale Difference can be ignored by simply using Objective Wounds instead of Subjective Wounds, since damage is where most of the Scale effects come in, but in other cases it's not possible.

Example: The Grab ability is modified by differences in Scale. The difference in Scale between grabber and grabbed becomes an increase or decrease in Difficulty for the target to escape. If a Normal (Scale 1) grabs a Paranormal (Scale 2), the Paranormal's Difficulty in escaping is 1 degree easier, because of the Scale difference. Thus, if the Normal had succeeded in putting the Paranormal in a Tasking Grab, the Paranormal would only need to succeed at a Hard roll to escape.

Example Heroic Hooks

1	Victim of Circumstance: The character isn t really inclined to be a hero, but he s not a total jerk. And things just seem to happen around him that he can t ignore, thrusting him into the reluctant role of hero. This Hook isn t recommended for a regular member of a team, but is useful for a solo hero or one who only appears occasionally (such as one played by a person who can t attend all the game sessions).
2	Vengeance: Someone has done the character a terrible wrong, and he s out to get revenge for it. The nature of the target makes the character a hero by default. Should the character get his revenge, he ll either retire or find a new Hook (usually Great Responsibility).
3	Great Responsibility: As in With Great Power…. The character has seen quite graphically the consequences of not using his powers for good, or has seen what his powers let him do, and is determined to use them to fight for what s right. Often such a character will have had a different Hook at one time but drifted into this one.
4	Good Citizen: Similar to Great Responsibility, but without any kind of major life-affecting event. The character has simply been raised well and is a basically good and responsible person. He sees his abilities as a tool to help make the world a better place. Tends to be optimistic and a goody two shoes at times.
5	Adrenaline Junkie: This character s out for thrills, and being a superhero seems just the way to do it. Often the tragic consequences of his actions will later change his Hook.
6	Displaced Aggression: What other job lets you beat the stuffing out of guys and not get put away for it? This character could just as easily be a villain, but sides with the good guys because it doesn t want to get put in jail. Will often get in hot water for excessive use of force.
7	Unmotivated: The character doesn t really have a reason, he s just a hero because he got these powers and is fulfilling societal expectations. This Hook is likely to change fairly quickly in the course of play.
8	Hidden Agenda: Some other purpose drives the character, who sees the hero gig as a means to this end. What the purpose is should be decided on by the player, and if it s met the character may need a new Hook. An example would be a mage character playing the part of superhero in order to gain allies against an ancient foe of his due to attack in a year. Another example would be a villain who s masquerading as a hero in order to set up for something big. Choose another Hook to be the false pretenses the character operates under.
9	Open Agenda: This character is blatantly using his position as a superhero to gain some other goal, usually fame, fortune or success with the opposite sex. A frequent hook for corporate-backed heroes to start with, although it may change later on.
0	Guilt: The character has done some awful deed in the past, sometimes secret and sometimes public, and seeks to atone for it. A frequent Hook for villains who have reformed.

Example Villain Hooks

1	Victim of Circumstance: No matter what he does, he comes off looking like a bad guy. From the first time when he put on his costume to go stop a robbery and got blamed for it, to the most recent time he s found himself accidentally at the same table as another villain in secret ID, he just can t seem to shake his villainous rep. He may want to be a hero, but just can t get the breaks.
2	Vengeance: Same as above, but the target of his hate is someone seen by the public as a good man. It may even be a genuinely good man, who has simply unintentionally hurt the character. The character will stop at nothing to get at his target, and may have already racked up an impressive body count.
3	Fugitive: The character did something wrong, or was framed for something, and is now on the run from the law. To support himself he continues to commit criminal acts, which only compounds the problem. Often if the character is really guilty, it s the result of having gotten vengenace on someone already. The character may not be a hardened criminal yet, but is well on the way.
4	Bad Citizen: Always been a rebel, always will be. Lashes out at figures of authority almost as a reflex action. Common Hook for thugs, but not for masterminds.
5	Adrenaline Junkie: Same as for the hero, but has no regard for who gets hurt along the way. May even be a sadist, getting his thrills from causing the deaths of innocent people.
6	Psychotic: Insane. Kills and maims without even really knowing it s wrong. Often very aggressive as well and will work for whoever will pay him to hit people.
7	Unmotivated: Often steered into crime by friends of his, this character s not really cut out to be a villain...or a hero, for that matter. But eventually he ll either quit his life of crime in disgust...or find he kinda likes it.
8	Hidden Agenda: Character may seem to only be out for the money or the thrills or whatever, but he s really plotting something else. An example would be a dumb thug who s actually plotting to overthrow his boss and set up a major criminal empire, or a hero who s playing the part of a villain in order to work his way into a major organization. Choose another appropriate Hook to be the character s cover.
9	Open Agenda: Money, power, sacrifices for his demonic master...any other obvious motivation belongs here. The villain may even be out to make the world a better place, but his plan for doing so makes him a criminal.
0	Pressure: The character is being blackmailed or coerced into crime. The threat can be physical or psychological, to the character or to his loved ones. It may even be a case of mind control via psychic powers or drugs. Choose another Hook for the character, heroic or villainous, to represent what his own choice would be. The character might be inclined to be a villain on his own, after all.

Hooks

A character's Hook in Modern Knights gives the basic reason why that character is either a hero or a villain. The Hook should be chosen to fit with the character's Concept, but if there's no suggestion of it in the Concept then it can be randomly rolled on a d10. Heroes and Villains share many of the same basic Hooks, although they'll be affected differently by them.

Effects

An Effect, or Special Effect, describes the way a power works beyond simple mechanics. Effects are things like fire, electricity, emotion or sharp pointy things. Not all abilities have Effects attached to them, but all Attack abilities and some Defense abilities do.

Characters will have a Primary Effect and a Secondary Effect Group. The Primary Effect is the one that best defines the character, the one the character can do the most damage with. Only in the Primary Effect can a character perform a Level 3 attack, for example. The Secondary Group is a tight cluster of Effects that are related in some way. The character can use Secondary Effects better than most, but not as well as his Primary. Note that the character's Secondary Group can contain the Primary Effect. Characters can use Effects outside their Primary and Secondary, but not very well.

Group Effects

Physical: Abrasive, Blunt, Sharp

Reactive Energy: Chemical, Cold, Heat

Electromagnetic Energy: Electrical, Light, Magnetic

Mental (Damaging): Awareness, Lifeforce, Sensory

Mental (Non-Damaging): Emotional, Psychological, Spiritual

In addition to these standard Groups, there are also other groupings possible, combining groups of the 15 Effects in different ways.

Group Effects

Elemental: Abrasive, Blunt, Heat

Weather *: Abrasive, Cold, Electrical, Heat

Magic: All

Devices: All

Mimicry: All, but only those mimicked from target

Nemesis: All, but only those "opposite" the target

* Chose one of the four as a Primary Effect, the rest as the Secondary Group. Weather Group is optional, and the Referee may require a weather-using character stick to the other Groups (see one of the Examples below for how this can be done).

Examples Of Unorthodox Secondary Group Effects

Example: Shadowblade has control over the forces of Darkness, and wants that as his Secondary Group. His player gets together with the GM to determine what a good grouping for Darkness would be. Darkness can be chilling, it cuts off sight, and mystical darkness can cut to the very soul. They decide that Cold, Sensory and Lifeforce fit the concept of the Group best, although with the limitation that Sensory can't be used to do damage.

Example: Feedback can control biological reactions. The player asks for a Secondary Group of Lifeforce, Chemical, Electrical and Heat. The Referee notes this is fairly broad and suggests that the proposed Bioenergy Group only work against living things (which makes sense), limiting it enough to allow all four Effects.

Example: Blademaster wants a Secondary Group for all the trick blades he can create out of thin air. He can make normal blades, poisoned blades, flaming blades, ice blades, light blades, pain blades and electrical blades. The Referee shoots down "Blade Group" as being far too broad as well as not really being a thematic group in the first place. Even if the player only asked for three Effects in the Group, it would probably be shot down on the grounds of not being a thematic link between Effects.

Example: Blademaster's player gets his act together and decides Blademaster creates blades of light energy. He saves the solid blades (Sharp) for his Primary Effect, and decides that the energy component can be Heat (infrared light), Light (visible light) or Lifeforce (hard radiation). The Referee approves this Energy Blade Group.

Note that Magic and Devices allow for great flexibility in attack power, but they also are vulnerable to defenses taken against these groups. A defense versus Magic will work against all Magic powers, no matter the Effect. The conditions for Mimicry and Nemesis will be described in a special section on making Mimics, since the ability is potentially very powerful and should be seen as optional.

GENERATING EFFECTS

The Primary and Secondary Effects should be chosen based on the character's Concept, and if the Concept is too wide for a three-Effect Group, consider allowing a four-Effect Group if the Concept seems to need it. However, if the character doesn't have a Concept in mind yet, use the following chart to determine Effects. For Primary Effects, roll a Group and then roll within the Group. For Secondary, just roll a Group. Special Secondary Groups should only be given to characters with a Concept.

Important Note: Some of the simpler character Concepts, especially those who end up with Empowered, may find no obvious choice for Secondary Group. It's okay to have a redundant Secondary Group (such as Physical when the character has Blunt and Sharp as Primary Effects), or to take a Secondary Group and not use it. This would allow for later latent abilities to surface, such as a martial artist learning mental disciplines. In the event that the player simply cannot decide on a Secondary Group, it can be left blank and filled in later with Referee agreement.

When the result is "Special or Re-roll," the player has the option of creating a new Effect of his own that fits in with the general feel of the Group. Otherwise, just roll again within the same group.

First d10	Group	Second d10	Effect
1-2	Physical	1-3	Abrasive
		4-6	Blunt
		7-9	Sharp
		0	Special or Reroll
3-4	Reactive Energy	1-3	Chemical
		4-6	Cold
		7-9	Heat
		0	Special or Reroll
5-6	Electromagnetic	1-3	Electrical Energy
		4-6	Light
		7-9	Magnetic
		0	Special or Reroll
7-8	Mental (Damaging)	1-3	Awareness
		4-6	Lifeforce
		7-9	Sensory
		0	Special or Reroll
9-0	Mental (Non-Damaging)	1-3	Emotional
		4-6	Psychological
		7-9	Spiritual
		0	Special or Reroll

EFFECT DESCRIPTIONS

PHYSICAL - Generally anything that involves matter hitting the target in some way and inflicting damage by impact (as opposed to chemical reactions). May be used with non-matter attacks, such as force fields or gravity, however.

Abrasive - Anything that wears away at the target instead of crushing or cutting it. Strong winds, "road rash" from hitting the pavement at high speed, sandblasting, criminal use of a cheese grater, that sort of thing.

Blunt - Does its damage mainly by crushing or smashing the target. Fists, clubs, falling from a great height and so forth. Very versatile Effect, can be used for a great many energy attacks as well, such as gravitic or telekinetic.

Sharp - Cutting, penetrating, slicing and other such attacks. Does its damage mainly by penetration of some sort, usually by blades or bullets.

REACTIVE ENERGY - Anything to do with chemical reactions or the speeding up or slowing down of them.

Chemical - Acids, bases, enzymes and gases. Attacks that do their damage via a chemical reaction of some kind, either with any old matter that gets in the way or by interfering with the target's metabolism (drugs).

Cold - Chilling things down, slowing reactions. Removing energy from the target.

Heat - Increasing temperature via flames, heated air, microwaves/infrared light and so forth.

ELECTROMAGNETIC ENERGY - Attacks along the EM spectrum. Radiation of photons.

Electrical - Mainly involving the motion of electrons, often in spectacular lighting strikes.

Light - Usually meaning just visible light, since lower end light is often done under Heat and high-end hard radiation comes under Lifeforce.

Magnetic - Frequently limited to manipulating metals (which can be swung around for Physical attacks) but sometimes given the creative latitude to affect iron in the bloodstream (not physically valid, but a common comic book convention).

MENTAL (DAMAGING) - Attacks that can cause pain or in general incapacitate a target by affecting his mind or spirit instead of his body. Not always nonphysical, however, as physical effects (such as sound or radiation) can have negative impact on the mind. These attacks rarely leave an obvious mark.

Awareness - Not actually damage in itself, attacks of this nature simply shut down the target's mind and cause him to fall asleep or into a coma. Typical stunning or disorienting attack that can remove someone from combat.

Lifeforce - Overall biological energy of the target, whether it's merely a physical thing or more of a spiritual entity. May not cause any visible damage, but the target's life is drained away and he may die. Radiation is a common physical means to this Effect, while vampirism is a spiritual use.

Sensory - Generally an attack of this Effect involves inducing extreme pain in a target without leaving a physical wound by direct stimulation of the nerves. It can also mean a physical attack that preys on one of the target's senses, such as a sonic scream which targets hearing or rubbing salt in a wound which targets touch.

MENTAL (NON-DAMAGING) - These Effects really can't be used to cause a foe to lose consciousness in most cases (but may with Referee permission), instead they are useful in attempting to manipulate the target.

Emotional - Playing on the victim's emotions, commonly fear or love. In the rare case it causes damage, it is usually through fear so intense that a heart attack is induced.

Psychological - Manipulating raw thoughts, controlling what the person thinks. Often used to set up convincing illusions in the target's mind but controlling how he interprets what he sees (to control what is actually seen, use Sensory). Cannot cause damage, but can make a target put himself in danger, such as by making him think it's perfectly safe to hide from the fight in the trash compactor.

Spiritual - Affecting the target's most deeply held beliefs, usually used to gain loyalty of the target or set the target off against his friends. Again, cannot cause actual damage, but may make the target believe with all his heart that he doesn't deserve to live and should go play in traffic.

Examples of Choosing Primary and Secondary Effects

Example: Kombat is a martial arts character with psychopower blasts that cause pain to his victims. He also has claws because he's from a mystic catlike race. Andrew needs to decide how to pick and choose for his Effects. He decides that Kombat's most devastating power will be the psychopower, which looks like Sensory. He takes that as his Primary Effect. Then the martial arts and claws are both Physical (Blunt and Sharp respectively) so that makes his choice for Secondary Effect Group. He could also use Abrasive attacks up to Level 2 in that case, but decides such attacks aren't in Concept.

Example: Tempest can wield all the powers of weather... rain, ice, wind, lightning, heat. That's a lot of Effects: Heat, Cold, Electrical, Abrasive, and possibly others. Tempest's player decides to go for lightning as the big gun, and that wind and rain don't do so much damage. He chooses Electrical as the Primary Effect, and Reactive Energy (for Heat and Cold) as the Secondary Effect Group. The wind and rain are Abrasive, and

will only do Level 0 or 1 damage. Alternately he could take the Secondary Group "Weather" and define Electrical as his Primary Effect.

Example: Brightsword's two main attacks are her strong right arm and her blazing sword (a laser torch). The player feels that she should be equally good with both, so he makes her Empowered, giving her two Primary Effects. She picks Blunt and Light as the two. Deciding that the blazing sword might also have a straightforward cutting function, she takes Physical as her Secondary Effect Group so that she can use Attack: Sharp up to Level 2. If she wanted to later use her sword for a Heat attack, it would only work at Level 1, since Heat isn't a Primary or Secondary Effect of hers.

Examples of Odd Powers

Not all imaginable Effects are listed here, but most of them can be modeled using these 15 Effects.

Example: Shrike has a sonic scream which can knock foes unconscious as well as cut through steel when focused. In addition, he's learned to use subsonics to make people sleepy. His Primary Effect is Sharp, the focused sonic blast. His Secondary Group is Mental (Damaging) from which he takes both Awareness and Sensory attacks. He could take a Lifeforce attack, but that doesn't fit the Concept, so he doesn't.

Example: The Ice Cubist makes ice, and lots of it. He can make ice spears, ice hammers, sleet storms, the whole nine yards. Not to mention he can make things really cold. But he can also make an area all cold and gloomy and depress people. His Primary Effect is Cold. His Secondary Group is Physical, and he has all three types of Physical attack: sleet is Abrasive, hammers are Blunt and spears are Sharp. In addition, he has an Emotional attack ability, but it's not very powerful because Emotional isn't one of his Effects.

Example: CosMax controls the four fundamental forces of the universe: Electromagnetic, Gravity, Strong and Weak Nuclear Forces. Electromagnetic is an obvious choice for his Secondary Group, but his Primary's not as obvious. It all depends on his Concept now: does he generally squish his foes or irradiate them? The player wants CosMax to have a better grasp of the generally more useful Gravity, so he takes Blunt has his Primary Effect. CosMax can still take a Lifeforce attack, but it won't do as much damage. With Referee discretion, CosMax could add Lifeforce to his Electromagnetic Group, however.

Example: SoulSword's soulsword is made of pure spiritual energy, but can cut through stone as easily as flesh. He may eventually learn to use it to disrupt spirits without damaging flesh, but doesn't yet know how. He takes Sharp as his Primary Effect, and now has to decide if he wants to be more powerful to start with or have room to grow. If he chooses Physical as his Secondary Group, he can whack foes with the flat of the sword for more effect, but will never really get good at the nonphysical effects. Instead he chooses to take Mental (Damaging) as his Secondary Group, even though he won't be taking any attacks with those Effects right away. He plans to get by on one main attack and a lot of tactical abilities.

Other Attributes

Beyond the Raw Attributes, characters will have a number of other Attributes that detail the character's abilities. These include Wounds, Combat Abilities, Noncombat Abilities and Disadvantages.

Wounds

While there will be times when a conflict can be resolved with words, it's almost inevitable that there will be combat in a superhero story at some point or another. And where there's combat, people (and things) get damaged. Modern Knights deals with damage using a system of both Subjective Wounds and Objective Wounds. Subjective Wounds are a measure of how badly hurt the character is relative to normal good health.

Objective Wounds are an approximate measure of how much actual damage is done. The tougher a character is, the less Subjective damage he takes from the same Objective Wound. The Scale attribute of the character will determine how his Subjective Wounds line up with the Objective Wounds.

Subjective Wounds

Subjective Wounds are measured in numbered Levels. Characters will have up to four Levels of Wound, although weaker characters may not have all four. Level 0 is included for completeness.

Level 0 - No real combat effect, but may have some result other than actual damage, usually cosmetic in nature (such as knocking a mask loose). Any damage done to a character below Level 1 is ignored... treat characters as having an infinite number of Level 0 Wounds.

Level 1 - Minor cosmetic damage and some pain. Enough so that the person knows he's been hurt, but not anywhere near life-threatening on its own. This damage generally fades after a few hours, leaving only a slight soreness.

Level 2 - Serious enough damage that it should be looked at by someone who at least knows first aid. Skin will be punctured, organic characters will probably be bleeding profusely. People unused to pain may pass out.

Level 3 - Broken bones and major internal damage. Even those accustomed to pain will have trouble ignoring this. Serious medical attention will be needed or the character may suffer permanent impairment.

Level 4 - Life-threatening injuries. Any character who has taken this Level of Wound is dying and needs attention as soon as possible. The general level of lethality of a campaign will vary, but even characters in light- hearted gameworlds should worry about this kind of damage. Only the very toughest can stay conscious after suffering a Wound like this.

Wounds above Level 4 will generally be instantly fatal unless the campaign is extremely nonlethal. Around Level 10 don't expect to find a body.

Objective Wounds

Objective Wounds are a somewhat vague way of tying the damage of attacks in with real things. They measure roughly what effect an attack would have on objects of varying strength and size. They're also useful to use in normal play, so that it's not necessary to adjust damage for Scale Differences every time an attack is made. An attack that does a Bone Wound to a Supernormal does a Bone Wound to a Normal.

There are six commonly used Levels of Objective Wound, with the possibility of more above and below this group.

Bruise - Enough damage to bruise a normal human or damage similarly soft materials like fruits or soft plastics. Enough damage to break normal glass.

Flesh - Enough damage to rend things of the general toughness of meat. Softwoods, plastics and delicate machinery are also at this level.

Bone - Enough damage to break bones, hardwood, tempered glass and similar substances. About as much damage as a Normal can inflict.

Metal - A Wound of this Level will put a hole in sheet metal, snap telephone poles in two, shatter a block of concrete and generally break anything not designed to take punishment. It will also fatally injure a normal human.

Structural - At this Level, an attack can do serious damage to things designed to hold up under strain, such as structural supports of buildings or armored vehicles. Will also start to dent the "supermetals" that show up in comics. The upper end of the Supernormal's attack spectrum in most cases, this Level of Wound will instantly kill a Normal.

Wrecked - Just about anything made of metal and stone is destroyed at this point. Lightly armored vehicles, small buildings, castle walls, etc. Nothing made of mere matter can withstand a Wrecked Wound totally unscathed, even supermetals show some damage. Only things like forcefields and magically enhanced structures can cope with this type of damage, and generally only Cosmic beings will be inflicting it.

Below Bruise are things like ripping paper or shattering an icicle. Anything fragile enough to be below Bruise will rarely be able to withstand multiple attacks, so establishing Wound Levels for it would be pointless. Above Wrecked, the type of devastation doesn't change, simply the scale of it. In RoboMACs, Wounds continue up into MegaWrecked, GigaWrecked and so forth using the standard metric prefixes. But in Modern Knights, any damage above Wrecked will probably be in the realm of Referee Plot Device and not need quantifying.

WOUND DETERMINATION

There are two things that need to be considered in assigning Subjective Wounds: Type and Traits of the character. In addition, the character's Scale determines what Objective Wounds the character has. For things without Traits (basic NPCs, objects), the Referee should simply assign numbers that seem to fit the situation (see NPC section for more).

Body Type	Level of Wound			
	1	2	3	4
Organic	3	0	0	0
Tough Organic	3	1	0	0
Semi-Organic	3	2	2	0
Inorganic	2	2	2	1

BODY TYPE

The character's Body Type is not really an attribute so much as a description of what he's made of. Soft, squishy organic types tend to bounce back quickly from minor damage but fold like paper under serious onslaught. Rigid metallic bodies can take more serious damage, but aren't as resilient at lower levels. They also tend to stand out in a crowd.

Body Type should always be taken as part of the Concept, not simply for reasons of grabbing more Wounds or faster healing rates. Note that a character who changes forms may have more than one Body Type, such as a man who turns to steel.

Organic - Normal squishy human type. May have powers and abilities beyond those of mortal ken and all that, but still soft to the touch. Gets 3 Wounds of Level 1, but none of the other Levels.

Tough Organic - Still strictly organic, but not as fleshy as normal humans. Perhaps has denser flesh than normal, or is more like wood than flesh. Might seem a bit odd in appearance, but gets 3 Wounds of Level 1 and 1 of Level 2. Many Supernormals will fall in this range.

Semi-Organic - Not quite all flesh and blood. Sometimes a cyborg, mixing flesh and metal, sometimes a mystic blend of stone and flesh, sometimes an organic plastic body. Most characters who are Semi-Organic will look inhuman to an extent. Gets 3 Level 1 Wounds, 2 Level 2 and 2 Level 3, but pays for this toughness by healing more slowly (see Healing) and looking decidedly inhuman.

Inorganic - No flesh or blood at all, probably a robot or an animated statue. May not heal at all, instead needing to be repaired when damaged. Will need a disguise to pass as human. Gets 2 each of Levels 1 through 3 Wounds and one Level 4 Wound.

Keep in mind, these Wounds are for those made up as full characters. NPCs, especially minor ones, need not be this tough. A wimpy robot thug might only have 1 Wound of each Level, despite being Inorganic, and a sickly Organic might not have all 3 Level 1 Wounds.

TRAITS

In addition to the base Wounds given to the character by his Body Type, additional Wounds are gained from various Traits. These are cumulative and add to the base Wounds. If a character has any bonuses to a Trait, the Wounds for that Trait are gained an extra time for every +1 on the Trait. So a character with Tech +2 would get 3 extra Level 1 Wounds.

* The Level 4 Wounds gained from Invulnerable have the advantage of allowing the character to remain conscious and active even after

Trait	Level of Wound			
	1	2	3	4
Brawn	1	2	1	0
Empowered	1	1	0	0
Fast	0	0	0	0
Invulnerable	2	2	1	1*
Mind	0	0	1	1
Tech	1	0	0	0

suffering them. Invulnerable characters have enough intestinal fortitude to soldier on even when fatally injured. The Level 4 Wounds from Invulnerable are lost first. Thus, an Inorganic character with Mind and Invulnerable may have three Level 4 Wounds, but he can only take one and still stand. After two such wounds, he drops like any other fatally injured person. Note that Fast confers no Wounds at all. The main defensive benefit of being Fast is that it automatically makes the character harder to hit (see Combat).

Healing

Recovery from Wounds will depend both on the character's Body Type and any Abilities taken to speed healing. The guidelines here will assume the effect of Body Type only, with Abilities that help recovery making it faster than this at a rate up to the Concept of the character.

No damage can be recovered unless the character has a while to rest. This includes during combat. Rapid-healing characters will need to buy a Ability to let them recover in a fight.

If there are a few minutes to rest, Organic and Tough Organic characters will recover all Level 1 Wounds. Semi-Organic characters will recover some Level 1 Wounds, exactly how many depends on the Concept. Cyborgs will generally recover all Level 1 Wounds, while other Semi-Organics may get back one or half of their Level 1 Wounds. Inorganic characters will not recover unless facilities are available to fix the damage, and at most will get back one Level 1 Wound in this time.

If there is an hour or more to rest and basic first aid or repair facilities available, all types of character will recover all Level 1 Wounds. Organics, Tough Organics and Semi-Organics that heal (instead of repair) will also get back one Level 2 Wound for every hour of such recovery. Inorganics and repairing Semi-Organics should be able to repair all Level 2 Wounds in an hour if they have a complete repair setup and proper skills (the Referee may wish to have the player roll for success). Cruder facilities will only allow repair of one Level 2 Wound per hour, roughly.

Without hospitalization, Organics will only heal one Level 3 Wound per week of rest. Tough Organics will heal one Level 3 per day or all Level 3 in a week of rest. Semi-Organics that heal do so at one Level 3 every other day, while those who repair do it at the same rate as Inorganics. Inorganics cannot regain Level 3 Wounds without help from an expert in fixing their particular body form (roboticists, sculptors, etc.). With such aid and repair facilities, all Level 3 damage can be repaired in a day.

With hospitalization, those who heal recover at twice the resting rate for Level 3 Wounds. Repair work is already the same as hospitaliza- tion, and Semi-Organics and Inorganics won't further benefit from it.

Level 4 Wounds are serious stuff, and heal at Referee discre- tion. It should require a massive refit for Inorganics to recover these Wounds, and extended hospital stays for Organics to get them back. Often it's necessary to put a "three months passed" into the story to let characters heal, or to use super-scientific or magical healing.

Overflow of Wounds

When a character has run out of Wounds in a particular Level and takes another Wound of that Level, the damage has to do something, right? In Modern Knights, the player has two choices when this happens: transfer or "overflow" the damage to the next higher Level, or suffer the consequences in the form of an Overflow Effect.

Subjective Level	Overflow Effect
1	Character is stunned for d10 rounds and cannot attack, but may take defensive actions at -2 on his rolls. 1 Flee combat and not return until the fighting is over.
or	(Only if Trait Mind) Lose next action shaking off the pain, no other effect.
2	Character is in shock and may not act at all next round. In addition, all rolls for the rest of combat are at -2 from pain.
2	(Only if Trait Mind) Character is in shock and may not act at all for the next two rounds while he overcomes the pain. No further effects.
3	Character is incapacitated and must have help to awaken in less than an hour. Without medical attention the character may die soon.
3	(Only if Trait Mind) Character is unable to act for d10+2 rounds and after that acts at -2 to all rolls. Without medical attention the character may die soon.
4	Death is almost instant. Only immediate aid will save the character.
5	Death is instant, and the body damaged almost beyond recognition..
6+	Character is obliterated, there s only some dust or a fine red mist to show he ever existed

If the player chooses to shunt the damage up a Level, it will go "up" until it finds a Level with Wounds remaining in it. If there are no Wounds remaining in any higher Level, or if the attack is of a Level above any the character possesses, the character must take the Overflow Effect.

Example: Tek-7 is out of Level 1 Wounds after a long brawl, but has a few Level 2 Wounds left. Hit by another Level 1, he decides to grimace and bear it, suffering the damage as Level 2.

Overflowed damage has the same Pain Effects as if it were from an attack of the Level overflowed to, but it generally doesn't do as much permanent damage. Being battered by dozens of overflowed Level 1 attacks and eventually losing a Level 3 Wound is not as bad as taking a Level 3 Wound directly, although it will hurt just as much.

If the character won't or can't overflow the damage to a higher Level, he suffers the Overflow Effect for the Level of damage inflicted. The Attack Ability Modifier Overflow Blast can also force an Overflow Effect. When a level is mentioned more than once, it means that the victim has a choice of options for his Overflow Effect.

Note that characters with Mind can still choose to suffer the other Overflow Effects, especially if the player feels it fits the flow of the game. In general, the less important NPCs will always take the Overflow Effect, dropping out of combat faster than the important ones.

Pain Effects

Aside from the Overflow Effects, damage can have immediate consequences for the character as well, as his body is wracked with pain or his systems crash around him. Pain Effects will make players think twice about overflowing damage to higher Levels, since in some cases the Pain Effect can be worse than the Overflow Effect it avoids.

Characters with Trait Mind suffer Pain Effects at one Level lower. Level 4 Wounds cause loss of next action to all characters, Mind or not, and incapacitate those without Trait Invulnerable's special ability. **Note:** if a character is a tech hero who rides in a powersuit or giant robot, you may wish to apply the Tricklethrough rules from RoboMACs as well, especially if the character is designed using those rules.

Subjective Level	Pain Effect
1	Only cosmetic. The character may cry out, giving away his position, but no penalty to rolls.
2	-2 to the character s next action or group of actions (if performing multiple actions in one Phase) from pain.
3	Next action lost as character almost blanks out from pain.

Example: Tek-7 is now out of Level 2 Wounds as well, and still hasn't eliminated all the thugs in the warehouse. Another Level 1 hit is scored on him, and his player now has to choose: overflow it to Level 3 and suffer the Pain Effects (Tek-7 doesn't have Mind) or take the Level 1 Overflow Effect? Since this is looking like an impossible battle even to Tek-7, the player decides to suffer the Level 1 Overflow Effect and Tek-7 runs away from the fight rather than be seriously injured and perhaps killed while he can't act.

Abilities

Now that your character has the basics (Concept, raw attributes, Wounds) out of the way, it's time to fill in the details with Abilities. Abilities can be superhuman powers, they can be gadgets, they can be learned skills, and so forth. Characters will have both Combat Abilities and Noncombat Abilities. Combat Abilities are those that can have a significant effect in a fight. Not just attacks and defenses, but also things like the ability to move around a battlefield quickly or see hidden foes. Because combat is where a game needs the most balance, Combat Abilities will be listed fairly exhaustively in the next section.

Characters start with either 12 "slots" for Combat Abilities or nine slots plus d10/2 for a random spread of 10-14 slots, depending on what the players and Referee agree on.

The following things are considered Combat Abilities and require a slot to be spent: Attack Abilities, Attack Ability Modifiers, Defense Abilities, Defense Ability Modifiers, Tactical Abilities, Tactical Ability Modifiers. Disadvantages and Noncombat Abilities do not require using one of these slots.

Noncombat Abilities may sometimes have a minor effect on a fight, but are largely useful outside a fight. Sometimes a single power will be reflected in both a Combat and a Noncombat Ability, such as the ability to fly. There is no built-in limit on the number Noncombat Abilities which may be taken, but they all must fit the character's Concept. The Referee is also free to limit the number of Noncombat Abilities on a particular

character if he thinks things are getting out of hand. Remember, ultracompetent characters can make a game boring. Although there is no exhaustive list of Noncombat Abilities, a number of samples will be presented in the section following Combat Abilities, as well as in the sample characters.

NAMING ABILITIES

"Attack: Light" isn't really something you're likely to read in a comic book. "Photon Lance" is more in the spirit. Players should come up with names for all Abilities of their character, from the simple "Attack: Light (Laser)" to colorful appelations like "Attack: Lifeforce (Soul-rending Tendrils of Nifflheim)." This helps define the character better and lends more color to the game.

A single Ability (as in a single slot spent on an Ability) can have more than one name, especially those Abilities which can be used at multiple damage levels or in more than one way. Similarly, a single name may apply to multiple Abilities, to simulate a single superpower used in many ways.

Example: Volcano has Attack: Blunt and can use it at Level 1 and Level 2. He decides that the following names all describe his Level 1 attack: Punch, Backhand, Head-butt, Snap-kick. Then he gives the following names to his Level 2 attack: Kick, Two-Fisted Smash, Haymaker, Drop Kick. Eight total names to apply to a single Ability (one slot).

Example: Volcano also has Attack: Heat usable at all three Levels of damage and with several Modifiers on it. However, he just calls all of these uses "Flame Blast." The character doesn't really finesse his flames much yet, being new to the powers. Later on, Volcano's Explosive Level 3 attack might be renamed "Nova Flames" or something equally colorful.

The name given an Ability should also help distinguish skills from powers from devices. Attack: Blunt could be a "roundhouse punch," a "telekinetic wave" or a "concussion blaster" depending on the user. The name will help fine-tune the Effect of an attack and give ideas for Noncombat applications of the ability.

DEVICE ABILITIES

Not everyone in the superhero genre relies solely on their inborn abilities. Some augment their abilities with the occasional gadget or weapon, while others rely totally on such devices for their combat powers. Using devices has a major drawback, of course. They can be broken or taken away, usually far more easily than a person's inborn powers can be removed. And while taking disadvantages voluntarily does help flesh out a character, Modern Knights does provide some compensation for this particular problem.

The biggest advantage is that the Devices Secondary Effect Group covers all Effects, allowing those who use a lot of technology to attack at higher damage levels in a broader spectrum of attacks. However, this is countered partially by the ability of Invulnerable characters to take defenses against the Devices Group as well.

Beyond this, it is necessary to determine whether the character is using individual gadgets or a unified powersuit.

If the character is using individual bits of technology (or magical items), it is often better to have the character take Device Points, since the flexibility of that methods compensates fully for the fact the devices can be taken away. However, not all characters who use devices are Trait Tech. For these there are two alternatives.

The first is to simply say the particular arsenal cannot easily be taken away. Magical items that are linked to their users are a common example of this, as are simple devices that the character can easily replace (such as a pistol). They may be knocked aside or lost for a moment or two, but are usually back by the next scene.
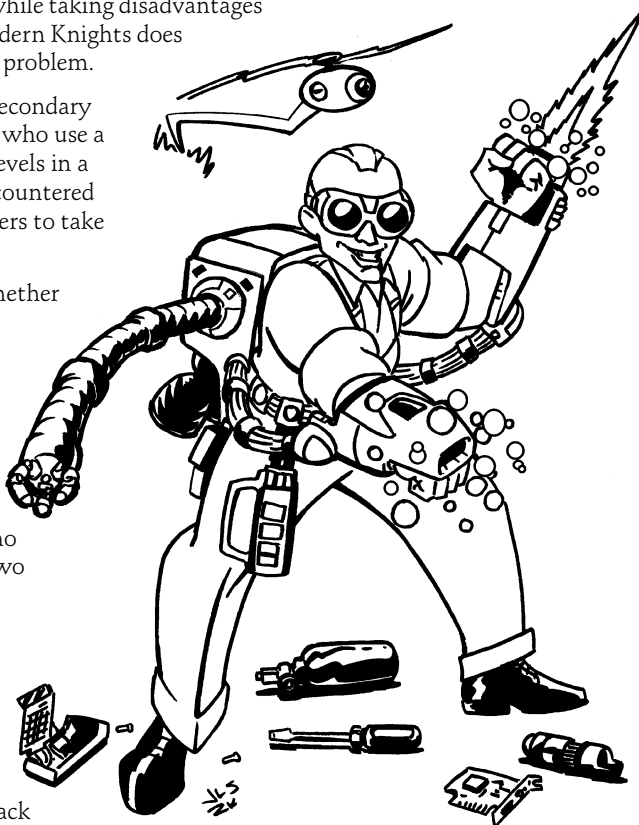
The second method assumes the character will likely lose at least one or two items per session on the average, so be sure to enforce it in play. For every three Abilities taken as devices, the character gets an additional slot to spend on non-Device Abilities. So a character that spends all 12 initial slots on gadgets will also have 4 slots to devote to things the character can do without his devices. **Note:** this method's benefits do NOT apply to slots spent on Device Points.

If a character is using a powersuit instead of individual pieces of technology, the powersuit does two things for the character. One, it increases his Scale attribute to whatever the norm is for the campaign. Powersuit characters are usually at most Paranormal without their suits. Two, the powersuit adds an extra Trait, which can be any of the Traits. Generally Mind will only be granted by magical powersuits, since most cybernetic computer enhancements would give Tech instead. This extra Trait may be one the character already possesses, granting +1 to that Trait. This is the only case in which a beginning character will have a Trait at higher than base level.

No matter what the nature of the devices, the player should define them as Device Group or Magic Group for purposes of Abilities like Depower or Armor. If the character's Primary Effect is used via a gadget, it counts as both that Primary Effect and either Device or Magic. Techno-magical items count as both Devices and Magic, but should be rare (especially since they're easier to stop).

See Device Points later in the rules for more on technological items.

Combat Abilities

Combat Abilities are split into three main classes: Attack, Defense and Tactical. The first two categories are pretty self-explanatory, and Tactical Abilities are those which affect combat but aren't strictly attacks or defenses.

Attack Abilities

For those Attacks that require an Effect, a single Effect must be declared for the ability when purchased. If the Effect is a character's Primary Effect, then the power may be used up to Level 3 of Difficulty (Tasking). If the Effect is one of the character's Secondary Effects, the power may be used up to Level 2 of Difficulty (Hard). Any other Effect may be used only at Level 1 (Easy) or 0 (Automatic). A single slot spent on the Ability will allow it to be used up to the maximum Level allowed by the Effect. In other words, you don't need to take Attack: Heat three times to be able to use it at Level 3, you merely need to have Heat as a Primary Effect.

Note that all characters may perform Attack: Blunt and Grab: Blunt at Level 0 without paying for the Ability, and that those with Trait Brawn gain those two Abilities for free. Those without Brawn must pay a slot for each of those two Abilities to use them above Level 0, however. With the exception of these two, however, a character must purchase an Ability (with an Effect) to be able to use it even at Level 0. All Attack Abilities function at Close Range only, unless enhanced by Modifiers (see below), and are written for use during Direct Phase (see Combat). Using an Attack Ability during Response Phase will result in one Level of effect lower (so a Hard Attack will do a Level 1 Wound) unless the character calls a "Snap Shot." Snap Shots will be covered again in the Combat section, but essentially cancel the reduction in damage while making all Failures into Mishaps.

Taking the same Ability with the same Effect multiple times gives a bonus to the task roll, +1 for every additional purchase of the Ability. The maximum level to which this can be taken is +4. Bonuses on an Ability for one Effect do not apply to the same Ability used with a different Effect.

Attack Ability List

Attack

Do damage equal to the Level of Difficulty attempted. This damage is with respect to the attacker's Scale, and may be modified by Scale Difference between attacker and target. Must have an Effect.

Depower

Level 2 Difficulty to remove a single power from the target. Level 3 to remove all Abilities that depend on a single Effect from the target. Level 4 to either reduce the target by one Scale class or remove all Abilities. Level 5 to turn a target into a Normal with no Abilities at all. Result normally lasts at least until the end of combat. Disadvantages (see below) may be taken to reduce the Difficulty, such as the effect lasting only d10 rounds.

GRAB

Somehow bind a target, preventing them from acting effectively. See below for a more detailed explanation of this Ability and its uses with various Effects. If a Grab is successful, target needs to succeed against the same Difficulty Level, modified by attacker's scale minus victim's scale, to free himself. Attacker may attack his Grabbed target at one Difficulty lower, but attacks against other targets will invoke Multiple Action Penalty. All attacks on the victim do one Level of damage higher, but Mixed results will harm the grabber as well. Victim may have a penalty to actions depending on the kind of Grab. Requires an Effect.

SNARE

Similar to Grab, but the attacker need not devote his attention to the target after a successful Snare. On the flip side, the attacker does not gain an extra benefit in hitting the Snared target, only the regular one Level increase in damage. Mixed results will generally free the target, but this will depend on the Effect (see below). Requires an Effect.

GRABS AND SNARES: CONTROL ABILITIES

The essential thing all Grabs and Snares have in common regardless of their Effect is that they somehow control the actions of the target. Grabs continually control the target while he is Grabbed, while Snares are more "fire and forget," putting the target into some situation and then letting him react to it.

All Controls somehow restrict the target's actions, either physically or mentally. The exact details of it will often depend on the Effect of the Control, but there's a few generalizations possible.

Physical Group Controls simply prevent the target from moving, as do Controls from both Energy Groups. Some Effects aren't well-suited to this task, such as Sharp or Heat. If the power is intended to actually pen in the target and cause him damage if he moves, then the proper power is a Triggered Attack, not a Control. The victim of a Physical or Energy Control will generally be unable to use most or all of his Abilities, and will be at +1 Difficulty on any he can use. At the same time, because they can't "roll" with the punches, any Physical or Energy Group attacks on Controlled targets inflict one Level of Wound higher than normal.

Mental Group Controls tend to be far trickier than simply immobilizing a target, although they can certainly do that as well. If the Mental Control is defined as immobilizing the target, treat it like a Physical Control for purposes of extra damage from attacks. A more subtle use of Mental Controls, however, is to influence the actions of the target and make him do the attacker's bidding. Specific methods will be described under the appropriate Effects below. In general, a target being controlled like this will not be at full ability, and all Difficulties other than for attempts at breaking free will be one Level more difficult (a sort of Multiple Action Penalty, since it's assumed the victim is also trying to break out). By taking a +1 Difficulty to his roll, the Controller can eliminate this penalty for his victim.

Example: Dominion wishes to make Brightsword his pawn, using his Spiritual Snare. But he wants her to be at full fighting strength for the job, so he decides to make the Snare a Level 2 Difficulty and adds one to that for his roll to keep Brightsword from being at a penalty on her actions. Thus he needs a Tasking roll to put Brightsword in a Hard Snare. If successful, she will become loyal to Dominion until she breaks out of the Snare. He cannot otherwise alter her beliefs after this, however, without another Snare attack. If he were using a Grab, he could change her beliefs at any time while she was held.

BREAKING OUT

At the simplest level, the victim needs only to succeed at a roll of Difficulty equal to the Level of the Control, as modified by Scale Difference (Controller's Scale - Victim's Scale). If you're more powerful than the person grabbing you, it's easier to break out.

However, depending on the Effect of the Control, it may be easier or harder to break out in various ways, and a character may even have immunity to the Control. Also, the result of a Mixed will depend on the

Effect of the Control and the Concept of the character. Finally, it may or may not be possible for outside attacks to free the victim.

If the character's Control will be easier or harder to break out of with certain Effects, the player should always work out with the Referee how this will work. For every way out that's harder, there should be a way out that's at least as common and is easier to get out with. It's quite possible a player may take a Control that's only easier to get out of, and not harder.

Example: Bacchus, avatar of the god of wine, can Snare people by causing grapevines to grow out of any surface and twine around the target. Fire burns these vines pretty easily, but simply struggling generally doesn't work. Thus it is +1 Difficulty to break out using Blunt, but -1 Difficulty to break out using Heat. The Referee decides that since Blunt is more common than Heat, the attack needs another limitation. Bacchus's player adds that anyone who can stay more than a meter from a surface can't be attacked, and expands the vulnerability to all Reactive Group attacks (Cold withers the vines, Chemicals kill the vines). The attack is now reasonable.

The normal effect of a Mixed result is that the character cannot act at all on the round he breaks out, unlike the normal result of having your full turn (with perhaps a Multiple Action Penalty assessed at Referee discretion). However, various Effects can suggest different penalties, such as taking damage from biting cords (Sharp Control), or momentary confusion over what to do at all (many of the Mental Group Controls). Again, the player should work with the Referee to find a reasonable effect.

Example: Tek-7 has a dartgun full of drugged needles he uses to subdue foes for a few seconds. This is a Chemical Snare, with the single effect of immobilizing the target. Normally, when someone shakes off the drug's effects they feel fine, but sometimes a person has a bad reaction to the drugs and gets hazy vision for a few seconds. The mechanics of this is that a Mixed result on breaking out will leave the target at -1 on all rolls for d10 rounds. **Note:** This Snare will not work at all on inorganic targets, which tends to even out the possible overly-powerful effects of the Mixed result.

Finally, whether and how others can help break someone out of a Control will depend on the details of the Ability. Any time the Control is defined as something wrapping around the target, it can be blasted off by any attack doing the same Level of Wound as the Difficulty Level of the Control, as modified by Scale Difference. On a Mixed roll, both the Control and the victim take the damage, regardless of which was the actual target. If the Control is actually part of the Controller, then any attack on the Controller which does this much damage will force him to let go. Controls defined in more exotic ways may still have ways for others to help break the target out, such as shaking a drugged person awake or using a mind power to get into the target's head and help. Such help will give the victim a -1 Difficulty to break free. If there's an automatic antidote (like knocking out the Grabber, injecting an antivenin, etc.) then it will free the victim at the end of the round it was administered.

Example: Bacchus uses a Sensory Grab to induce dizziness in a target, making the target feel drunk. Grabbing the victim's face in one's hands and staring straight into it can help the victim refocus and shake the effect.

Example: The Ice Cubist has laid down an ice slick which acts as a Cold Snare, making Tek-7 slip and slide and be generally unable to get off a shot. Simply picking Tek-7 up (using flight or a long pole) and moving him off the ice will remove the effect of the Snare. A Heat-based attack on the ice would also free Tek-7, but run the risk of burning him.

Example: Tek-7 fires a mass of plastic cord to tie up the Ice Cubist. It's really just one long strand all tangled up, so anyone with a blade can help the Ice Cubist out by severing the strand carefully. However, unless such care is taken, the Snare cannot be attacked without hurting the Ice Cubist as well, because it's so small.

Suggested Controls by Effect

Physical group

Abrasive - Hard to work in most cases, about the only likely Control with this Effect is to use whirling wind or water to keep a target bound up.

Blunt - Many possibilities, this is going to be one of the most common Effects for Physical Controls. Wrapping your arms around a target, tying him up with rope, englobing him in a forcefield, etc.

Sharp - Very difficult to define, since most Sharp Effects would really be Triggered Attacks. The Referee may allow a Sharp Control such that a Mishap on escape attempts causes damage equal to the Level of the

Control. Other "Sharp" Grabs and Snares can include pinning someone to a wall by their clothing, using a projectile (like an arrow) or claws.

REACTIVE ENERGY GROUP

Chemical - Controls in this group generally involve drugs of some sort which immobilize the target temporarily but can be shaken off. To immobilize a target for much longer periods, use an Overflow Blast.

Cold - While a solid block of ice is generally more of a Blunt Control, the Referee may allow it to be defined as Cold so that the character can get more use out of his Primary Effect. Other than solid ice, simply cooling a target down to the point of uncontrollable shivering also works for a Cold Control, as does forming an ice slick to prevent non-flying targets from acting as they slip slide away.

Heat - Unless the campaign is very "four color" and allows such things as "solid cool flames" as cages, then Heat is better suited to a Triggered Attack. It may be used to simulate mild heatstroke, however, forcing the target to shake off the effects before he can act. Alternately, it can be used for melting pavement under a target's feet.

ELECTROMAGNETIC ENERGY GROUP

Electrical - Usually defined as a direct current charge causing the target's muscles to lock up. The target will spark and his hair will stand on end and all those cool special effects. Can also be defined as generating a static charge that pins the target to a surface.

Light - Unless your campaign goes for "solid light constructs," it's almost impossible to generate a normal Control with this Effect. However, a Snare: Light can be defined as blinding a target until he can clear his vision, being a sitting duck and at +3 Difficulty on attacks at range until then.

Magnetic - "Grabbing the iron in the bloodstream," while physically impossible, is the standard comic book rationale for Controlling organics with this Effect. Otherwise it only works on metal, and could be defined as wrapping a target in metallic dust. Unlike a Blunt Control, the matter used isn't as important as the fields holding it.

MENTAL (DAMAGING)

Awareness - Lock down someone's consciousness, cause a fugue state in which they just blank out. Shaking the victim will usually help him recover. Actually using Grabs to control by this means is difficult and requires great subtlety.

Lifeforce - Cut a person's spirit off from his body and keep him from moving. In a Grab sense, can be used to override the target's spirit and impose your own, but that's usually the domain of the Nondamaging Mental Effects.

Sensory - Causing pain if the target moves is more of a Triggered Attack, but can be used more subtly to control actions. Additionally, a Sensory Control can (as the name implies) control what the victim senses, creating illusions in the mind of the victim. The Difficulty of the Control is how hard it is for the victim to tell that the illusions are not real. Massive incongruities ("Wait... he can't fly... what's going on here?") will give the victim help in breaking out.

MENTAL (NONDAMAGING)

Emotion - Control what emotions the target feels. Fear, hate, love, sorrow and so forth, but not loyalty (that's Spiritual). Snares will instill one emotion and let it remain, while actively Grabbing will let the Controller alter the target's emotions to suit. Counter-control by another mentalist is generally the only way to help a victim.

Psychological - Control what the target is thinking, and by extension, doing. This is the classic "Mind Control" power, where the Controller gives a command and it is obeyed to the letter. Micromanaging the victim, as it were. If given as
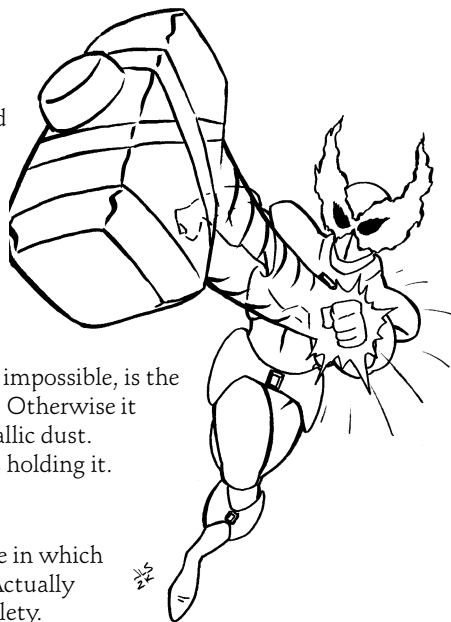
command contrary to the subject's beliefs or emotional ties (such as "kill your beloved") the victim will gain a bonus determined by the Referee.

Spiritual - Control the beliefs of the target, his basic worldview and philosophy. Useful in instilling blind loyalty in henchmen: remember that those of lower Scale will have a very difficult time breaking out. Direct manipulation of the target will have to play upon these new beliefs. Strong reminders of contrary beliefs normally held by the victim will help in breaking out.

Overall, the reader should notice that it is very hard to keep a target of the same or higher Scale Controlled for long, but that those of lower Scale can frequently be held as long as the Controller wants. In cases where the Referee wants a character to remain held for a long period, he may only allow attempts to break out under certain circumstances (such as when under great duress) and not every round. This usually applies only to the Mental Group Controls, but sometimes it is necessary to keep a hero tied up physically for a while.

Attack Ability Modifiers

The basic four Abilities listed above can be customized into a broad array of powers by use of Modifiers. An Attack Ability Modifier costs a slot to purchase, and may only be applied to an Attack Ability unless the Referee agrees to waive the restriction.

Normally, a given Modifier must attach to a specific Ability and Effect that the character has. However, characters who are Empowered may apply any Modifier they take to any Attack Ability they have, within the constraints of their Concept. Note that one Modifier may attach to another Modifier and only be usable in tandem with the first.

Example: Volcano is superstrong and has flame powers. He takes Burst on his Attack: Heat to give him the ability to hit multiple targets with a sheet of flame. If he were Empowered, he could use the Burst on his Attack: Blunt to simulate hitting many targets at once, but the player decides that's not in Concept... Volcano's simply not fast enough to do that.

Most Modifiers increase the Difficulty of the power they modify, but do so without increasing the damage. Unless the player takes a Disadvantage telling otherwise, the character can always use the Ability without the Modifier.

Example: Volcano is facing a single target, so Burst won't help him. He simply uses his Attack: Heat power without Burst and saves himself an increased Difficulty.

Using more than one Modifier at a time can generate VERY powerful results, and should be looked at very carefully by the Referee before he allows it.

Barrage

A single target may be struck multiple times with the power in one attack action. For every attack after the first, the attacker suffers a cumulative +1 to be hit that round, and every shot racks up a doubly-cumulative -1 to hit on his next shot in the Barrage. In other words:

By the fifth shot, the character is very unlikely to hit. In addition, any time a shot is missed, that ends the Barrage for that round. The attacker may also end the Barrage at any time before missing a roll.

Example: Volcano buys Barrage on his Attack: Physical to represent relentless pummeling. After hitting a target twice (once with each fist), his next roll will be at -3 and he's +1 to be hit. He decides to stop the Barrage on his own rather than risk Mishap.

Burst

Increases the Difficulty of the Attack Ability by one. The attack can strike multiple targets with enough precision to avoid harming allies or property. d10/2 + 1 targets may be hit in one attack, although each should be rolled for separately. Those wishing to attack one target multiple times must take Barrage.

Example: Volcano's Attack: Heat has Burst. He's trying to flame a group of thugs, and rolls a 7 on his d10. Rounding up, he can attack up to five of them at once. He picks his five and lets loose.

Most Recent Shot	Penalty to hit Next Shot	Bonus for Others to Hit You
1	-1	0
2	-3 (-1 + -2)	+1
3	-6 (-1 + -2 + -3)	+2
4	-10 (-1 + -2 + -3 + -4)	+3
etc.		

Explosion

No change in difficulty, the attack will hit all opponents at Close range as well as d10/2 randomly determined allies of the attacker and/or innocent bystanders. Only one roll is needed to activate the power, if successful all targets will be hit. On a Mixed, the attacker is also hit.

Example: Volcano takes Explosion on his Attack: Blunt to represent smashing his foot into the ground and starting an earthquake. This is very destructive and will hurt friend and foe alike, as well as dropping a nearby building or two.

Extra Range

The attack may be used at Not Close range for an increase of one in difficulty.

Example: Volcano learns to sustain his flames over longer distances with greater accuracy, taking Extra Range on Attack: Heat.

Group Effect

The Attack Ability may be used with any Effect in a single Effect Group with no increase in Difficulty. The character's Concept should determine if all of the Effects are indeed used. Even if only two Effects are used, this allows two Effects to share various other Modifiers on the Ability without having Trait Empowered. Referees should be very careful in allowing this Modifier for broad Groups like Devices and Magic. Note that this has no effect on restrictions imposed by Primary Effects and Secondary Effect Groups.

Example: Volcano decides to take Group Effect on his Attack: Blunt, turning it into Attack: Physical. The reasoning behind this is that Volcano's hands have been hardened by fire to the point that his fingertips are sharp like stone spears. He can now punch and stab with any Modifiers he would have had on Attack: Blunt. Volcano's player could have declared that Volcano's hands are also rough like stone and can be used to 'sand' an opponent, but decided that was out of concept (and silly).

Overflow Blast

For two levels higher in Difficulty, the character can instead cause the Overflow Effect for the Wound Level he would be inflicting. Normally this will only be Level 1 Overflow, but this can be useful against thugs or in conjunction with a Disadvantage to reduce the Difficulty.

Example: Volcano is taught a kidney punch that can cause great pain to his target. On a Tasking he can force a Level 1 Overflow on his target, making the victim either pass out for d10 rounds or flee combat. Since passing out makes more sense, the Referee decides that's what happens. If the Overflow Blast were used with Volcano's Attack: Heat, it might cause the foe to "get out of the kitchen" instead of swooning.

Reflex Barrier

This modifier can be taken with any Attack Ability, but is most appropriate with Attack and Depower. An Attack Ability that has a Reflex Barrier can be set up to surround the character with an offensive screen that will hurt anyone who attempts to touch the character. There are two ways a Reflex Barrier can be set up, and the character can either choose one way or be able to use the Modifier both ways, depending on the character's concept. Regardless of which type of Barrier is erected, however, the Difficulty is NOT modified by Grabs and Snares. The first type of Reflex Barrier is an active screen that requires the concentration of the character but can be used at any Wound Level the character's Effects allow. To use it, the character simply rolls for an attack at the desired level, with success setting up the Reflex Barrier for that round. Anyone who touches the character in any way (including attacks that involve contact) will take

damage as if hit by the Attack. At the Referee's discretion, this may not invoke Multiple Action Penalty. It will largely depend on the nature of the special effect and the character concept.
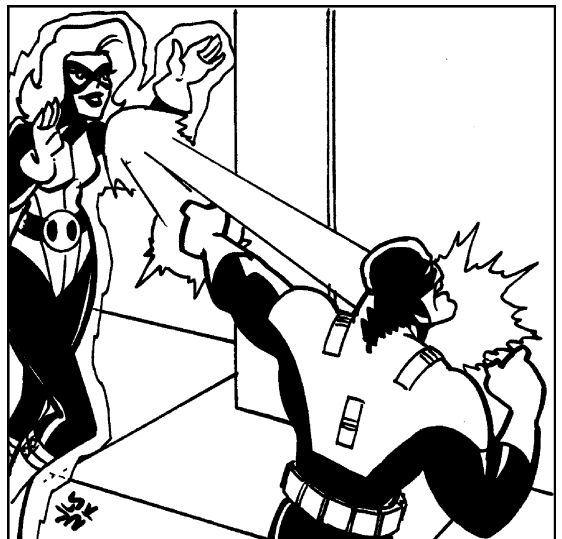
Example: Darkshield decides he's tired of being manhandled by Brightsword, and rigs a device to electrify his armor at will. He purchases Reflex Barrier for his Electromagnetic Group Attack, and can now generate any Level of damage he wants, but he has to concentrate on the effect to keep from shorting out his armor. With practice and further tinkering, he might be able to maintain this field without it getting in the way of his other actions. And, of course, even if Brightsword Grabs him, he can still zap her with relative ease now.

The other form of Reflex Barrier is a low-intensity field that can be set up with some effort but then maintained easily. To set up this version, the character needs to roll for an attack of Level 1 intensity with +1 Difficulty added to the roll. This roll does count towards Multiple Action Penalty. Once established, the Reflex Barrier will remain in place until the character wills it to go away or suffers any Pain Effect (if the power is device-generated, Pain Effects will not dismiss it). Anyone touching the character will suffer a Level 1 attack that automatically hits.

Example: Pincushion can will himself to be covered in spikes an inch long and needle-sharp. He's practiced enough that he can keep the needles on unless startled or badly hurt. Activating this power is a Hard roll, and anyone who touches him will suffer a Bone Wound (since Pincushion is Supernormal Scale) from the Sharp Effect. A character with Armor versus Sharp would be unharmed, but might still feel the pointy bits. He might also be able to make larger spines by concentrating harder, creating the first type of Reflex Barrier.

Note that the above description assumes the "touch" is physical. At the option of the player, the trigger can be defined as mental instead. A Reflex Barrier can be either physical or mental, but not both. To get both conditions, buy Reflex Barrier twice.

Example: Shade spends several months practicing mental exercises to give a nasty shock to anyone attempting to probe his mind. He buys Reflex Barrier on his Psychological Grab, and keeps it up in the second form most of his waking hours. Anyone who attacks him with any psychic ability will be immediately Grabbed at Level 1. Shade will then have to spend actions to maintain the Grab, but he'll be alerted to the attack and have a chance of fighting back, even against an attacker he can't see.

As shown in the above example, Grabs can be given a Reflex Barrier, but Snares tend to be more useful because no further attention needs to be paid. Still, a Reflex Barrier Grab can be used to simulate certain martial arts maneuvers.

Example: Kombat has started training himself in blindfighting, and has reached the point where he can grab anyone who touches him. Buying Reflex Attack on his Grab: Blunt, he normally uses this ability in the first mode, readying himself to Grab any attacker in a Level 2 or Level 3 hold. However, he can maintain a state of constant low-level awareness so that once he's ready, anyone attacking him from surprise will find themselves in a Level 1 Grab.

As a warning to Referees, the Reflex Barrier can get really ugly if combined with other Modifiers, such as Explosion, so be sure to keep an extra careful eye on this.

TRIGGERED ATTACK

For one level higher in difficulty, the character can set his attack to go off when certain conditions are met, such as crossing a tripwire or after a certain amount of time. Frequently used with Devices. The attack may gain bonuses in hitting its target if it goes off unexpectedly. If applicable, the Level of the Attack is the Level of Difficulty needed for a careful search to reveal any triggering mechanism or reveal the presence of a time-delay effect. When used with magic, it often represents a curse cast on any who desecrate a location. The Trigger must be determined when the Attack is used. A common Disadvantage of this Modifier is that only one type of Trigger is available (tripwire, timer, etc.) in exchange for one less Level of Difficulty.

Example: Volcano has learned to charge an object with enough heat to hurt a person without melting the object, taking Triggered Attack on Attack: Heat. The condition is fixed as "when someone touches the heated object," but instead of reducing the Difficulty, Volcano says it means the attack sticks around for a while even if triggered.

Unstoppable

Only meaningful on the Attack power, for an increase of two Levels of Difficulty the Attack cannot be stopped by any Defense Ability that reduces or prevents damage. Dodging and other avoidance tactics still work.

Example: By concentrating his flames, Volcano can eventually get past any fireproofing invented. On a Tasking Roll he can keep probing with his Level 1 flames until they get past a target's Heat defenses.

Wall

This Attack Ability Modifier is meant primarily for Grabs and Snares, but can be used for Attack and Depower under certain circumstances. Wall gives the character the ability to create a freestanding construct of any size or shape so long as all parts of the construct could be considered in Close Range of each other. Walls based on Grab must be concentrated on, while Walls based on Snare will remain on their own. This modifier does not alter the Difficulty of the Ability, largely because Modern Knights does not have a detailed combat mapping system. Referees who choose to adapt mapping systems from other games may wish to assign a +1 Difficulty for Walls because of their tactical usefulness in mapping systems.

Physical Effect Group Walls act as barriers to movement, and possibly to sight as well. They can be broken in the same way as Grabs and Snares, but each successful attack on the Wall only creates a hole large enough for a human-sized character to move through. An Overkill will destroy the entire Wall, as will 2-6 holes (roll 1d10/2 + 1 when the Wall is created). Other Effect Groups inflict their effect (damage, mental control, etc.) on anyone who touches or passes through the Wall. While Holds in other effect groups can normally create a small barrier around one person, Wall allows the Hold to affect a much larger area.

An Attack or Depower with Wall bought on it will function like a Grab Wall, requiring concentration but inflicting damage according to Effect Type. The main reason to buy a Wall Attack would be to use one of the Physical Group Effects to inflict damage, such as a wall of swords or telekinetically controlled flying objects.

Regardless of what type of power is made into a Wall, there are two combat effects that can be generated with a Wall: surrounding and dividing. Surrounding an individual or group with a Wall completely blocks them off from the outside. There is no way out except through the Wall. This can have both offensive uses (capturing people too weak to break through the Wall) and defensive uses (keeping out attackers). Non-Physical Walls can be attacked through, but certain types of attack might be stopped at Referee discretion. Those attacks will instead act to break the Wall as if it were in the Physical Effect Group.

Example: Darkshield sets up a Wall of Magnetism around himself. The Referee decides that certain Effects can't get through it. Magnetism (it interferes with the wall), Electricity (the electrons are deflected by the magnetic field) and any metal objects. Those attacks will act to try and break the Wall as if it were Physical Group, with Magnetic Attacks having a harder time of it.

Dividing the field of combat is the other major use of Walls, and effectively keeps combatants apart. When the Wall is set up, the character declares which characters remain at Close Range and which are moved to Not Close Range (who have to get around the wall somehow). This effectively breaks the fight into two sets of "Close Range," requiring a bit of bookkeeping. It is suggested to make a marker for each character and then shuffle them between two piles. Characters will need to move between the two piles to with Range Ability (if they have it) to represent being on different sides of the wall. If the walls do not block a character's attack, then he ignores this effect. Creating a hole in the Wall will allow the character who created the hole to also ignore the effect.

Example: Darkshield erects his Wall of Magnetism between his operatives and the pesky SWAT team. It blocks their steel-jacketed bullets while allowing his lasers through to pick off the police. A few SWAT members run around the edge of the Wall and get a few shots off, however.

For +1 Difficulty, a maze can be constructed, splitting everyone into their own areas. Opaque mazes require a Hard roll to find anyone specific, or Easy to just find someone in general.

Example: Labyrinth wills a maze of forcefields into being, a Blunt Effect Wall based on Snare. Now everyone in the fight has to navigate the maze in order to reach someone to fight, requiring Easy rolls to find a random person, or Hard rolls to find a certain target. Labyrinth rolls a 4 when he sets up the maze, so (4/2 + 1) three holes must be made in the walls before it collapses from lack of integrity.

Here's a few more examples of interesting effects that can be obtained with the Wall Modifier:

Example: Everyone who passes through a door into the villain's headquarters suddenly becomes inexplicably loyal. This is built as a Spiritual Snare Wall across the entrance. The villain has plenty of time to tune his instruments, so the Wall is set up at Level 3. Everyone who touches or passes through this field of

mind-control energy will suffer an automatic Level 3 Spiritual Snare, becoming very loyal to the villain. Because this is machinery, attacking with Mental Group powers will not break the Wall, but destroying the archway generators will.

Example: While a Blunt Effect Snare Wall can be used to create ice structures, a Cold Effect Snare Wall will generate a zone of intense cold, freezing anyone who passes through it.

Example: A maze of very strong mirrors could be constructed by combining a Wall (specific characteristics depending on how it might be broken) with the Tactical Ability Confuse. In this case, the Referee would rule that the effect of Confuse only applies to rolls made to find others in the maze, but that it persists as long as the maze itself does. Also, Light Effect powers could ignore the maze, since if you can see the target's reflection, you can hit the target with a laser.

Example: This one's an example of bending the rules a little to make an idea work. Suppose you want to create a sticky wall. Normally, a Wall Snare will only create a static barrier, not latch onto anyone who touches the Wall. But you could also buy Reflex Barrier on the attack, defined as the Wall automatically causing a Level 1 Snare on anyone who touches it. The +1 Difficulty from this application of the Reflex Barrier would apply to creating the Wall, but the Wall itself could be any strength.

Defense Abilities

Defense Abilities are those that directly allow a character to either avoid being hit, reduce the damage taken, or protect another in the same manner. Some Attack and Tactical Abilities will have defensive aspects, but the Abilities in this section are primarily for protection. Some will require an Effect, others will not. Those that do require an Effect can be taken for an entire Secondary Group or any number of Effects within that Group if the character is Trait Invulnerable. If the entire Group doesn't fit with the character's Concept, it can be limited to part of the Group.

Example: Volcano generates intense heat and is also resistant to it. Being Invulnerable, he could take defenses against the entire Reactive Energy Group if he wanted, but decides that only Heat and Cold are in concept for him.

Example: The Luddite is resistant to the effects of technology, and being Invulnerable can buy Armor: Devices to reduce damage from all Device-based attacks. However, he decides that low-tech objects (like clubs and swords) still affect him normally.

Defense Abilities cannot normally use Attack Ability Modifiers, but specific cases are up to Referee discretion. Defense Abilities have a few of their own Modifiers, however, which cannot normally be used by Attack Abilities.

Taking a single Defense Ability multiple times gives it a bonus, usually a simple addition to the roll needed to activate the ability. Exceptions will be noted.

Defense Ability List

Armor

Requires Effect. Reduces damage from attacks of that Effect by one Wound Level. Taking it twice (Armor +1) reduces damage by two Wound Levels, and so forth. Armor need not actually be represented by visible armor plating, and covers all passive defenses that operate after the target has been hit.

Special Note: Invulnerable characters can buy up to Armor +1 for a Group, but any additional levels of protection must be taken per Effect.

Example: Volcano is resistant to temperatures, but is especially heat-resistant. He takes Armor: Reactive (Heat and Cold only) at +1 for two slots, then spends another slot to get Armor: Heat up to +2.

Dodge

Easy roll to give a single opponent +1 Difficulty in attacks against the character, Hard roll to give all opponents +1 Difficulty. Opponents who use the SNPC Attack Chart instead suffer a -4 to their rolls.

Hide

The best way not to be hit is to make it so they can't shoot at you in the first place. Hide represents all the varied ways of accomplishing this: shrinking, stealth, invisibility and so forth. The Difficulty rolled by the

Hiding character is the Difficulty others need to discern his location once they start looking actively. Casual detection is two Levels of Difficulty harder.

Once a Hidden character gives away his location or is found by others, any bonus to his Hide Ability is subtracted from opponents' rolls to hit. Thus, someone with Hide +0 is completely visible when revealed, while someone with Hide +4 is still very difficult to hit. Note also that a character may only be revealed to some opponents, not all (especially if found using Advanced Senses). It is possible to activate Hide at Automatic Level simply to gain the effect of bonuses to the Ability. Doing so does not cost an action. Hiding in the first place takes an Action, but re-Hiding will depend on the nature of the exact power and the circumstances of being discovered.

Example: Mr. Cellophane can become translucent and very hard to see, with Hide +2. He has Hidden at the Hard Level, meaning that a casual search is very unlikely to find him (Limit roll). When he punches out a thug, he's given his position away and can be attacked at -2. But since he's still translucent, as long as he doesn't attack next round he's back Hidden without needing to roll. He can also Hide without rolling in order to gain the -2 to be hit.

Example: Tek-7 is very good at Not Being Seen, giving him Hide. Once he comes out of concealment, however, he can be attacked normally and he has to take an Action to Hide again.

Example: Miss Direction uses illusions to Hide, usually creating false images of herself all over the field of combat. In this case, she's in plain sight... but which of her is the real one? Even after she gives herself away, so long as she doesn't give herself away next round she can shuffle and become Hidden again. The Referee decides this requires a roll, but doesn't take her Action.

PARRY

Requires Effect. Allows the character to mount an active defense that turns aside attacks of specified types. It is an Easy roll to set up the Parry, which will then last for d10/2 rounds before another roll must be made. It's not so much that the effect cuts off abruptly, rather that it is an active defense and Actions must be taken every so often to pay attention to it. Parrying reduces the damage of an attack by 3 Wound Levels, effectively blocking it entirely in most cases.

Example: Brightsword can use her laser torch to block all manner of incoming physical objects, even (sometimes even improbable things like wind). She takes Parry: Physical to represent this, blocking fists, swords, pointed sticks and so forth with her weaving blade.

Note: Referees may wish to make the duration roll in secret and not tell the player exactly when his defenses have been dropped, especially if the character is inexperienced.

DEFENSE ABILITY MODIFIERS

These Modifiers each cost a slot to purchase and can only be purchased on a single Defensive Ability, even if the character is Empowered or Invulnerable. When applying them to Armor, assume Armor is normally a Level 0 Difficulty and that use of the Modifier will add to that. Modifying Dodge is odd, but possible with the right special effects. As with Attack Modifiers, they should be defined as being always present or being things that can be set aside.

Example: Kombat later learns to project a dome of psychopower that protects all within it from powers like his (Sensory Effect). This is bought as Armor: Sensory with Defend locked into the +2 Difficulty mode (protect all at Close Range). He cannot use the Armor power unless he uses it at this level.

ABSORB

Only usable with Armor or Parry. For +N Difficulty, up to a Level N Wound may be absorbed and added to the character's total. The character cannot Absorb more damage than the attack had, but can Absorb more than he suffered (in the case of Armor). Roll must be made before opponent's attack roll is made. Referee discretion as to whether this can raise Wounds above starting levels, and how long extra Wounds last. This Modifier can be very powerful, and the Referee may wish to make it cost two slots to buy.

Example: Impetus can suck the kinetic energy out of objects to heal himself, taking Absorb on Parry: Physical. If his roll is a Success, he not only prevents the damage, he also can gain a Wound back from it.

Example: Volcano finds he can invigorate himself by bathing in flames. And with Armor: Heat +2, he's very hard to hurt with flames. So if he takes Absorb on his Armor, a Hard roll would let him gain up to a Level 2 Wound back if he's hit by the flames. If the flames only do Level 1 to begin with, that's what he gets. The actual damage to him is reduced below Level 1, so he comes out ahead.

Defend

Ability may be used to protect others. +1 Difficulty to use the power on someone else (but not yourself, that requires a separate roll), +2 Difficulty to protect yourself and one other of choice or to protect everyone at Close Range (friend and foe alike) and +3 Difficulty to protect anyone on the field of combat that you choose, leaving others undefended. Exactly what parts of this can be used will depend heavily on the character's Concept.

Example: Brightsword can also use her laser torch to block attacks aimed at someone near her, but she can only protect one person at a time. Thus her Parry: Physical has Defend as a Modifier, but she can only use it at the +1 rating. If she also wants to Parry for herself that round, she'll have to take a Multiple Action Penalty on both rolls.

Example: Doctor Eschaton has enchanted his cloak to be proof against Lifeforce attacks, giving it Armor: Lifeforce. He can spread it out and enfold another person in it to protect them both, throw it out to cover a person he cannot reach or magically enlarge it to cover the entire area. He can even make holes appear in it so that those he doesn't wish to defend aren't helped. Thus he can use all variations of the Defend modifier.

Draw Fire (Deflect)

Ability may be used to cause an opponent to fire upon another target, or even on himself. This can be in the form of deflecting an attack, positioning yourself in front of the target or whatnot. If used in conjunction with Armor, the character will still take damage if the roll to hit by the attacker is successful, but if the opponent misses the attack can be deflected without harm to the character. With other powers, a Mixed result means that the Draw Fire worked, but the character also took damage from the attack.

For +1 Difficulty, opponent makes a second roll to hit against a random target allied to him. For +2 Difficulty, opponent makes a second roll to hit against a target of character's choice. Thus it is generally Tasking for Parry, Dodge and Hide to choose the target, but Hard for Armor (since it brings along with it the chance for damage).

When used with Armor or Parry, Draw Fire is commonly called Deflect as well.

Example (Armor): Chrome is a metal man with a high polish, and therefore has Armor: Electromagnetic (light bounces, magnetic and electrical move his electrons without so much pain). A laser is shot at him and he can angle his body to bounce the laser into another target. If the opponent makes a successful roll to hit, he hits Chrome in a soft spot and does some damage, otherwise Chrome bounces the laser off without harm.

Example (Dodge): Kombat taunts the Ice Cubist into attacking while standing in front of Chrome. Dodge is normally Easy, but Kombat wants Chrome to be hit, so he rolls a Tasking roll. If he fails, he taunted too long and got tagged. Otherwise, Chrome gets frozen.

Example (Hide): Bluebottle can shrink to the size of a fly (a Bluebottle fly, of course). By getting in front of a target and then shrinking (usually an Easy roll, modified up to Hard or Tasking) he can make someone else get hit.

Example (Hide): Tek-7 generally requires people not to be looking at him to Hide, so he cannot use Draw Fire with his Hide Ability.

Example (Parry): If she's very careful, Brightsword can knock a deflected attack onto someone else, but usually only ranged attacks.

Linked

Two or more Defense Abilities are set up so that they activate at the same time with a single roll. Does not cost a slot if this actually turns out to be a disadvantage, such as Armor that only works when the character is Hidden. Depending on the character's Concept, it may or may not be possible to use the Abilities separately. The single highest Difficulty of all Linked Abilities is the one used for the one roll and there is no Multiple Action Penalty for activating several Linked Abilities. Any Linked Abilities with durations (such as Parry) roll once for all the durations. In the event that one Linked Ability has a limited duration and the another doesn't, it will depend on the Concept and Referee discretion whether all Linked defenses turn off at the same time.

If another Modifier is applied to one Ability in a Link, it applies to them all unless the player says otherwise. The Linked Abilities are considered to be a single Ability.

Example: Mr. Cellophane can become transparent to Hide. This also makes him harder to hurt with Light-based attacks. His Armor: Light is Linked to his Hide Ability. Since this is actually a limit on the power, it does not cost a slot.

Example: Shadowblade can step between realities and momentarily become intangible, a living ghost. Being Invulnerable, he has Parry: Physical, Parry: Reactive and Parry: Electromagnetic all Linked with the limitation that all act at once. For one Easy roll, Shadowblade will take -3 Levels of damage from all three Groups for d10/2 rounds, although his mind can still be affected normally. This four-slot power models the standard active intangibility power seen in comics, with the user still able to attack but very difficult to hurt (a really major attack might get a little through while the character is solid to attack). Similarly, the "caught him while he was solid" trick happens when the roll to renew the active defense is failed. If he bought the Draw Fire Modifier to Parry: Physical, he could use it to Draw Fire on all three Parries.

Example: Barricade can project a force field that stops most forms of tangible attack. He has Trait Invulnerable, so he can take Parry to an entire Group at once, but he wants broader coverage than this. So he takes Parry: Physical, EM Energy and Reactive Energy all Linked. With one roll, he can block any attack in these three Groups for the next d10/2 rounds. While this has the same game mechanic as the intangibility above, it can have vastly different effects.

Example: Heisenberg can increase his quantum uncertainty to the point that multiple images of him appear, none of which is "really" him. He Links Hide and Dodge into a single roll, meaning that even if the opponent can figure out which one is probably him, hitting is another matter entirely. However, neither Dodge nor Hide affect an Explosion (since the attacker just rolls to make it work, then everyone gets hit), which fits with the idea that if you can hit all of them at once, he takes damage. If he wanted to be so uncertain that even Explosions had less chance of working, he could link in intangibility (see previous example).

Tactical Abilities

These are Combat Abilities that aren't strictly attacks or defenses, although they can aid in both capacities. They may take Attack Ability or Defense Ability Modifiers at Referee's discretion, but the Referee is advised to be very cautious about this. There are no general Tactical Ability Modifiers, but the Range Ability has a unique Modifier available to it. Tactical Abilities may be used in either Direct or Response Phases. Those that have an effect lasting for one round will affect the target on the same round if used on Direct, during the next round if used on Response. This is unlike most Defense Abilities, which retroactively defend against attacks made before the Response Phase.

Example: Tek-7 uses a smokebomb to Confuse a foe. If he throws it on Direct, then that foe is Confused this round. If Tek-7 waits until after the foe has attacked, the effect hits next round. If he had instead tried to Parry the attack on Response, it would have worked against this attack, not next round's attack.

Tactical Ability List

Note: there is not a separate Tactical Ability Modifiers list, although certain Attack and Defense Ability Modifiers can be applied to Tactical Abilities with Referee consent. Several Tactical Abilities have Ability Modifiers that are unique to that Tactical Ability.

Advanced Senses

A minimum of -1 Difficulty on all rolls to detect things (see through illusions, spot Hidden characters, etc.). Possible to have automatic success under the right conditions. Should be made powerful enough to merit spending a slot on, weaker versions should be bought as Noncombat Abilities. Other benefits may also be conferred depending on the details of the power.

Example: Tek-7 builds a set of thermal/starlight/radar/sonar goggles, which display the various information as either a heads-up display or replacing his regular field of vision (controllable by him). This gives him -1 Difficulty on most sensory checks, as well as letting him

completely ignore smoke clouds (as used by some Confuse powers) and automatically see concealed heat sources (such as those Hidden only from visible light). This is worth a slot.

Example: Doctor Eschaton can see guilt in the faces of the guilty by just looking at them. While this is a sense most people do not have, it is not very useful in combat, and should be taken as a Noncombat Ability.

CONFUSE

Difficulty 2 (Hard) to give one foe +1 Difficulty on all rolls (or -4 on all rolls in the case of simple NPCs) on the next NPC Phase. On Difficulty 3 (Tasking), all foes suffer +1 Difficulty. This Ability complements the various Modified Dodges.

Example: Tek-7 constructs a smokebomb to hamper foes. It's a thick, oily smoke that clings to one target, giving that target +1 Difficulty on anything he does. Tek-7's player decides that the effect wouldn't really allow smoking all foes, since it would also get all allies. If he decided to do that, though, he could buy it as Dodge Defend (all in combat).

DEVICE POINT

One slot per Device Point. See below for how these work. Character must be Trait Tech to purchase.

FOCUS

Character spends an action to concentrate or draw energy from the surroundings or let power build or whatever, gaining -1 to all Difficulties next round on a successful Difficulty 2 (Hard) roll. On a Difficulty 3 (Tasking) roll, the character has -2 Difficulty next round. This does not alter the maximum damage the character can do with his Attack Abilities.

Example: Kombat plans to use his Brain Explosion power but wants to make absolutely sure it works... he may not have enough Speed Points to pull it off. So he takes an action to Focus at the Tasking Level, gathering in his ki energies for one tremendous blast next round. If successful, he will be able to use his Brain Explosion at maximum effect on an Easy (Difficulty 3 minus 2 for Focus) roll. (Brain Explosion power described below under Disadvantages.)

HEAL

Normally left for after combat, healing can be done to a limited extent during a fight. For dramatic reasons, however, it is intentionally made difficult, lest fights last forever between regenerating characters. The Difficulty to Heal one Wound is equal to the Level of Wound it is (with respect to the Healer, making it easier to heal Normals in combat). Thus it is Easy to Heal a Level 1 Wound.

For +2 Difficulty, all Wounds of that Level will be Healed. Every use of Heal during combat after the first is at a cumulative +1 Difficulty.

Healing that only affects the Healer is -1 Difficulty, but this must be determined when the power is taken. A character who can Heal others has no bonus when Healing himself.

Example: When in full ice mode, the Ice Cubist is actually made of ice and can repair damage to himself by freezing it over. He can only heal himself this way, however. Late in a combat, he's out of Level 1 Wounds, so he jumps in a fountain and freezes water onto himself to seal minor cracks. The Difficulty is 2 (1 for

Level 1 Wound, +2 for all Wounds, -1 for self only), and on a successful Difficult roll he gets back all his Level 1 Wounds. Any gaping holes in him (Level 2 or 3) are still there, however. Should he choose to heal one of them, he will be at +1 Difficulty unless he waits until after the fight is over.

MAGIC FAVOR

One slot per Favor. See Magic below for more details.

RALLY

The ability to inspire your allies into action. On a successful Difficulty 2 (Hard) roll, all allies gain immunity to Level 1 Overflow Effects and Level 2 Pain Effects for d10 rounds.

Example: Brightsword's optimism may be annoying at times, but when she gives the old "Rally 'round the flag" speech in the middle of a fight, it somehow makes sense and gives her teammates the will to fight on, ignoring little aches and pains.

RANGE (CHANGE)

The character can cover great distances during a single combat round, often using a nonstandard mode of movement such as flight. On a Difficulty 1 (Easy) roll, the character can move from Close to Not Close range or vice versa, or from Not Close to Out of Combat range or vice versa. On a Difficulty 2 (Hard) check, the character can move from Close to Out of Combat or vice versa. This check does not count for an action when assessing Multiple Action Penalty, but if performed on Response Phase it will not alter the results of NPC attack. In addition, any attacks will always be made from the new range, so leaving combat on Direct Phase prevents the character from attacking that round. Range may be changed only once per round. The three ranges will be described more fully in the combat rules, but the following simple description holds: Any target you could reasonably reach in a few seconds is Close, any target you can see but couldn't reach in a short time is Not Close and any target you can't see is Out of Combat. In other words, Close is the infield of a baseball diamond, Not Close is the outfield and stands, Out of Combat is the parking lot and beyond.
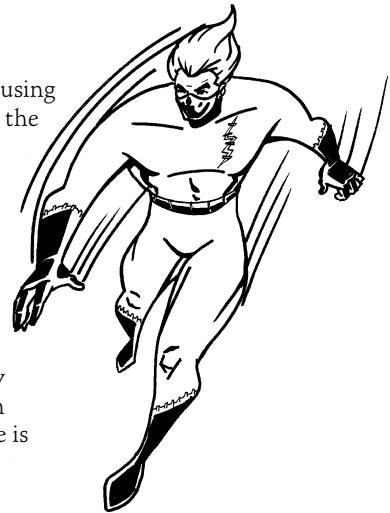
RANGE MODIFIER - CARRY

Not everyone who can move fast can take passengers, nor is it always necessary to move yourself in order to move others. Taking this Modifier on Range allows others to be moved around the field of combat.

+1 Difficulty to use Range on a single unresisting (willing or unconscious) target

+2 Difficulty to use Range on a single resisting (unwilling) target

+1 Difficulty to multiply number of targets by up to 10 (so +1 for 2-10 targets, +2 for 11-100 targets, etc.)

-1 Difficulty if the character stays with the target

Which options can be used will depend on the details of the Ability.

Example: The Ice Cubist can make ice slides to move around easily and to drag loot (or unconscious thugs) along with him. He has Range with Carry, but can only bring one target and must stay with the target to move it.

Example: Tek-7 builds an evac sled to get some civilians out of the combat fast (well, he slaps a control unit on a truck... he calls it an evac sled though). This lets him move up to 10 willing or unconscious targets away from combat. It's easier if he stays in the truck and drives it manually, but he's needed in the combat. Thus, to move them to Not Close is Difficulty 3 (1 for Close to Not Close, 1 for willing targets, 1 for up to 10 of them). He can't get them all the way out of combat in one action (Difficulty 4), but hopefully Not Close will be safe enough this round. He may wish to take a Disadvantage (see below) to make this easier, such as Sitting Duck (he has to stand there working the remote control).

SCALE CHANGE

The cost of this Ability is the cumulative sum of Scale numbers up to the maximum the character can assume, not counting those up to the standard Scale of the campaign. In other words, if the standard Scale were for some reason 0 (sub-Normal), then to get up to Supernormal would cost 1 for Normal, plus 2 for Paranormal, plus three for Supernormal, a total of six slots. If the character is normally weaker than the
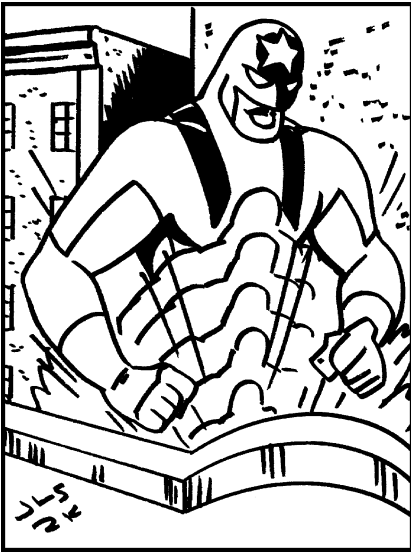
standard Scale and only uses this power to reach the Scale of the other characters, it is free, since it's really a disadvantage to the character to be weaker the rest of the time. Powersuit characters effectively gain this Ability at "up to standard Scale" automatically from their powersuits (see Device Abilities above). The Difficulty of attaining the new Scale is equal to the Scale number if used during combat. Those who get the power free may ignore the roll at Referee discretion. Disadvantages such as limiting the time spent at the higher Scale can be taken to offset this.

Example: Bulwark is normally a pretty tough guy who can grow to twice normal size and get tougher. His base Scale is Paranormal, and by growing to twice normal size he becomes Supernormal. Since Supernormal is the standard Scale for Bulwark's group, he gets this ability for free. In addition, the Referee rules that he doesn't need to make a Level 3 roll to grow.

Example: Later in the campaign, Doctor Eschaton regains a small portion of his original power and can assume his full glory for a few moments at a time. His new Scale will be Cosmic (4) and cost him 4 slots. Normally it would take a Level 4 roll to assume the new Scale, but he can only keep it for d10 rounds (-1 Difficulty) and it causes him some pain (Level 1, -1 Difficulty) to do this, for a net result of needing a Difficulty 2 roll to immanitize (become unearthly).

Warning

This is potentially a very unbalancing power, even for its steep cost. Referees are advised to be very careful in allowing it, and enforce strict limitations on its use.

Speed Point

One slot per Speed Point. See below for using Speed Points.

Split

The character can create exact doubles of himself. It is a Difficulty 1 (Easy) roll to duplicate willingly, and many characters with Split will also have some situation under which it happens automatically (such as when struck). At base level, Split generates a Normal Scale copy with all of the original's Abilities except for Split itself. Any special communication abilities between duplicates count as Noncombat Abilities. Any Wounds suffered by the duplicating character prior to duplication will also be suffered by the duplicate, counted as Subjective.

Increasing the Scale of the duplicates functions in a manner similar to Scale Change, but the character has to pay for every Scale. So two extra slots to make the duplicates Paranormal, five total slots to increase to Supernormal (two for Paranormal, three more for Supernormal), etc. In the event Scale 0 duplicates are desired, the power costs one less slot, making Split free if only one duplicate can be made at this level.

Increasing the total number of duplicates costs a slot for every doubling of the total number. Duplicates may or may not have Split themselves in this case, but the total number is not increased if they do. So to have a total of four copies (three Normal, one at whatever Scale the character is) costs two slots. The current number of duplicates may be doubled in one action until the maximum is reached. Faster duplication is only possible at Referee discretion.

Changing the powers (Traits and Combat Abilities) of the duplicates also makes Split cost more slots, as this can create a very flexible character. For one extra slot, all duplicates have the same powers as each other, but different powers from the original. For two extra slots, all duplicates have unique Traits and Abilities. This cost only extends to Traits and Combat Abilities... duplicates may have different Noncombat Abilities for free.

The method by which Split duplicates disappear will depend on the character's concept. Most commonly they are simply absorbed back into the creator. Other times they fade away after a time. Villainous Splitters sometimes just kill their own duplicates for fun.

A common disadvantage for Split is that the character only has a set number of duplicates. If one dies, it's gone forever. At Referee's discretion, this can allow a character with a small number of duplicates to save a slot off the cost.

Another disadvantage for Split is that the duplicates do not have as many powers, or any powers at all. It's -1 Difficulty if the duplicates only have half as many slots as the original, -2 Difficulty if the original also loses half his slots when using Split. Note that the duplicates may lose different Abilities without incurring extra cost. This is useful in simulating "gestalt" characters, where the "original" is a merged form with the Abilities of all the component members.

Example: Hydrox the Human Wave can generate twenty exact duplicates of himself, for a total of 21 of him. He's Paranormal and wants the dupes to be Paranormal as well. Base cost is one slot, plus two for Paranormal, plus four more for a maximum of 32 copies (limited to 21 by him). Total cost is seven slots, leaving him a few for powers possessed by himself and his copies. Whenever he is struck, a duplicate splits off unless he's already at his maximum. He can reabsorb any duplicate by touching it and concentrating (no action cost).

Example: Beamsplitter can fly into a window when in light form and split off a weaker copy of himself as most of him is transmitted but some reflected. He can only maintain one such duplicate at a time, and it's Normal Scale, for one slot cost. He's Supernormal and has suffered a Metal Wound (Level 2) before using Split. His duplicate will be created also suffering a Level 2 Wound, which in its case will be Flesh. His duplicate fades after a few minutes away from him.

Example: Hive can exude insects at will, which count as Scale 0 copies of himself (he's a big insect). If he could only create one, it would be free. Instead, he can generate huge swarms, spending 6 slots to generate up to 128 insects that are Scale 0. If he's injured, those still inside him are also injured at the same Subjective Level. When he calls them back, they slip back into his body. Any killed off are regenerated within a day.

Example: Tripper is actually a triplet with the ability to fuse into one body and one shared mind. His "duplicates" are actually separate brothers. If one dies, he's dead for good. The Referee allows Tripper to get the third brother free, rather than spend the extra slot to go up to 4 maximum. Tripper's "duplicates" are Paranormal Scale and start with only 6 slots each for Abilities, giving him a -2 Difficulty to Split voluntarily... pretty much Automatic in this case. If he wanted the three brothers to have wildly different abilities, he could spend a few extra slots on it, but he decides they're all fairly similar, and each has a subset of the combined form's Abilities. One keeps most of the Attack Abilities, another the Defense Abilities and the third the Tactical Abilities. Individually they're specialists, together they're unstoppable.

Example: Necromancer can call up minor undead at will from some dark dimension. He spends several slots to allow him to create up to 16 undead at one time, all of them Paranormal. However, he doesn't want them to be carbon copies of himself, so he spends another slot to make them different from him, but all the same as each other. He can now call up a small army of undead. If they are destroyed, he suffers slightly, having put some of his own lifeforce into their creation. Similarly if he dismisses ("reabsorbs") some after they've been damaged.

Magic: Personal Power and the Granting of Favors

Science concerns itself with finding out the rules of nature. Magic concerns itself with finding ways around the rules of nature.

Most action/adventure settings presume that if magic exists, it exists alongside of technology and science. Yet as anyone who has studied a science should know, magic runs counter to science. It is intuitive and personal where science is logical and reproducible. The universe runs on science because of this.

But in a fictional setting, the laws of nature are not absolute, especially in a setting where brightly-clad heroes fly around zapping each other with lightning and lasers. Magic offers a way around the rules to those who know how to do it. While the superhumans may be able to perform a few static feats that go against everything the scientists say is possible, the mages know where to look to break just about any rule you care to mention. Magic and science complement each other, they're opposite sides of the same coin. Sometimes they are bitter enemies, sometimes they're the same thing completely, but usually they're complements.

In all but the most baroque settings, exercise of magical power comes in two basic forms: Personal Power and the Granting of Favors. In Modern Knights, Favors are a Tactical Ability.

Personal Power

Personal Power is just what the name implies, a reserve of power the mage can use to bend the rules (and reality) to his will. Generally the mage will only be able to use this power effectively in a limited number of ways, limited by his personal training and will. Attack spells, defenses, even a simple spell of illusion to hide his really tacky costume. In this system, magic derived from Personal Power is bought as powers, both combat and noncombat. If it's not written on the character sheet, the character can't do it using personal resources.

A single power slot may be used for many spells. For example, the power Attack: Heat can stand for as many as three different spells depending on whether the character has Heat as his Primary Effect. Normally magicians will have Magic has their Secondary Group of Effects, so any Attack spell will be able to function at two or more damage levels.

Example: Doctor Eschaton takes an Attack: Sharp and defines it as magical. At Level 1, he defines this as a rain of steel needles and calls the spell "Stitch in Time." At Level 2 the attack is a dancing sword that materializes out of thin air and he calls it "Blade of Sarthos." If his Primary Effect were Sharp, he could also use the Level 3 attack as another spell, perhaps "Gears of Pain" where sharpened gears would materialize around the target and grind at it.

Similarly, one spell can be split up into several powers. A single "Illusion" spell could be used to buy Hide (cloaked in an illusion of empty space), Confuse (multiple images of the mage) and Confuse (make a foe waste his action attacking an illusion). One basic spell, three powers.

Example: Doctor Eschaton knows a very potent and versatile defensive spell, the "Tower of Sarthos." It protects him against blades and guns while also giving protection to anyone Eschaton can get near. It is bought as Reduce: Sharp and Defend: Sharp, with the roll for Defend representing him getting close enough to protect someone.

Favors

A far more broad selection of effects can be gained by asking other entities for a boon. This can be as mundane as kindly asking the spirit of a tree to bend aside and allow the mage passage or as cosmic as invoking the source of all darkness to blot out the Sun. Of course, nothing's free, and the mage will often have to agree to do something in return. If he bargains well, it may be a minor favor or even something he was going to do anyway. If he bargains poorly, he may have to consign his soul to slavery. The more powerful the entity, the harder a bargain it will generally drive… but the more it can do in return.

When bargaining for a boon, the player tells the Referee what he wants and who he is asking. Based on how major each of these two things is, the Referee will assign a difficulty to this Negotiating Roll. If the player makes a Mind check against that difficulty and succeeds, he gets what he wants and doesn't have to meet unreasonable demands in return. Failure and the effect may be granted, but at an exorbitant price. Mishap and the entity is offended and may try to lash out at the mage somehow. However, an Overkill generally means the entity will perform the favor for free… either because its own agenda is being advanced by the action or because it likes the mage. The player may elect not to cast the spell if it turns out too difficult (the character knows better than the player).

Example: Doctor Eschaton and his allies are trying to stealthily break into a secret government lab run by a rogue colonel. They've made it to the mahogany door of the colonel's office but Tek-7 can't bypass the lock. Kicking in the door would alert security forces. So Doctor Eschaton's player, Chris, decides to try a spell. He calls upon Loki, Norse god of trickery, to unlock the door. Loki's a pretty big hitter and the task is more than a little beneath him, so the Referee assigns a Tasking roll. After a moment of thought, Chris decides that a Mishap from Loki is not what the group needs and changes his plans. This time he asks the wood spirit who lived within the mahogany tree to let him and his friends pass through the wood. The spirit is technically

dead and can't do much, but is more than willing to work against anyone who would cut her tree down to make a door, so the Referee assigns an Easy roll. Doctor Eschaton and his friends pass through with ease, not having to do anything in return (although on a Failure the spirit may have asked they take the door with them).

Sometimes there's no time to work out a bargain and fulfill its terms, such as during combat. This is where the Favors a mage has bought with some of his power slots come in. Favors measure the mage's good reputation for repaying debts and keeping oaths. Using a Favor gains the effect of an automatic success on the Negotiating Roll (no unreasonable demands, the boon is granted) but means the mage will later have to pay back his debt. Normally the Referee will simply allow these actions to be taken off-panel between major scenes of the adventure, but sometimes can use them as adventure hooks later on. Note that if the entity being invoked is sufficiently major and thinks it is being treated like hired help, it may take action to make the mage miserable beyond the simple repayment of debt.

Example: On the way out of the secret lab, security is tripped and the players are now seconds from being caught red-handed breaking into a government installation. Deciding it's time to call on the heavy hitters, Eschaton uses a Favor and invokes Loki's aid, asking that he fry the security systems and sow confusion among the sentries. This is the kind of thing Loki likes (especially since he's being given free rein and will probably haunt the place for years) so Eschaton's not likely to find himself being visited by fire spirits in bed (something Loki might have done if invoked for the lock). Chaos ensues and the players escape.

A few weeks later, a mysterious letter arrives from Lock Industries asking Doctor Eschaton to look into a certain resort development on an isolated Caribbean island. Being no fool, Eschaton knows this is Loki asking for repayment. A quick check of computer records (by the team techie) later and the team knows the resort is a suspected cover operation for the worldwide terrorist organization ODIN. Loki's demands are reasonable, since he's siccing the players on villains, but they do satisfy his own purposes. Any blow against a namesake of his brother's is pleasant for the god of trickery.

If a player does not roleplay at least some attempts to repay debt incurred through use of Favors, he may get a bad reputation in the magical world as a "Warlock" or oathbreaker. Warlocks have to pay in advance, as it were, and rely more heavily on Personal Power. Loss of Favors until the player takes some action to restore his character's reputation is generally in order. Favors may be spent to gain temporary Personal Power as well, granting the player the abilities of powers on the Power List. The mage is simply asking some relatively powerful entity for a boost in resources. Such temporary powers will generally last until the end of the scene, then fade. While possessed, they work exactly like they were on the character's sheet. Asking certain entities for these powers may result in modification of the mechanics, however. A successful Magic roll against a Referee-assigned difficulty can reveal any such alterations, but only if the player thinks to ask.

Example: Doctor Eschaton asks an Efreet (Arabic fire spirit) for the ability to cast flames (Attack: Heat). Efreets like flames in general and this one grants the power... with a difference. Level 3 damage requires an Easy roll, Level 2 requires a Hard roll and Level 1 a Tasking roll. Also, not attacking at all requires a Limit roll. The power will not fade until the Efreet is satisfied with the amount of damage done to the area, but it needs no other payment beyond the destruction this causes. While Eschaton may be grateful for the power this grants him against his foes, the damage he ends up doing to the building he was protecting convinces him not to call upon an Efreet again. Since Efreet are notorious, it would have been an Easy roll for Eschaton to deduce the possible effects had Chris thought to ask.

A player must have at least one Favor purchased to be able to bargain for boons. Those who wield magic but don't have Favors simply don't know how to go about asking.

SUMMARY OF MAGIC

Personal Power - Spells bought as superpowers. Each power bought is a spell or suite of related spells.

Favors - Tactical Ability, one slot per Favor. Allows character to bargain with other entities for power. Using a Favor guarantees success and a reasonable debt to repay in return. Otherwise player needs to haggle with the entity and make a negotiating roll. Favors represent the "credit" a character has due to his reputation.

Negotiating Roll - Difficulty determined by:

1) How powerful the entity is (more powerful means a harder roll)

2) How easily the entity can perform the task

Roll is a Mind check and adds any bonuses on the Mind Trait. The secret of success is to find an entity just powerful enough to do the job. Too powerful an entity will resent it, too weak an entity will be unable to do the job. Only characters who have spent slots on Favors may make Negotiating Rolls.

DEVICE POINTS

A character with Device Points will always have some unspecified equipment on his person at all times, often just the right thing for the situation. For every slot spent on this Tactical Ability, the character will have one Device Point.

By using his Action, a character may exchange a Device Point for any Ability within reason for his Concept. A garage tinkerer won't be pulling out brainwave resonators, but may have an arc welder in a pocket somewhere. The character may not perform any other actions that round, and if successfully hit that round the device is lost (but may only be just out of reach, if the Referee feels kind). It is recommended that those with Device Points also take the Devices Secondary Effect Group if they intend the Devices to be their main combat tools.

Devices gained by using Device Points can be easily stolen, broken or otherwise lost in combat. Any Mixed result will mean the Device has worked properly but is now out of power/charges/ammo/etc. Mishaps will mean total malfunction. When struck in combat for a Level 2 Wound or higher, the character will lose the Device most recently used as he drops it in pain (or it gets hit).

On the positive side, the character with Device Points is very flexible. And while he's in trouble if caught by surprise with most of his Device Points still to be spent, given time to prepare he can be scary. Device Points are potential plot-wreckers, so the Referee will need to be careful about letting players have too much advance knowledge of opponents. If an opponent is known to have no real defenses against a particular Effect, you can bet at least one Device Point will be spent to generate an attack with that Effect, so maybe the opponent has gotten a new defense since the latest information. Devices may be passed around to others in the group, but they won't be able to use them any higher than their Effects allow... nor can they use them any higher than the creator's Effects allow. The reasoning behind the first restriction is that if a character doesn't know how to use an Effect to its fullest potential (in other words, didn't take it as a Primary or Secondary Effect), he's not going to get the fullest use out of the device. For the second restriction, it simply means the gadgeteer can't make a bigger flamethrower or taser or whatever than a certain size.

Example: Tek-7 and Kombat expect to fight an opponent who is especially vulnerable to Cold. Tek-7 can use two Device Points to make a pair of freon projectors and give one to Kombat. Tek-7 can use the rifle up to Level 2, but Kombat can only use it up to Level 1.

Example: The villain is vulnerable to Sensory powers instead, so Tek-7 makes some sonic rifles and gives one to Kombat. Kombat has Sensory as a Primary Effect, but cannot use the rifle above Level 2 because Tek-7 has Devices as only a Secondary Effect (**Note:** this is still a good idea for Kombat, since he cannot use his own Sensory attack at full power without suffering intense pain).

As a side note, a Device Point may be spent on a weapon or other device intentionally weaker than it could be, especially if the object is supposed to be standardized. The Referee may wish to devise a list of standardized devices for his campaign world so that those with Device Points have access to some normal equipment as well as their own high-tech inventions.

Example: Tek-7 has been disarmed and searched pretty well, but not totally. He decides to spend a Device Point to claim he had a gun of some sort hidden really well on him. The Referee agrees, but says the gun has to be a smallish pistol, limited to Level 1 damage. So Tek-7 pulls a Beretta out of a fairly uncomfortable hiding place and makes his move.

Device Points are regained any time the character has enough time to either pick up new supplies or cannibalize the old devices for parts. Generally this takes an hour or two for each Device Point regained, although "Mechanical Empaths" who control tech with their minds can recover them as quickly as Speed Points (see below). Tech characters can also use other characters' gadgets to get the raw materials needed.

A special note for "Magic Tech." In the rare instances when a character can actually manufacture magical items (or more likely summon them from somewhere), use Magic Group instead of Devices, but otherwise the Ability works about the same.

Speed Points

This Tactical Ability lets Fast characters catch errors in time to correct them, effectively giving them a second chance when they fail. For every slot spent, the character has one Speed Point.

When a roll is not a Success or Overkill, a character can spend a Speed Point to get a second roll. This roll must exceed the first roll by at least 2 plus any bonus to the Fast Trait to be counted, but still might not be a Success. Note that this allows more experienced characters to get more use out of a single Speed Point. The character can keep spending Speed Points until a Success is gained, of course. The exception to this is outside of combat. Out of combat, only one Speed Point may be spent on any single action.

Example: Kombat is going to use his big "Brain Explosion" (see below) power to knock out a vastly superior force of villains. He **must** make this count, so it's a good thing he has two Speed Points left. These are tough villains, so he goes for a Tasking Roll (which will incapacitate them all if successful).

His initial roll is a 6, a dismal failure. Spending a Speed Point, he gets to try again, this time rolling a 4. The dice don't like Andrew today, but it's okay, he gets to reroll that. Trying again, he gets a 9, still not a success, but high enough to count as use of his Speed Point. Cursing, Andrew spends Kombat's last Speed point to try again, this time getting a 16. The villains drop like tenpins.

Speed Points are recovered any time the character has time to rest for a while, get something to eat, etc. This is the reason for the restriction on noncombat use of Speed Points... a character could simply burn all his points and get an automatic Overkill without the restriction.

Making Your Own Abilities (Optional)

While it's possible to do a great deal with the Abilities presented here, it's likely that most Referees will eventually run into a power or skill that can't be modeled with this list. Often such new Abilities will be of limited usefulness or excessive complexity, especially since most of the common and relatively simple Abilities are already included. In that case, the Referee should devise (in conjunction with any affected players) a new Ability. For example, say the team speedster wants to be able to grant others the ability to move quickly. More than just sweeping them along in his trail (which would be Range - Carry), he can actually "rev them up." On hearing this, the team mage decides he'd like to be able to enchant others with powers as well. The Referee then works out the following somewhat complicated Ability to cover these situations and any others that might crop up. He calls it Imbue and makes it a Tactical Ability.

Imbue

This Ability lets the character give powers to another character during combat, whether by something as simple as tossing a gun to the person or as complex as mutating him into a new lifeform. If it can only be done outside of combat, take it as a Noncombat Ability, but consider the Difficulties in his Ability as a guide to making the Noncombat version.

At base level, Imbue allows the character to give a single one of his own Abilities to a single other recipient, willing or unwilling. The Ability is then lost by the original character until he can get it back. This level of the Ability has a Difficulty of 0 (Automatic). The Ability Imbued may be Combat or Noncombat (such as a sense
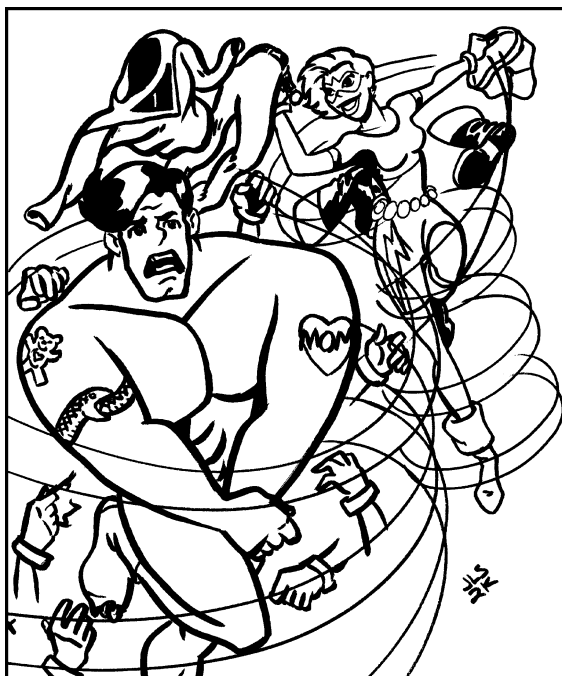
or flight). If the character can use the Ability with multiple Effects (such as Invulnerable characters with defenses), only one Effect may be transferred by Imbue at base level. Imbued Abilities can be used up to the Level the owner can use them, regardless of the Primary and Secondary Effects of the subject.

A number of options may be taken to increase the usefulness of this Ability, but they are set when the slot is spent. If Imbue is taken at a higher Difficulty, even using it for low Difficulty feats will require the higher roll. Imbue may be taken multiple times with different options. Here are the options:

1) +1 Difficulty - User may Imbue target with any valid power

2) +1 Difficulty - User does not have to give up the Imbued power

3) +1 Difficulty - User may Imbue target with an Ability he does not personally have, but must have also taken the "does not give up" option above (hence +2 Difficulty total). Note that if this is used with an Effect not part of the Imbuer's Primary or Secondary Effects, the target can only use it at Level 1.

4) +1 Difficulty - Number of Abilities Imbued at once doubles

5) +1 Difficulty - Number of total targets at once doubles (increases by a factor of 10 if Imbuing a Noncombat Ability)

6) +1 Difficulty - Group Effect may be Imbued

7) -1 Difficulty - Target must take an action (and invoke Multiple Action Penalty on other actions this round) to accept the Ability

8) -1 Difficulty - Only Device Abilities may be Imbued

9) -1 Difficulty - Target suffers a Disadvantage of some sort (such as hideous appearance, reduced intellect, etc.)

Other Disadvantages (such as Must Grab) may also be taken. Option 1 alone means any single Ability the character has may be given to the target. Option 1 combined with 3 means any single Ability may be given to the target, whether the character has it or not. Option 3 alone means the character can pick a single Ability he does not have and Imbue it. Imbued powers generally last until the character recalls them, but they should never last longer than a few hours at a time.

Example: Tek-7 invents a special slap-patch that lets him attach devices to others in combat, sort of a portable holster. He buys Imbue with options 1 (any valid Ability) and 8 (only Devices, in this case Device Point creations). He has to use a Device Point to create the object, but then on an Automatic roll (+1 and -1 Difficulty) he can give it to someone else.

Example: MonsterMaker can turn people into monsters with a gesture. She Imbues four Abilities: Scale Change to Paranormal (2 slots), Attack: Sharp and Armor: Sharp (to make them bulletproof). These are Abilities she does not have, so it's +2 Difficulty there (+1 to 'not lose them' and +1 because she doesn't have them). It's another +2 to give 4 Abilities. It's still a fixed set, so he doesn't suffer another +1 from Option 1. The subjects are twisted into monstrous forms (Option 8, -1 Difficulty) and they must be Normal Scale for her power to work (a unique Disadvantage worth -1). Since MonsterMaker has Physical as her Secondary Group, her creations can use Attack: Sharp up to *their* Level 2.

Example: Brightword gets so good at inspiring people that she can give them long-term resistance to assaults on their beliefs. She can Imbue them with Armor: Spiritual without losing her own protection. She buys Imbue with Option 2 (does not lose Ability) and Option 5 several times to affect up to 8 people at once. To compensate, she decides that the people have to take a moment to really listen to what she's saying,

Option 7. She also has to stand fairly still and orate, the Sitting Duck Disadvantage. The final Ability has a Difficulty of 2, base of 0 plus 1 for Option 2, plus 3 for three times taking Option 5, minus 1 for Option 7 and minus 1 for the Disadvantage. Even if she only wants to inspire one person, it's still Difficulty 2.

Example: Pixie can give people the power of flight, a Noncombat Ability. She keeps it herself and can give everyone in the area flight if she wants, but they have to think happy thoughts to take off. So she Imbues Flight, +2 Difficulty to affect up to 100 people (the Referee decides that's enough to get everyone at Close Range), +1 not to lose it herself, -1 because they have to take an action, for a final Difficulty of 2.

DISADVANTAGES

Sometimes it can enhance a character to take limitations for their own sake, especially if it keeps them close to Concept. However, some limitations are severe enough that there should be some sort of payback for taking them. The following is a sample list of Disadvantages which can be applied to Abilities to reduce the Difficulty of their use. Some will only make sense applied to Attack Abilities, some only for Defense Abilities and some will work for any Ability.

A given Disadvantage must be defined as being "attached" to either a specific Ability or a specific Ability Modifier. It is up to the Referee and the character's Concept whether the Ability or Modifier can be used without the Disadvantage, although some Disadvantages are defined as automatic... they can't be turned off.

Several Disadvantages can be applied to a single Ability or Modifier to bring the Difficulty down to manageable levels.

INSTABILITY

A power that's easier to activate, but harder to get on the right target. Applicable to anything that has a target, including some Defense and Tactical Abilities. Once a successful result (Mixed, Success, Overkill) is generated, roll a d10. If it's equal to or less than the Instability Rating of the Ability, a random target is chosen instead. The original target is included in the random pool. Instability cannot be turned off.

The Instability Rating is 1 if the power gets -1 Difficulty, 3 if it gets -2, 6 if it gets -3 and 10 if it gets -4. Thus, a power which is made four Levels of Difficulty easier will always hit a random target.

Example: Volcano takes -1 Instability on the Burst Modifier to his Attack: Heat. Every time he makes a successful roll to hit a target of his Burst, there's a 1 in 10 chance that the badly-controlled gout of flames hits someone else, but the attack is 1 Level of Difficulty easier.

LIMITED EFFECT

Only applicable to Abilities that do not require a specific Effect, such as Depower. For -1 Difficulty, the Ability only works on or against Effects from a single Group (this can include Devices and Magic). For -2 Difficulty, the Ability only affects a single Effect. Part of the Disadvantage here is that the Ability will not be usable against Abilities that lack an Effect of their own.

Example: Volcano can set up a churning field of heat around him that makes it hard for Electromagnetic attacks to hit him properly. He buys this as a Dodge that only works against Electromagnetic Energy Group. The Difficulty is brought down to 0 (Automatic)) against a single foe and 1 (Easy) against multiple foes.

Example: Tek-7 creates an Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) gun which can fry circuitry. It's a Depower that only works against Devices Group. His Difficulty on removing a single power or all powers in Devices Group is reduced by one. He cannot remove all of a target's Abilities, however, unless they are all defined as Devices.

MUST GRAB

-1 Difficulty to an Ability if it can only be used on a Grabbed target (this is in addition to the normal benefits of grabbing a target). Normally applies to Grab: Blunt (physically grabbing the person in your arms), but need not. Applied to either a Power or a Modifier, it cannot be turned off.

Example: To reduce the Difficulty of his Unstoppable Attack, Volcano decides he has to Grab his target in order to burn through any defenses.

PAIN

Use of the power causes a Wound of some Level. Whatever this Level is can be subtracted from the Difficulty of the Ability. Pain Effects and Overflow (if applicable) are as if this were any other damage. Whether this always takes effect on the power is up to the Concept (and the Referee).

Example: Volcano can really push himself to use his Attack: Heat, taking a Level 1 Wound (Bone) to reduce the Difficulty of his attack by one. However, he can attack without the pain at normal difficulties.

Shortened Duration

Only applicable on Abilities that have a duration, this one cannot be turned off and is intrinsic to the Ability or the Modifier it's attached to. -1 Difficulty to decrease a "d10 rounds" Ability to 1 round of duration or to reduce an "until end of combat" Ability to d10 rounds. -2 Difficulty to reduce an "until end of combat" Ability to 1 round.

Sitting Duck

Bracing to use the power makes the user easier to hit. -1 Difficulty in exchange for being -1 Difficulty to be hit or -2 Difficulty and be hit automatically. Usually this will attach to a Modifier instead of an Ability.

Example: When Volcano uses his Explosive Attack: Blunt, he's an easier target. He's always -1 Difficulty to be hit while using it in exchange for -1 degree, but he doesn't take the -1 Difficulty to be hit when just punching someone.

By stacking Modifiers and Disadvantages, it's possible to generate a really nasty power. The Referee should make sure any particular combination taken isn't ridiculously unbalancing.

Here's an example of a nasty, but balanced, power.

Kombat has Attack: Sensory to represent his psychic blast powers. However, using these abilities requires that he experience pain at the high levels, represented by a Pain Disadvantage that cannot be shut off at Level 3. He discovers, however, that he can really amp up the attack by taking more pain. By letting the power feed back into itself for a few seconds, he can unleash a terrifying "Brain Explosion" that stuns everyone in the area but also inflicts almost unbearable pain on Kombat.

He buys the Modifiers of Explosion, Unstoppable and Overload Blast and defines that they all must be used together on Attack: Sensory. This raises the Difficulty by 4 Levels, making even a Level 0 attack a Limit roll. Then he takes Sitting Duck (he has to stand there and concentrate) for +4 to be hit as well as three levels of Pain, bringing the Difficulty back to normal. Every time he uses the Brain Explosion, he takes a Level 3 Wound and is +4 to be hit that round, regardless of whether the attack succeeds.

If he succeeds, he's probably just cleared the field, although major villains will have Mind and be resistant to lower level Overflow Effects. If he fails, he will almost definitely go down, since he's +4 to be hit and just took a Level 3 Wound on top of that. Kombat understandably only uses this power in dire emergencies. Also, at 3 extra slots cost, this is something Andrew decides not to buy for Kombat right away, but to save up for later on.

Optional Character Abilities

Mimics

Mimics are those who can duplicate the powers of others around them. This is a potentially very powerful and plot-imbalancing ability, especially in the hands of player characters. As a result, most Mimics encountered should be Referee plot devices.

However, if a player really wants to play a Mimic and the Referee agrees, here are a few suggestions on how to accomplish this.

First, Mimics should be Empowered, so that they can use Attack Ability Modifiers (especially Group Effect) on all their Attack Abilities, and Invulnerable, so they can buy Defense Abilities for the Mimickry Group.

Second, Mimics take the Secondary Group of Mimickry, allowing them to use borrowed powers up to Level 2. Mimics are rarely as good at using a power as the original owner is, but sometimes they can use a weak power to better advantage due to experience with that power.

Third, Mimics should take all four Attack Abilities with Group Effect (Mimickry) on them, spending 5

slots in the process. This way they can use any Attack Ability at least in basic form. Then take the basic Defense Abilities (Armor, Parry) with the Mimickry Group Effect. The remaining slots can be spent on inborn Abilities of the Mimic, or on Ability Modifiers he wants to be able to duplicate, etc.

By this method, a basic Mimic can be built, one who can duplicate the simpler powers of those around him. The Concept of the character should include the conditions under which powers are copied (touch victim, be within a certain range, eat victim's brains, whatever) and how long they last (d10 rounds, all of combat, until sundown, etc). Those who remove the powers they copy from their victims should also take Depower with enough Disadvantages to make it work reliably.

An alternate method of building a Mimic is to give the character "Mimic Points" that work like Device Points, letting the Mimic build his power repertoire up as he wants. Conditions for clearing a Mimic Point for reuse should be established with the Referee. This lets the character copy any power the subject may have, but reduces the total amount of power the character has, as each Attack: Effect must be taken separately.

Finally, you have Mimics who can even copy Traits. This is very powerful and can be a bookkeeping nightmare as the player's Wounds will change frequently. The suggested method is to let the player leave Traits blank, but fill one Trait with "Mimic." Thus, a character who would normally get 4 Traits can now Mimic up to three Traits (or may have one fixed Trait and two Mimickable, etc). Mimics of this type should use the Mimic Points method unless they keep Empowered and Invulnerable as fixed Traits, leaving only one flexible Trait. At higher levels of experience, however, even these characters can be extremely flexible, as taking +4 on a blank Trait gives the character 5 Traits to play with.

Nemesis

A variant of the Mimic is the character who can gain the powers opposing his target, or more powerfully, the exact powers needed to defeat a target. This is a potentially VERY powerful ability, and should generally remain the province of the Referee's "Plot Device Characters."

However, it can be done for player characters if the Referee is willing. The simple "thematic opposition" Nemesis takes the Secondary Group of Nemesis and has the Modifier Group Attack on all his Attack Abilities. His Attack Abilites can use any Effect that the player and Referee agree opposes that used by the target. Obvious pairings include Heat vs. Cold and Blunt (Earth) versus Abrasive (Air), but others will require some work. The opposite of Light is darkness, but should the darkness be a chilling Cold, a spirit- draining Lifeforce Attack or a choking Chemical fog?

Generating any power needed to defeat a target can be very tricky in general, although Device Point characters can make a pretty good shot at it. Attack Abilites made Unstoppable with the Disadvantage that an action must be spent to "calibrate" the attack (-1 Difficulty) work well for this. Parry: Nemesis and Armor: Nemesis are also very good choices, but it is suggested that they be required to spend an action "calibrating" as well with no reduction in Difficulty. In this case, Nemesis means the Defense Ability works against the Primary Effect of the opponent.

Shapeshifter

Another variant of the Mimic is the more powerful variety of shapeshifter, one who can take on the powers and characteristics of anything he imitates. To build a shapeshifter who can take the powers of anyone he turns into, simply make the character up as a Mimic (whatever variety you prefer) and give the character the Noncombat Ability of Shapeshifting, with the Disadvantage that only the powers of the imitated character can be Mimicked. Without this Disadvantage, the Shapeshifter can become an amalgam of characters, picking and choosing which Abilities to Mimic, a very powerful character indeed.

Example: SuperDeformer is a very powerful and versatile shapeshifter, able to copy appearance and superhuman powers of anyone he sees, although with minor differences. In a fight with Brightsword and Kombat, he starts off copying most of Kombat's Abilities, along with a twisted copy of Kombat's appearance. Later in the fight he decides he needs a new attack mode, and a sickly green copy of Brightsword's laser torch grows from his hand, giving him that single ability. The hand holding it now looks like Brightsword's as well.

There are, of course, Shapeshifters who aren't Mimics. At the simplest level you have characters who can change their appearances as a Noncombat Ability, gaining no Combat Abilities in the process.

Also common are characters who only have a set list of powers, but must change form somehow to activate them. Anywhere from someone who grows claws in order to use Attack: Sharp to a kid who says a magic word and transforms into a superhuman adult. The change of form is a Noncombat Ability, or even a Disadvantage (especially if the empowered form is unpleasant). Scale Change frequently accompanies this

sort of shape change, although it doesn't have to. The next highest level of power is the character who has total control over his body, but can't create complex machinery or change chemical composition. His body can form spikes and shoot projectiles (although this should include a Pain Disadvantage) as well as stretching all over the place, but that's about it. A Group Attack: Physical and some Defense Abilities to simulate resiliency can model this type of Shapeshifter. Parallel to this is the "Beastformer" character, who can turn into various animals both real and fantastic. Again, a Group Attack: Physical to simulate claws, hooves and the like is useful. Certain Abilities can be taken as only working in animal forms, such as Advanced Senses or Range (winged flight, etc). A Secondary Effect Group of "Natural Animal Weapons" is possible, including Sharp, Blunt and Chemical (poisons and toxins). Mystical Beastformers with access to a dragon's fire or a thunderbird's lightning should take the Magic Effect Group.

Similar to the Beastformer is the Techformer, who can generate any kind of device from his own body. The same basic design methods can be used, although the Techformer's likely to have a number of Device Points to represent the greater flexibility of technology over animal forms.

The remaining major class of Shapeshifter is the most powerful by far, able to turn into anything that can be imagined and heal wounds by simply rearranging themselves. Generally this sort of character should remain an NPC, as the powers represent a massive plot device. Something like Mimic Points but without the restriction of needing to copy from someone else could be used if a player wanted to play a Shapeshifter of this power level.

Example Concepts:

John Smith, The Guy Next Door, is a master of disguise. This is because he's a shapeshifter who can rearrange his features and change his skin and hair color and texture at will. He can only become someone of roughly his own size and build, but he's so average in those quantities that his range is pretty big. He has Shapeshifting as a Noncombat Ability.

HK-1000 is a shapeshifting hunter-killer android from the future, made of a composite of memory metals and fluid plastics. It can deform itself into any shape and harden or soften its surface at will, as well as project a holographic cloak along its surface to appear like what it has turned into. HK-1000 has the Non-combat Ability of Shapeshifting, letting it look like anything of roughly the same volume. It also has Group Attack: Physical to represent the blades and hammers and shredders it can form out of itself. It has Heal on itself, as wounds flow shut given a few seconds. It also has Grab: Blunt for wrapping itself around a target.

SuperDeformer, as mentioned above, can assume the shape and powers of anyone he sees, but his copies are always slightly wrong. He's built as a Mimic who can Mimic any single power or all powers using Mimic Points, with the special effect that part or all of him becomes a twisted copy of the target. If the ability he copies lies only in the eyes, he can gain it by just changing his upper face, for example, or he could change his whole body. Because there's a definite wrongness about his copies, he doesn't get a Noncombat Ability for Shapeshifting, since it's not really useful enough to call it an Ability. Also, his Mishap results are frequently because of some important flaw in his copy (such as copying a gun but having the bullets stick to the barrel).

Transformation Powers (New Effect Group)

Every so often in the superhero genre, you have a character who can turn people and things into other people and things. While more common in the Fantasy genre, it does pop up occasionally in this one, often in the form of Shrinking Rays and Evil Sorcerors (who infest just about every adventure genre). This ability can be very plot-mangling, so Referees are advised to be very careful when using it, either for players or NPCs.

Transformation is a Secondary Effect Group. Unlike most Effect Groups, it has no set list of individual Effects. Any specific transformation is a single Effect. Examples include Transformation To Stone, Transformation to Animals, Transformation to Lesser Scale (Shrinking Rays), Transformation to Plants, Transformation to Other People, etc. So long as the type of transformation is fairly limited in nature, it can be a single Effect.

Example: Clayshaper uses his enchanted clay to make duplicates of people, then alters the clay figure to distort the victim somehow. He's best at simply turning people into grotesque monsters, but is capable of other uses of his powers. He takes Transformation to Distorted Mockeries as his Primary Effect and Transformation as his Secondary Group.

Example: Medusa can turn living matter to stone at will. She has a few other Abilities, but her main trick is stoning people. Her Primary Effect is Transformation: Living Matter to Stone. She can't do any other kind of Transformation, to she won't be taking Transformation has her Secondary Group.

Using Transformation Attacks

The Ability most used with Transformation is Attack. Attacks with a Transformation Effect cause damage normally (see exception below) but have a new set of Overflow Effects. Usually a specific Attack will only aim for one Overflow Effect, but some can have varying effects.

As an exception to the normal rules, a character hit by an Attack: Transformation will automatically suffer Overflow Effects from an Overflow, and cannot choose to shift the damage up to a higher Wound Level. Any Level of Overflow can be used for effects of a lower Level. If an attack is used at a Level higher than the one needed for Overflow, it still must get an Overflow result to cause the change: for one-shot transformation use Overflow Attack.

Level 1: Changes which don't affect the character significantly in combat can occur. Usually these are simply changes in appearance and have no effect on the character's ability to keep fighting. However, the psychological effects of the change (such as turning a man into a woman) can make the target stop fighting and even flee.

Level 2: Changes which significantly affect the character but don't totally remove him from any combat situation he might be in. Changes can be drastic, such as loss of some Abilities or Traits, or acquisition of new ones. May be used in place of the Imbue Ability to grant minor powers.

Level 3: Wholesale alteration of the character is possible. Anything may be changed. Addition of vast power is possible, but this should only be allowed when the plot calls for it, not as a regular combat tactic. Most of the drastic transformations (to stone, to frogs, etc) will fall into this category.

Level 4+: As with Level 3, but the changes are more likely to be permanent.

As a general rule of thumb, the Transformation should be about as inconvenient to the victim as the corresponding normal Overflow Effect, if not slightly less inconvenient in combat (but with extra problems in noncombat).

Recovering From Transformation

Normally, when a character has completely healed back the Wounds of the type Overflowed, the transformation will end and the character will return to normal. Minor (Level 1) transformations will only last until the end of combat or a few minutes out of combat, while Level 3 transformations can last days or weeks.

However, there are often special conditions which must be met for a transformation in a story to be reversed. Depending on the condition and the nature of the Transformation, this can be simulated with either a Modifier or a Disadvantage.

Special Condition (Modifier): Victim cannot "heal back" from Transformation. Victim will only return to normal when something special has happened, such as being kissed by a princess or getting the forgiveness of the person who transformed the victim. To count as a Modifier, it must make it harder for the victim to recover, or make it take longer.

Example: Clayshaper's victims only return to normal when the statues of them are shaped back into normal form and then dissolved in water. Since you have to capture him and find his statues to undo the transformations, this makes it harder to recover, and counts as a Modifier.

Special Condition (Disadvantage): As with the Modifier, but the victim will recover far more quickly on the average. Usually taken on Level 3 Transformations to make them less dangerous.

Example: Medusa turns her victims to stone, a very inconveniencing effect which must get a Level 3 Overflow to work. However, they only stay in stone form until she leaves the area (gets at least a mile away) as the transformation is maintained by her psychic powers. Killing her would also reverse the transformations. This is a Disadvantage on her Attack, but not a great enough one to merit a change in Difficulty.

Of course, it's best to not even be Transformed, and Armor and other Defensive Abilities can be taken against Transformation. As this is of limited usefulness in most cases, it will often be taken via Device Points or magic.

Transformation Damage

As a default, it hurts to be slowly turned into something else, so Attack: Transformation causes regular damage. However, as a Disadvantage worth -1 Difficulty Level, it doesn't do damage. Instead, the victim keeps a separate "damage" total for the Transformation, and when it would result in an Overflow the victim is changed. Damage from other sources does not speed the transformation in this case as it does with normal Transformation.

Instant Transformation

To change a victim in one shot instead of slowly, the Attack: Transformation can be given the Overflow Attack Modifier, which will generate the Overflow Effect with one shot. Note that unless No Damage is taken as a Disadvantage in this case, both Overflow Effects will occur, leading to a stunned or unconscious victim.

In addition, when attacking someone of lesser Scale, a Level 3 Overflow will often be generated on the first shot. Remember that this can count for Level 1 or 2 as well when seeking lesser effects.

Examples

Medusa - She turns living matter to stone with a glance, but they only stay that way until she moves more than a mile away or is killed. She has her Primary Effect as Transformation of Living Matter to Stone and buys Attack: Transformation of Living Matter to Stone. The process is slow and painful, and can happen all at once or in stages depending on how robust her target is. At Level 1 Overflow, the target takes on a grey, stony appearance and feels rough to the touch, but is otherwise unaffected.

At Level 2 Overflow, the target has a thick stone skin which gives them Armor: Physical, but also slows them down and imposes a -2 to all rolls. This penalty extends to even mental actions, as the target's thinking becomes slower and muddled.

At Level 3 Overflow, the target is solid stone and cannot move or think. While in her presence, the targets can heal normally, but they snap back to normal rapidly if she leaves the area (a Disadvantage).

Clayshaper - His mystic clay lets him make statues of people and then deform the statues to cause the same change in the person. This change doesn't hurt and only happens once he's done reshaping the statue. The more robust his target, the longer it will take him to shape the clay, as the clay itself will take on the toughness of the victim. Only by restoring the clay statue to its original shape and dissolving it in water can the victim be changed back. Dissolving the statue without returning it to normal will trap the victim forever, although a new statue can be made to alter the new form back to the old one. Clayshaper has Secondary Group of Transformation and Primary Effect of Transformation to Twisted Mockeries (it's easier just to mangle the statue). He can only induce changes which would show up on the clay, however. He has taken Attack: Transformation to Twisted Mockeries and Group Attack: Transformation with the disadvantage that the changes must be visible. At Level 1 Overflow, his victims are usually just twisted into some bizarre shape. This has no real effect on combat, although they might no longer be able to use certain devices.

At Level 2 Overflow, he can reshape his victims into forms that hinder them, or give them minor powers, such as winged flight or claws. At Level 3 Overflow, when he uses it, the victim is often turned into an immobile block or blob.

The No Damage Disadvantage means his target doesn't always know anything is amiss until the change hits.

Circe - The sorceress of Homer's stories, she turns men into animals. These animals do not possess any spark of their former intelligence and do not recover unless she wants them to. The transformation isn't painful, for what little that's worth. Her Primary Effect is Transform Men to Animals, while her Secondary Group is Magic. Changing men into unthinking animals is a Level 3 effect, and it happens all at once, needing an Overflow Attack Modifier. The transformation only ends when she wants it to, a Special Condition. Normally, she cannot affect those of her own power level, because the Difficulty of a Level 3 Overflow Attack with the No Damage modifier is Level 4, Limit. However, Circe is Supernormal, and can transform Normals on a Level 2 (Hard) Difficulty. She also often waits for her victims to be asleep from drugged wine before transforming them, making the job even easier.

Noncombat Abilities

Noncombat Abilities flesh out the character so it isn't just an armored warmachine trundling from one fightscene to the next. Often these are the most important parts of a character in terms of characterization and getting the story told. There's a fine line, of course, between a fleshed out character and an "omnicompetent" one who can do just about anything out of combat. If a player asks for more Noncombat Abilities than his Concept would seem to indicate, the Referee should feel free to snip a few. And remind player who have omnicompetent Concepts that those can be very boring to play, suggesting they trim some abilities themselves.

Despite their name, Noncombat Abilities can have an effect on combat. They simple don't do so often enough to be considered true combat powers. For example, flight is a Noncombat Ability in and of itself, even though the Tactical Ability of Range can be defined as flight. But if the characters are in a canyon being fired on from the top, having flight can make a major difference in what options that characters have in combat. The combat rules will flesh out how Noncombat Abilities can affect a fight. As a rule of thumb, if a power seems too weak to really be useful in a fight, it's a Noncombat Ability. This also applies to some of the Combat Abilities in the previous section, if the Referee decides they won't be as useful in his particular campaign. Hypersenses is a good example of a Combat Ability that could be easily demoted, as is any Combat Ability that the character takes a severe enough limitation on, such as Growth only to reach the Scale of all the other characters. Likewise, if a Noncombat Ability turns out to be regularly useful in a fight, make the player pay for it with a slot (it can wait until he gets one from advancement if this comes out in play). If the newly-changed Ability cannot be created using existing Combat Abilities, the player and Referee should work it out using those abilties as a guide. Keep in mind that a single skill or "superpower" can be a Combat Ability in the hands of one character and a Noncombat Ability in the hands of another. Many Abilities have potential uses in combat that not everyone has discovered yet. Again, flight is a good example of this. A fast, agile flier probably has Range and maybe Dodge defined as uses of flight. On the other hand, a slow and unmaneuverable flier would only have the Noncombat Ability of flight and no Combat Abilities attached to it.

Noncombat Abilities can also be refined uses of Combat Abilities, such as using Attack: Cold to air-condition a room.

Here's a short list of suggested Noncombat Abilities:

Movement powers (often attached to Range):

Flight, Gliding, faster swimming and running.

Example: Brightsword can leap and bound around in combat, covering great distances in a single jump. As a Combat Ability this is Range, but it also lets her perform various stunts out of combat when she can concentrate on it. While not as useful as flight, it fits her concept better.

Skills:

Sciences, detective skills, professional abilities, etc. Skills are probably the most common Noncombat Ability.

Example: Tek-7 is extremely good at creating new identities for himself and his friends. This goes beyond simply making fake IDs (although he does that quite well), and includes planting false paper trails in the appropriate systems and agencies. More than once he's broken up a pointless fight by pulling out false credentials and intimidating his opponents into scattering.

Refined Uses of Combat Abilities:

Skywriting with Attack: Heat (flames), Shorting out security systems with Attack: Electrical, Acrobatics based on Dodge, various telekinetic tricks based on Attack: Blunt or various Defense Abilities, Shoring up a structure with blocks of ice (Snare: Cold), etc.

Example: Brightsword's main weapon is a laser torch from an alien spacecraft, and in combat she uses it as a sword for Attack: Light. However, she can also use it for several other things, such as delicate cutting work, lighting a dark room or cauterizing wounds.

Minor Magical Spells:

Disguise spells, Wards and alarms on entrances, scrying, etc.

Example: Doctor Eschaton, while normally embodying sorrow and dismay, can draw such emotions into himself during those rare moments of compassion. This is useful in the aftermath of a battle, when there are victims... and families of the victims.

The gamut from basic first aid to healing magics which can undo even Level 4 Wounds (but not during a pitched fight). Ability to transport others at high speeds. Vehicles and Bases. Government clearance. And so forth.

Example: Doctor Eschaton can ask the winds to carry the entire team rapidly to where they wish to go, using a Favor if he's in a hurry. On arrival, the winds dissipate.

Generally, if it looks like a Combat Ability but takes too long to perform to be useful in Combat, it can be taken as a Noncombat Ability. See the sample characters below for more examples of Noncombat Abilities.

SAMPLE CHARACTERS

THE POWER KNIGHTS

The following are full writeups of the four characters mentioned in the Concepts section, who go by the group name of the Power Knights. These character sheets depict the characters as they are at the start of a campaign, and they do not have all of the Abilities that may have been attributed to them in various examples. They are: Brightsword, Doctor Eschaton, Kombat and Tek-7. Note that they may not have a great deal of Noncombat Abilities, which will be normal for starting characters...Noncombat Abilities are best developed during the course of roleplaying. While the characters presented do not span the full range of what can be done with the rules, they provide useful examples. Any game mechanical notes which would not normally be on a character sheet will be enclosed in brackets, [like so]. Brightsword will have many such notes, the others less.

BRIGHTSWORD (AKA JENNIFER FREE)

Player: Sarah
Concept:
Jonathan Free was a simple working man in the 1950s, a very normal joe. But like many in that decade, he was abducted by a UFO and presumed dead. Over the course of the experiments on him, he gained superhuman strength and resilience, and led a revolt of the test subjects that left him the lone survivor of the UFO. Returning to Earth in an escape pod, he used his new powers and the laser cutting torch he had found to become one of the great heroes of the 1960s. Jennifer is his daughter, and when he died she learned the secret of his double identity as Brightsword. When she first activated his laser torch, the radiations from its power cell triggered her inherited mutations, and she took up the Good Fight.

Traits: Brawn, Empowered, Invulnerable, Mind

Four Traits, including all three 'blunt instrument' Traits. Brightsword is not a very subtle character. Note that Brawn gives her Attack: Blunt and Grab: Blunt for free, while Empowered lets her take two Primary Effects. Invulnerable means she can buy broader defenses.

Scale: Supernormal

The chosen Scale for all player characters in the campaign. The Concept would also have worked with Paranormal if necessary, but not Cosmic.

Hook: Good Citizen

Your basic four color hero outlook. Somewhat naive, but not stupid.

Primary Effects: Blunt, Light

Remember, she gets two Primary Effects since she has Trait Empowered. Any Attack Abilities using either of these two Effects can be used up to Level 3

Secondary Effect Group: Physical

Any Attack Abilities she buys in the Physical Group (Blunt, Sharp, Abrasive) can be used up to Level 2. Since Blunt is a Primary Effect as well, she can use it to Level 3.

Body Type: Tough Organic

Her mutations made her muscle density greater than normal.

Wounds: (7/6/3/2) Level 1 = Bone

7 Bone, 6 Metal, 3 Structural and 2 Critical. Since she's Invulnerable, she can act after a Level 4 Wound.

Attack Abilities

Attack: Blunt [free] - Level 1 is "Jab," Level 2 is "Right Cross" and Level 3 is "Sunday Punch" or "Haymaker."

This Ability is gained free from having Brawn. Because she took Blunt as a Primary Effect, she can use it at all three Levels.

Attack: Light - From her laser torch, a technological item which she never seems to lose and which can't be broken. No special names for each Wound Level.

This Ability costs her a slot. Again, as Light is one of her Primary Effects, she can use this from Level 0 to Level 3.

Attack: Sharp - Also the laser torch, which has a force confinement field that can cut without burning.

This Ability also costs a slot. Because Sharp is not a Primary Effect of hers she cannot use this Ability at Level

3. However, since Sharp is part of her Secondary Group, she can use this attack up to Level 2.

Grab: Blunt [free] - No special names, rarely used.

Another power free from being Trait Brawn. Because Blunt is a Primary Effect of hers, she can apply a Grab up to Level 3.

Attack Ability Modifiers

Overflow Blast - Only applies to her Attack: Light, a stunner setting that her father had a techie ally build in.

Costs a slot. This Modifier could apply to all of Brightsword's attacks since she's Empowered, but that wouldn't fit the Concept of an untrained hero. Later on she might learn nerve strikes that would let her use this Modifier with all her Attacks. It would not cost her additional slots to do this, however.

Defense Abilites

Armor: Physical, Reactive, Mental (Non-damaging) - Her toughened body resists simple physical injury and lets her ignore extremes of temperature. Her strong will makes her hard to mentally control.

Overall this costs three slots. One for Physical, one for Reactive Energy and one for Mental (Non-damaging). If she were not Trait Invulnerable, the same coverage would cost nine slots, one for each specific Effect in the three Groups.

Parry: Physical - Uses laser torch to block incoming matter attacks. Will not be able to block certain Physical attacks such as wind-based Abrasive attacks.

This costs her one slot. To get the same effect without being Invulnerable would cost four slots: one each for Abrasive, Blunt and Sharp, then a fourth to buy the Linked Modifier to let them all work at once. It becomes obvious how useful Invulnerable can be.

Dodge - Some acrobatics training before gaining her powers.

One slot spent here. Nothing special.

Defense Ability Modifiers

Defend: Parry - She can interpose her blade between someone else and an attack, but can only use Defend at the +1 Difficulty level.

This Modifier also costs one slot and only applies to her Parry Ability. She has taken a Disadvantage on it to keep it within Concept.

Draw Fire: Parry - She can deflect attacks onto other targets, although it must make sense (no blocking a punch onto someone not nearby).

This Modifier costs one slot and applies to her Parry Ability. To Draw Fire using

Dodge or Armor would require spending an extra slot for each of those. If she wanted to Draw Fire for all three Armors, she's need to pay the cost three times or make the Armors Linked, one case where Linked is actually useful on Armor.

Tactical Abilities

Rally - Brightsword's infectious optimism can help her friends ignore the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, as well as the bullets.

One slot spent. A possible Disadvantage to take would be that she has to be heard by all of her allies for it to work, since it's a speech.

Range - Leaping and bounding several dozen meters at a time with her superstrong legs.

Her final slot is spent on this Ability. She may wish to later take the Carry Modifier on it.

Noncombat Abilities

Acrobatics - While having little formal training, her formidable natural abilities augment this. She can do things like walk tightropes, jump chasms, balance on one finger and so forth.

Evolutionary Advantages - Her mutations give her faster healing than normal, but not fast enough to buy the Heal Ability (yet). She can recover Wounds five times as quickly as listed for Tough Organics. In addition, her senses are more acute than normal, giving her -1 Difficulty on perception checks out of combat. She hasn't yet learned to tune out the distractions of combat and use her senses in that situation.

Laser Torch - Can be used for cutting and welding, as well as lighting up an area. May have other settings her father had built into it that she is not yet aware of.

All of these are some basic ideas for things she can do with her powers that aren't strictly Combat Abilities. The player will probably develop more as the campaign progresses.

Disadvantages

Inexperienced - May not always take the optimum action in a situation, player will be encouraged to make "rank amateur" type mistakes until the character has been active a while.

In addition, Brightsword has a few Disadvantages willingly taken on her Abilities. She hasn't taken any which change the Difficulties, though, since she's meant to be very straightforward.

Description: Originally a gangly 6 feet (1.83 meters) tall, she has filled out with muscles and is no longer gangly. She has short brown hair and violet eyes, but in costume wears a long blonde wig and blue contact lenses. Her costume is a white bodysuit which covers her torso and legs. It is accented by red piping on the shoulders and outside of the legs, and there is a red sword on the

front of her torso, pointed down. She wears blue leather gloves, boots and a blue domino mask affixed by spirit glue.

A description isn't absolutely necessary, of course, but it helps the player get into character if she can picture Brightsword. The fairly simple precautions taken to protect her identity reflect the tone of the campaign.

DOCTOR ESCHATON ("THE DARK PLACE IN MEN'S SOULS.")

Player: Chris

Concept: Originally the ruler of a vast extradimensional domain, he was the guardian of the Door. When the world ends, he will open the Door and let the next world begin. This is the origin of the name he took among humans, as "eschaton" means the end times.

However, when a demonic invasion threatened not only the mortal plane but also his own, he joined with the 1960s Power Knights to defeat them. This cost him much of his power and made it so he could not return to his domain. His power will return in less than a century, which for him is an eyeblink. He is whiling away the time until then playing the part of hero which the mortals have placed him in.

With his taste of mortality has come impatience, however, and after thirty years he has had enough and is seeking to regain his power NOW.

Traits: Empowered, Invulnerable, Mind

Scale: Supernormal

Hook: Hidden Agenda - Regain lost power. Poses as Good Citizen.

Primary Effects: Emotional, Spiritual

Secondary Effect Group: Magic

Body Type: Semi-Organic (magical simulacrum)

Wounds: (6/5/4/2) Level 1 = Bone

Attack Abilities

Attack: Magic - A wide variety of offensive spells usable at Level 1 or Level 2. Some names include: The Flames of Desire (Heat), Blades of Sarthos (Sharp), Fatal Purity of Essence (Light), Hammer of Souls (Lifeforce).

Snare: Emotional - Usually used to cause sorrow or angst (the feeling that nothing matters). Often prefaced by saying "Look into the darkness that hides in your heart!" or something to that effect.

Attack Ability Modifiers

Group Attack - Allows Attack: Magic above.

Allowing a Group Attack this broad can be unbalancing, the Referee should be very careful in allowing it.

Defense Abilities

Armor: Magic +1 - While he may have only a little of his own powers, he has lost none of his natural defenses to the magic of others.

All Magic Effect Group attacks against him have 2 Levels less of effect.

Hide +2 - "The shades of sorrow" cloak him almost all the time, giving him -2 to be hit. He can deepen the shades at will and become almost impossible to find.

Tactical Abilities

Magic Favors (4) - As an aloof cosmic being, he had no need for the good will of others. He has since built up some trust in the mystic community.

Noncombat Abilities

Flight - A simple spell allows him to move through the air, but usually not quickly enough to matter in combat.

Immortality - Simply put, he cannot be killed by any means. His body is simply a construct of his magics. But he can still feel pain and be incapacitated, and the more damage he takes the longer he needs to recover. Thus he avoids getting "killed" if possible. Magic - An almost endless supply of obscure spells, the more powerful of which generally use Favors. In addition, he knows a great deal about magic in a scholarly sense.

Senses - He can see into the soul of any living being and find the hidden guilt and pain. He will also gain a vague impression what the hidden things are about. "You killed a man, this I know...."

Disadvantages

Detachment - Sometimes it's hard to get him to consider mundane things. Like the combat currently going on around him. Inhumanity - People feel somewhat uneasy around him. While this can work for him in some cases, it generally is a liability.

Description: A pale-skinned and thin man with unkempt white hair. Dresses in loose clothing which is generally concealed behind a cloak of shadows. Very enigmatic at times, but has loosened up a little. His spells tend towards the subtle, not the flashy, except during a fight. He has been known to "ham it up" in combat.

Often stays near Brightsword. Her father was one of the few mortals he actually considered a friend, and he has adopted a slightly protective stance towards Jennifer which would embarrass him if it were noticed.

Kombat (Kenjiro aka Kenjiro Tanaka)

Player: Andrew

Concept: In the mists of remote northern mountains in Japan live an ancient race of mystical beings, reputed to have been at the height of their civilization when mankind was learning to use fire. For millenia they have kept to themselves, but recently the urge to reclaim their position as pre-eminent in the world has arisen. Kenjiro was one of many being trained for the army of superwarriors that would take over the outside world, but he realized that what his people were doing was wrong. He fled the secret village and made his way to mankind's cities where he drifted from job to job, seeking to learn more about his mysterious inborn powers and hopefully someday prevent his people from conquering the world. He ran afoul of Tek-7 a few months ago in Chiba and after the two fought to a standstill they became fast friends. Kenjiro came to the United States with his new friend and established the false identity of Kenjiro Tanaka with Tek-7's help. Because of his videogame-like style of fighting and psychopowers, the press dubbed him Kombat.

Traits: Brawn, Fast, Mind

Scale: Supernormal

Hook: Hidden Agenda - Stop his people, poses as Adrenaline Junkie.

Primary Effect: Sensory

Secondary Group: Physical

Body Type: Tough Organic

Wounds: (4/3/2/1) Level 1 = Bone

Attack Abilities

Attack: Blunt [free] - Various obscure martial arts maneuvers as well as simpler moves he's picked up on the streets.

Attack: Sensory - Psychopowers. A bolt of green electricity which causes intense pain in the target. Usually emanates from his eyes, but can be made into a halo around his whole body.

Attack: Sharp - Although he rarely uses this ability, Kenjiro does have claws which sheath in his fingertips. He has also been known to use one of Tek-7's pistols, but never at more than Level 1.

Grab: Blunt [free] - Various holds, some picked up from judo, some unique. His Level 2 Grab is called "The Mist From The Valley."

Attack Ability Modifiers

Barrage - Used with Attack: Blunt, he calls this "The Plentiful Fists of the Summer Rains."

Reflex Attack - Used with Attack: Sensory, it is the halo effect mentioned above.

Defense Abilities

Dodge - In the course of dodging, he can leap to heights of several meters and has impossible hang time.

Parry: Blunt, Sharp - Sometimes complicated block maneuvers. With the aid of kevlar wrist-bands Tek-7 built, he can even Parry bullets if he can see the shooter. His arms glow green with his psychopower when he does this.

Defense Ability Modifiers

Draw Fire: Dodge - "The Irritating Feints of the Butterfly." He flutters back and forth in front of his chosen target, sometimes bouncing off the empty air.

Tactical Abilities

Magic Favors (0) - None yet, but he has the potential to use his powers to communicate with natural spirits and ghosts.

> **Included as a justification for later purchase of Favors by the player.**

Speed Points (3) - He's superhumanly fast in terms of reflexes, although his running speed is only marginally superhuman.

Noncombat Abilities

Acrobatics - His mind and body are one, and he can perform truly impossible feats when he concentrates. Brightsword is as clumsy as a water buffalo by comparison.

Fake Identity - Thanks to Tek-7 he has a very convincing paper trail establishing him as a Japanese national in the US on a student visa. Once he's learned enough to make it convincing himself, he'll be establishing residency and going for US citizenship.

Night Vision - He has superior low-light vision because of his catlike eyes.

> **Kombat has just emerged from a very insular culture, and has yet to develop many talents outside of fighting.**

Illegal Alien - He's not legally documented anywhere, and if his fake ID is ever pierced, he could be in trouble.

Innocent - He's only been in the outside world for a few months now. He's unfamiliar with many things we take for granted, and trusts too easily.

Pain - When Kombat uses his Attack: Sensory at Level 3 of effect, he suffers a Level 1 Wound, but gets a -1 Difficulty on the roll. He cannot choose to roll at normal difficulty and avoid pain.

At this point, his powers are simple enough not to take major Disadvantages on them, but as noted in the Disadvantages section he has the potential for some big ones.

Description: Lithe young Japanese man with a vaguely feline appearance. This is enhanced when his claws come out and he falls into a fighting stance. His eyes are slitted like a cat's, but he wears colored contacts over them when attempting to work on his "secret ID."

In costume he wears whatever loose-fitting fighting clothing he has handy, usually a gi (karate outfit) from the dojo he's got a job teaching at. He also wears a half-mask over his lower face, pulls his hair back in a ponytail and removes the contact lenses.

TEK-7

Player: Ben

Aliases: Carl Benson, Ben Carlson, James Danner, Tim Boche, others

Concept: Hidden deep within the bureaucratic webs of the US Government lies a spider with no name. Those few who have inklings of its existence call it the Chameleon Bureau, for its ability to assume the aspect of other projects in order to acquire funding. It is a government unto itself, doing what it will with the taxpayers' money. One of its many projects was to create the ultimate assassin through a combination of genetic tinkering, RNA-implant teaching and hypnosis, the Technologically Enhanced Killer program. One of the subjects, once no more than another forgotten homeless man, turned out to be the downfall of the project. Although without memory of his old life, TEK number seven was now loose and seeking to destroy the Chameleon Bureau once and for all. As an ironic comment, he took his old subject code as his new identity...Tek-7.

After a few successful strikes against the Bureau gained him positive publicity (the government,

while embarrassed, was actually glad to have these things found and destroyed), he decided to take on the mantle of superhero. Sure, the others may be overly idealistic, but that made them easier to manipulate.

Traits: Brawn, Fast, Mind, Tech

Scale: Supernormal

Hook: Vengeance against the Chameleon Bureau

Primary Effect: Sharp

Secondary Effect Group: Devices

Body Type: Tough Organic

Wounds: (5/3/2/1) Level 1 = Bone

Attack Abilities

Attack: Blunt [free] - Level 1 represent various martial arts he's been taught by RNA-drip. Level 2 involves use of his Power Baton Device.

Attack: Sharp - He's never without lots of guns and bladed weapons. Level 1 attacks are various pistols and knifes, Level 2 are sub- machineguns and sometimes swords, Level 3 are heavy machineguns. Only the most thorough of searches can completely remove this attack.

Grab: Blunt [free] - Level 1 are various holds, Level 2 requires he use his steel bullwhip (which can also inflict a Level 2 Sharp Attack).

Attack Ability Modifiers

Burst - Attack: Sharp can be used on multiple targets, whether spraying machinegun fire or rapid knife work.

Barrage will come later.

Defense Abilities

Armor: Sharp - Armor mesh implanted under his skin, made from kevlar and other plastics, it cannot be detected by metal detectors.

Dodge - Enhanced reflexes let him get out of the way of most attacks.

Hide - Stealth skills let him find hiding places in even the most open areas. Once revealed, however, he can't hide again without some kind of distraction to make people not see him.

Tactical Abilities

Device Points (6) - He can make anything out of anything. Usually what he makes is useful in combat.

Speed Point (1) - Enhanced reflexes.

Noncombat Abilities

Contacts - Not many yet, but he knows a few Important People and is good at getting them to owe him favors.

Devices - At any given time he'll have dozens of minature gadgets on his person, even when in civilian ID. Bug detectors, phone taps, miniature cameras, computerized slot machine manipulators, what have you. Your basic spy arsenal.

Skills - Has expert-level ability in all areas of intrusion and the art of killing. He can scale sheer walls without equipment (although he probably has the equipment), slip out of handcuffs and

strait jackets, diguise himself and his voice and many other things. Since his abilities were implanted into him, he's still finding new skills that he didn't know he had.

Special Skill: Paper Trail - Tek-7 can generate a totally convincing "Paper Trail" for anyone, or likewise erase a real one. Beyond simply making false IDs, this means implanting birth certificates in records offices, establishing drivers licenses and credit histories, all the little things that make a person real on paper. Since he no longer has his own original identity, he is obsessed with making new ones.

He may seem way too competent at first glance, but keep in mind that not every adventure will involve sneaking around. Not to mention, his interpersonal skills are quite poor, making it difficult for him to interact normally with people.

Disadvantages

Cold Fish - His original personality was erased and nothing put in its place...personality is a liability to an assassin. He's working on his personal skills, but they're still very lacking. No Identity - He has no memory of his original identity. Any paper trail he may have had (birth certificate, rap sheet, etc) was erased by the Chameleon Bureau in preparation for making him an assassin. He is mildly obssessed with making new identities.

Description: Devoid of any artifice, he's a well-muscled young man with black hair and blue eyes, roughly 5'10" (1.77 meters) tall and 220 lbs (100 kg). However, his hair is usually bleached blond so as to better take various dyes and coloring agents, and he often wears colored contact lenses and false facial hair.

He has two costumes that he regularly uses. One is a black stealth suit with many pouches and compartments for intrusion gear. He avoids wearing this on "public" missions. His "public" costume is a bright yellow with black accents and lots of technological bits attached to it (for ease of access when he needs to make something on the spot) and a full helmet, usually with various sensors in it. He looks like a gaudy action figure in this costume, which is exactly his intention.

Note that none of the characters have used any of the listed Difficulty- Modifying Disadvantages. Beginning characters frequently won't have the kind of high-level powers which require such Disadvantages.

Sample Villains

Keeping in mind that it's possible to play villains as PCs, here are a pair of villains set in the same world as the Power Knights. The Referee will also in general want to write up the more important antagonists as full characters. Less important foes can be written up as Simple NPCs (see page 68).
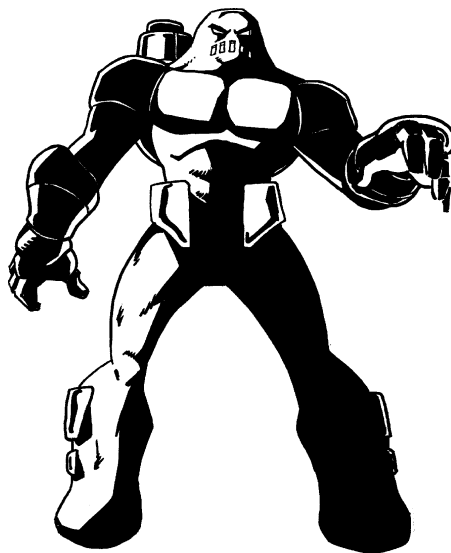
Darkshield (aka John Raven)

Player: Referee

Concept: Back in the 1960s, one of the original Brightsword's archfoes was Soviet agent Sergei Ravenoff. Ravenoff played the part of a gaudy "supervillain" as cover for his espionage activities, and chose to oppose Brightsword on the grounds that the patriotic hero wasn't swift enough mentally to figure out Darkshield's ulterior motives. However, Sergei was killed accidentally during a battle in a nuclear reactor, leaving behind a wife and son in the United States who had been part of his cover and knew nothing of his dual life.

Recently, John Raven, son of "Scott Raven" (Sergei), discovered his father's powersuit and other equipment. He swore revenge on the hero who killed his father, but found that Brightsword was dead already. When the new Brightsword took up the mantle, John decided to avenge himself on the successor.

Darkshield's armor has been upgraded from the original 1960s vintage by John's electronics skills, and is exceptionally good at defending against electromagnetic attacks. Unfortunately for him, Brightsword packs a mean punch too.

Traits: Brawn, Fast, Tech plus Invulnerable from his powersuit Scale: Normal, upgraded to Super-normal in the powersuit

Hook: Vengeance (against Brightsword)

Primary Effect: Magnetic

Secondary Group: Electromagnetic Energy

 May later change to Devices

Body Type: Organic

Wounds (without suit): (5/3/1/0)

Level 1 = Bruise

Wounds (with suit): (7/5/2/1)

Level 1 = Bone

Attack Abilities

Attack: Blunt [free] - Darkshield is not especially trained in hand to hand combat, but he can punch for a Level 1 Wound.

Attack: Electromagnetic Energy - Various attacks in the EM spectrum, bought as a Group Attack. See Modifiers below. Note that he can only use Magnetic at Level 3, the other two Effects (Light, Electrical) are limited to Level 2.

Grab: Blunt [free]

Attack Ability Modifiers

Group Attack: Electromagnetic Energy

Extra Range: On Attack: EM. He can hit anything he can see, thanks to the advanced targeting computers in his helmet. However, this is harder than attacking in close, for a +1 Difficulty to any Not Close attacks.

Defense Abilities

Armor: Physical, Electromagnetic Energy - -1 Wound Level from all attacks in those two Groups. Physical armor is composite armor plating over ballistic cloth and padding. Electromagnetic armor is from power accumulators that siphon off energy from attacks of that nature.

Parry: Electromagnetic Energy - Can turn back EM energy with the fields generated by his suit. However, he has not learned to direct these attacks back at anyone (no Draw Fire Modifier yet).

Defense Ability Modifiers

Absorb: Applied to Armor: EM. He can boost the gain on his suit's siphons and use the energy to repair damage to the suit.

Tactical Abilities

Device Points (2) - Frequently has spare components which can be attached to his armor for variable effects.

Focus - By letting power build in his armor's circuits, Darkshield can gain a few seconds of improved performance.

Range - The armor has thrusters allowing flight.

Speed Point (1) - Cybernetic enhancements in his armor give him improved reaction speed.

Noncombat Abilities

Movement - Flight at speeds of up to 400 miles per hour is possible with the suit's thrusters.

Sealed Environment - Air supply for a half hour is contained in the suit's backpack, plus baffles let him breathe normally during high speed flight.

Skills - John Raven is a brilliant electrical and mechanical engineer, and has improved on his father's armor immensely.

Telekinesis - He has minor abilities to move metallic objects with his magnetic powers. This may later evolve into a Combat Ability.

Disadvantages

Absorb - This can only repair damage to the armor. If he takes Wounds from a source that's obviously not hurting the armor, such as Mental attacks or attacks when he isn't in the armor, these Wounds cannot be recovered by using Absorb.

Inexperience - He's an electronics genius, but not a trained combatant. He often makes foolish mistakes in a fight and sometimes forgets to use all the advantages he has built into it (such as the Speed Point).

Powersuit - All of his powers are part of his Darkshield powersuit. If it is lost or damaged he's in trouble. In addition, all of his attacks count as Devices Group for purposes of defending against them, despite the fact he doesn't have Device Group (yet).

Appearance: Out of armor, he's a nondescript man in his 30s, in reasonable shape and with glasses. He has sandy brown hair and blue eyes and stands 6' (1.83m) tall.

The Darkshield armor is a glossy black powersuit with molded musculature and built-up areas on the arms and legs to house his attack powers and thrusters respectively. A bulky backpack holds his air supply and generators. The armor makes him stand 6'5" (1.96m) tall. His face is covered except for two thin eyeslits that glow red.

HEAT LIGHTNING (AKA JASON ROSSUM)

Player: Referee

Concept: Jason had always been fast. Really fast. But he was also incredibly shy, a fact that kept him from showing off his speed around other people. But that was before Tina. He'd have done anything to catch her eye, and finally one day he hit on a plan. He'd create a secret identity like in the comics...after all, the women always fell for the dashing hero at first, giving the real guy a chance to get to know them. Unfortunately, his plan went horribly wrong. He had no way of knowing, racing alone in the desert like he always did, that he gave off incredible heat when he ran

full tilt. So he ran up to Tina, swept her off her feet...and charred her to a cinder.

Horrified and panicked, he kept running. He's been running ever since. Police figured out who he was from eyewitness reports (his mask wasn't very good), so he couldn't just go home and try to pretend it never happened. With no real skills and hunted by the law, he had to turn to crime to live. He's been getting very good at it, and at uses of his forcefield-generated speed. He's not sure if he's more afraid of being caught or of not being caught.

Jason is surrounded in a sort of psychokinetic exoskeleton that allows him to move at incredible speeds and protects him from the negative effects of this. He's also learned how to pick up massive static electrical charges and drop them on targets. Currently he does work where finesse is not needed.

Traits: Fast, Invulnerable, Mind

Scale: Supernormal

Hook: Fugitive

Primary Effect: Electricity

Secondary Group: Physical

Body Type: Organic

Wounds: (5/2/2/2)

Attack Abilities

Attack: Physical - Group Effect (see below). Blunt usually means punching his foe. He can give his forcefield an edge to allow Sharp attacks. And he can cause Abrasive damage by grabbing a foe and dragging him along the pavement for a second or two before letting go. Attack: Electricity - Builds up static charges and then zaps targets with thousands of volts. When he's using this attack, a trail of blue sparks follows him and traces out the last several seconds worth of his path.

Attack: Heat - Can only be used at Level 1, and only as part of his Reflex Attack (see below). Has a few Disadvantages.

Attack Ability Modifiers

Barrage - for Attack: Physical. A withering hail of attacks on a single target. He has not yet learned how to use Burst and Barrage at the same time.

Burst - for Attack: Physical. He can run past several people and hit all of them. Using this with Abrasive often means he picks up a cloud of grit in his wake and blasts it into his foes.

Group Effect - for Attack: Physical.

Reflex Attack - for Attack: Heat. When using his powers, he's surrounded in a nimbus of heat strong enough to fatally injure an unprotected Normal. He needs no roll to activate it, due to the Disadvantages on it. See below for details on the Disadvantage. Only affects those who hit him physically or who he grabs/carries.

Defense Abilities

Armor: Electromagnetic Energy, Physical, Reactive Energy - his skintight forcefield dampens the effects of all non-mental attacks. However, it doesn't block everything, allowing certain frequencies of sound attack (Sensory, Awareness) and hard radiation (Lifeforce) through.

Dodge - He's fast.

Tactical Abilities

Range: Carry - He has to stay with the target of his Carry, but he can carry an unwilling target. This is useful, since few would willingly let him carry them...his Reflex Attack would fry them. Speed Points (0) - He's fast, but still a little uncoordinated, so he hasn't bought any Speed Points.

Noncombat Abilities

Speed Tricks - He hasn't developed many noncombat uses for his powers, thanks to the damaging effect of his powers, but he has figured out a few of the standard speed tricks. He can run across water (but it's slippery), windmill his arms to blow things over, fuse sand into glass by running over it several times, and so forth.

Disadvantages

Age - He's only 17, with only a partial high school education (he went on the run 2 years ago).

Heat Shield - His Reflex Attack activates automatically any time he uses his powers. It stays active for an amount of time related to how long his powers were in use: zipping through a door-way would cause him to flare up for about a second, running for three hours would leave him dangerous for several minutes afterward. Anything that touches his field suffers a Bone Wound from Heat. Note that this field starts a few millimeters above his skin, so he can wear a skintight costume and not have it burn off.

Wanted for murder - He can't stay in one place for long before he has the law sniffing after him. He can't hold down an honest job, nor can he use his powers to support himself very well (he destroys what he steals). This forces him to work for others as hired muscle, putting him in many situations where he'll run into the law.

Appearance: A gangly 17-year-old with buzzcut (burned off) black hair and green eyes. He's about 6'1" (1.85m) and 140 lbs (64kg) and a mixed Slavic/African heritage. His costume is a red bodysuit that covers his entire body and a bandanna across his lower face. When he has the time and money to get fancy, he paints his upper face light blue and stitches a blue lightning bolt into his costume, but since his costumes tend to get destroyed quickly anyway he's never exactly the same.

Note: Heat Lightning could have gone for a "Friction Effects" Secondary Group, containing Abrasive, Electricity and Heat, taking Blunt for his Primary Effect. However, this didn't really fit his concept, so it wasn't done.

Task Resolution

While it is possible to fully roleplay the resolution to anything the players want their characters to do, in most cases a random system is desirable, either to help less experienced roleplayers or to inject an element of chance. In Modern Knights, two ten-sided dice (2d10) are rolled for the majority of things calling for that element of chance, including task resolution.

Degree	Overkill	Success	Mixed	e	Mishap
Automatic	16+	15-5	4-2	-	-
Easy	17+	16-10	9	8-2	less than 2
Hard	19+	18-12	11	10-3	2 or less
Tasking	20+	19-15	14-12	11-6	5 or less
Limit	21+	20-17	16-15	14-9	8 or less

Anything a player wants his character to attempt with have a Difficulty rating from 0 (Automatic) to 4 (Limit of Ability). Anything easier or more trivial than Difficulty 0 can happen the way the player describes it without needing a roll. Tasks harder than Difficulty 4 are impossible for the character to even attempt.

When making a roll against a Difficulty, the player rolls 2d10 and compares the result to the table below:

Results above 20 or below 2 can occur because of bonuses to skills or penalties from adverse conditions like heavy rain or pain. Success and Failure are basically just that, nothing special about them. Overkill results mean that the character has done much better than expected, sometimes with negative consequences, but not always. In Appendix A you will find a sample tables for Overkill results, but feel free to tailor such tables to each player's character. Overkill should generally do something interesting, not just increase the damage of the attack.

Mixed results are successes with some minor cost, such as doing less damage than hoped, realizing you only have d10 shots left or damaging yourself. Such results are generally dependent on the ability used, so no general table will be presented.

Mishaps are Really Bad Mistakes, which can severely affect the flow of battle. Again, a sample table will be presented, but feel free to make your own. As a simple default, Mishap on Attack Abilities means you hit yourself or an ally. On Defense or Tactical Abilities, the Ability can be lost for the rest of combat.

See Appendix A for sample tables for Overkill, Mixed and Mishap results. Players and Referees are encouraged to create their own customized tables for these results.

Both PCs and NPCs use this chart to determine the results of a Difficulty roll, although less important NPCs may suffer a penalty (see later). Schematic NPCs (ones not built using the normal character creation rules) have their own charts to follow, but still may use this one occasionally, such as when breaking out of a Grab.

Modifiers to Rolls: General Rules

Many factors can change the base Difficulty of a roll or modify the actual number rolled on the dice. Since there's more than one way to roll (see Schematic NPCs), it's necessary to devise a conversion chart for such modifiers. The only time it is necessary to convert is when PCs fight SNPCs and therefore don't use the same charts to hit, but players may wish to turn Difficulty modifiers into dice modifiers (at Referee's discretion). Only MODIFIERS FROM SITUATION may be fed into this table. Modifiers to Difficulty due to Ability Modifiers and Disadvantages cannot be converted into bonuses and penalties to dice rolls. Similarly, bonuses to rolls due to taking the Ability multiple times remain numerical bonuses and cannot be converted to changes in Difficulty.

To use the chart, read down to the line with the lowest SNPC modifier when turning Difficulties into dice modifiers. Positive Difficulty modifiers become negative roll modifiers and vice versa. SNPCs are balanced slightly differently than PCs, meaning that they suffer more from penalties and benefit more from advantages.

Example: Tek-7 Dodges, which normally gives opponents a +1 Difficulty. His opponent is an SNPC, so that translates into a -4 to hit Tek-7.

Example: Kombat has improved his Attack: Sensory and made it +3. He cannot trade this +3 in for a -1 Difficulty. However, if he does a really nifty stunt with his martial arts and gains a +3 to hit on Attack: Blunt, he can instead roll at -1 Difficulty.

Example: It's VERY foggy, and all ranged attacks are at -2 for PCs and regular NPCs. Consulting the chart, that means SNPCs suffer -3 to ranged attacks. A wind power is used and the Referee decides that reduces the penalty to -2 for SNPCs, which turns into -1 for PCs.

Note that turning Difficulty modifiers into dice roll modifiers will increase the chances of either Mishap or Overkill (depending on if it's a bonus or penalty) when done by players and fully-written-up NPCs, so the Referee should only allow it occasionally.

Positive or Negative Modification		
SNPC Roll	PC/NPC Roll	Difficulty
1	1	0
2	1	0
3	2	0
4	3	1
5	3	1
6	4	1
7	5	1
8	6	2

Possible Modifiers

Most modifiers are penalties, since the task resolution chart and the Difficulties assigned to Abilities assume at least fairly good conditions for use.

PC Penalty Possibilities

-1 Minor weather inconveniences, low lighting, character skipped breakfast, makeshift tools, etc.

-2 Major weather inconveniences, night time darkness, pain effects, rushing a complicated job, etc.

-3 or Severe weather alert is out, total darkness, foe is dodging,

+1 Difficulty fighting in a crowd of innocents, Multiple Action Penalty, etc.

+2 Difficulty Trying to do something you have no training in at all.

PC Bonus Possibilities

+1 Good roleplaying of action, access to cutting-edge tools or superior weapons, etc.

+2 Excellent roleplaying, good use of Noncombat Ability to complement action in combat, etc.

+3 or Target is Grabbed or Snared, target is unresisting, astounding roleplaying

-1 Difficulty complementary use of Noncombat Abilities, etc.

-2 Difficulty Extra time is taken out of combat to use a Noncombat Ability.

Two main types of modifier here bear further explanation: Multiple Action Penalty (MAP) and complementary use of Abilities. In addition, luck can come into play as well, and will be covered in this section.

Multiple Action Penalty

Every round, players may perform a single Action without any penalty. But sometimes things get hectic and characters need to do more in less time, juggling several actions at once. Sometimes this is just the character working faster, but other times it's actually an attempt to combine two Abilities into a new synthesis.

Whatever the reason, any time a character takes more than one action per turn, all rolls that round are at +1 Difficulty. Some Abilities require spending an Action even if they don't require a roll… they're automatically successful but still make other activities harder. One notable Ability that requires a roll but not an Action is Range. Regardless of whether an Ability requires roll or an Action, however, each ability may ONLY BE USED ONCE per round. If you want to attack someone twice with the same Ability, take the Barrage Modifier, and if you want to attack multiple targets with the same Ability, take the Burst Modifier. Inflicting damage on a Grabbed target is a separate type of Action, regardless of the Ability used to do it. This is the one exception to using the same Ability twice in one round. **Note:** the player must declare his intent to perform multiple Actions before making his first roll for the round. If this is not done, only one Action may be taken.

Any number of Actions may be taken beyond the first and only incur the +1 Difficulty. Just keep in mind that the more times you roll, the more likely a Mishap becomes.

Unless specified by the player, Noncombat Abilities that can be used in combat do not take an Action. Of course, many Noncombat Abilities take too long to be performed in combat at all.

Example: Brightsword gets attacked by surprise and doesn't have the luxury of taking only a single Action per round. She decides to block and attack this round, activating her Parry while also using Attack: Blunt to smash a villain in the face. Her Parry, normally Level 1 (Easy), is now Level 2 (Hard). If she wanted to use her Attack: Blunt at Level 3 of damage, it would be Level 4 (Limit) Difficulty. She decides to only lightly bash the guy (Level 1 damage, Level 2 Difficulty) in case he's not superhuman.

Example: Kombat wants to grab one thug and use him to hit another. Since the thugs are only Normals, he doesn't have to attack above Level 1 to take them out, so he decides to try and perform all three actions (grab thug, swing thug, hit other thug) at once. If he fails one, he fails all the remaining rolls, says the Referee. He has two Level 2 (Hard) rolls and one Level 1 (Easy) roll to make. It's Hard to grab the thug, then Easy to harm the held thug by swinging him into something (-1 Difficulty for Grabbed target) and Hard again to make the "something" be the other thug. He only suffers a +1 Difficulty for all Actions, despite taking more than two. Recall also that he could attack two targets without using Burst because one attack was on a Grabbed target.

Complementary Abilities

Sometimes two great powers go great together, as they say. When two Abilities used by a character seem to help each other, the Referee can give the player a bonus to his rolls or lessen the Difficulty, depending on how much the Abilities complement each other. Sometimes only one of the two rolls will get a bonus, and sometimes one of the Abilities won't require a roll at all, just some good roleplaying.

When a Noncombat Ability is used to help in combat, the player should convince the Referee it's plausible and then describe how it will work. Bonuses will depend not only on how well it would work, but also on how interesting and original it is. Using the same trick twice never works quite as well... if you want a permanent bonus, buy it.

Example: Tek-7 wants to use his ability to make fake IDs to help him in combat. Obviously, he can't stop the action and make an ID up in the middle of a fight. But he could have prepared a convincing-looking ID in advance that will let him shock his foes into freezing for a moment. The referee agrees that this is plausible, and Tek-7 pulls out an FBI badge, shouting "You're under arrest!" His opponent, Heat Lightning, is afraid of being caught by the law, and freezes up enough to give Tek-7 a +2 to hit.

Example: Doctor Eschaton is facing a demon and needs to find a way past its Armor: Magic. He decides that his Magic Skill would let him know about this type of demon, and the Referee decides that a Hard roll (with no Action spent) will give Eschaton +2 on all attacks against the demon, making Overkills more likely.

Example: Crasher is your basic flying brick. He usually leads off a fight by flying into his opponent at full tilt. The Referee gives him -1 Difficulty on this attack his first time, IF the opponent isn't familiar with Crasher's favored tactics. The second time he uses it in a fight, the Referee might give a +1 to his roll. After that, opponents know to duck.

When a Combat Ability is used for this, the character will have to overcome Multiple Action Penalty (unless he's using Range). Again, the player will have to describe how this combination will work and the Referee will determine what bonuses are gained. Usually the "main" Ability used will get a bonus that counters the MAP and the others will be rolled as normal. The most common example is Grab and Squeeze. A character uses Grab to get a hold on someone and then does damage to his held target. This is so common that the bonus is built into the power, held targets are -1 Difficulty to attack.

Example: Kombat wants to dazzle his foe with an array of stunts before kicking him in the head. The stunts will have the added benefit of making him harder to hit. The Actions to be combined are Dodge and Attack: Blunt. The Referee decides that if the Dodge is successful at +1 Difficulty, then the Attack will suffer no MAP. Even if the Dodge fails, Kombat will get +1 to his harder Attack roll, since it was kind of dazzling.

Luck

Good Luck

The easiest way to simulate a consistently lucky character is to have the character buy Speed Points. This way, bad rolls can be turned around into good ones. Other aspects of good luck can be simulated by a few Magic Favors and Noncombat effects.

Note: if a character's Concept includes luckiness but not speed, the Referee may allow the player to purchase Speed Points without taking Trait Fast for his character.

Bad Luck

A character may have bad luck as a Disadvantage. This may only affect the character out of combat (always missing the bus, phone ringing in the shower, etc), but it can have an effect on combat as well.

If a character is unlucky in combat, the Referee should occasionally roll a d10 and subtract four, counting all positive results as zero. Negative results are added to the character's roll as a penalty to it.

Example: Lou Zer, super merc for hire, has lousy luck. Every few rounds, the Referee applies Bad Luck. This time he rolls a 4, which comes out to zero after subtracting 4, so no modifier for Lou this time. Later in the combat, the Referee rolls a 1, meaning Lou's next roll is at -3.

Pushing Your Luck

Not everyone has consistently good or bad luck, but everyone has the occasional good or bad break.

At any time a player needs to make a roll, he can declare that he's "Pushing His Luck." This must be declared after the Difficulty is determined but before the roll is made. If a character is Pushing His Luck, he may not spend Speed Points to later modify the roll (if he has them). The first time this is done in a game session, the player rolls d10, subtracts 5, and adds the result to his roll. In other words, the dice will be modified by a number from -4 to +5. This slightly favors the character. The second time this is done in a game session, the player rolls d10 and subtracts 6. There's a fifty percent chance it won't hurt him, so it's still marginally worthwhile.

The third time, roll d10 and subtract 7. The fourth, subtract 8. And so forth. A player who pushes his luck more than five times in a game cannot benefit at all from further attempts. Beyond twice, Pushing Your Luck becomes Just Asking For It.

Pushing Your Luck is a dangerous thing to do. If you want to be able to count on luck, don't Push it... buy Speed Points.

Optional Modifiers

There's two more modifiers you can use for all characters if you're interested in a little more detail to combat. Both can get fairly abusive at high levels, so be careful. However, without these modifers, there's very little reason to take Trait Fast above base level.

Free Actions (Multiple Action Penalty): Characters with exceptionally fast bodies (Trait Fast) or minds (Trait Tech) are often able to perform multiple actions without the normal penalty for doing so. To simulate this, count the total number of Traits the character has in Fast and Tech, remembering that Fast +1 is two Traits, Fast +2 is three Traits, and so forth. Divide this number by two and drop fractions. This is the number of additional actions the character may perform each round without invoking the Multiple Action Penalty. Exceeding this number will bring the penalty back for all actions.

The total number of actions that can be taken without Multiple Action Penalty is listed on the character sheet as Free Actions. Everyone has at least one Free Action.

Example: Hyperdrive is the world's fastest man, and he's a pretty quick thinker as well. He has Traits Fast +2 and Tech. This is a total of four, so he may perform two more actions per round without penalty. If he tries to do four things at once, however, they are all one degree of Difficulty harder. If he were to raise his Tech to +1, it wouldn't help him perform more actions, since five divided by two is still two when you drop the fraction.

Defense Bonus: Characters who are quick, strong-willed or both tend to be harder to hurt regardless of other defenses they may have. Quick characters are always dodging a little, and strong-willed characters may have a slight chance to shrug off damage. To find the Defense Bonus, count up the total number of Traits in Fast and Mind, in the same way as above. Divide by two and throw away the fraction, and the result is the Defense Bonus. This number is subtracted from all rolls to hit against the character, PROVIDED THAT the

character is aware of the attack and able to get "ready" for it somehow. Characters attacked by surprise, or by an opponent they can't see do not get their Defense Bonus. If the character is unable to move (such as when Held), but is still aware of the attack, count only Traits in Mind. The basic Defense Bonus assumes attacks that actually have to be aimed (as opposed to mental attacks or explosions), and that do damage. If the attack doesn't need to be aimed, then only Trait Mind is counted. If the attack doesn't do damage (such as Grabs or Depowers), then only Trait Fast is counted. Unaimed, non-damaging attacks therefore ignore the Defense Bonus.

Example: Later in his career, Kombat has Fast +1 and Mind, among other Traits. This is three total Traits, so his basic Defense Bonus is 1, giving opponents -1 to their rolls to hit against him. Against Grabs, Depowers and anything else that is aimed at him but doesn't do damage, he still has a Defense Bonus of 1, since he's Fast +1. If he's Grabbed, however, he loses his Defense Bonus, since he only has one Trait in Mind so far. Similarly, if attacked by an Explosion or a psychic blast, he has no Defense Bonus. If he later takes Mind +1, his overall Defense Bonus will be 2, and he'll have a Defense Bonus of 1 against Grabs, Depowers and attacks on him while Held, representing his ability to ignore pain.

A character who has Fast +3 would have a Defense Bonus of at least 2 in most situations and be able to perform three actions per round without penalty. Even without major attacks and defenses, this is a dangerous character, so be careful when using these optional modifiers.

Types Of Rolls

There's three basic kinds of roll a player or Referee will make during the course of an average game that use the Task Resolution Chart: Using Abilities, Trait Rolls and Gimme-A-Rolls.

Using Abilities - Every Ability has a Difficulty associated with it, and the player or Referee needs to roll against it on the Task Resolution Chart. Covered elsewhere under the individual Abilities.

Trait Rolls - General tasks which aren't really associated with specific Abilities are often tied to some basic Trait. The Referee decides what Trait best fits the task and assigns a Difficulty to it. Those lacking the Trait must roll against this Difficulty. Those with the Trait roll at one Difficulty less. Characters with a bonus to the Trait may apply this bonus to their roll.

Example: A pit opens below Kombat, Tek-7 and Brightsword, none of whom currently have the ability to fly. The Referee decides that it's a Hard Fast roll to get out of the way before it's all the way open. Brightsword isn't Fast and needs a Hard roll. Kombat and Tek-7 are Fast and need only an Easy roll. If Kombat were Fast +1 as the result of experience, he'd have +1 on his Easy roll.

NOTE: if you choose not to use the optional modifiers involving Trait Fast, this kind of roll is the only place that having Fast +1 or higher is useful. You may wish to ask for more Fast rolls if you don't use the optional modifiers.

Example: Tek-7 and Kombat encounter some sort of Doomsday Device in a villain's lair. Neither has specific skills relating to the science used to create the device, so the Referee decides that anything they want to try would be a Tech roll. A moment later an armored goon bursts in and is fought off, but a Mishap results in the device being triggered. The Referee decides that it's a Limit Tech roll to disarm it... Kombat's certainly not going to succeed and Tek-7 had better still have a Speed Point left to spend. Of course, unless the Referee
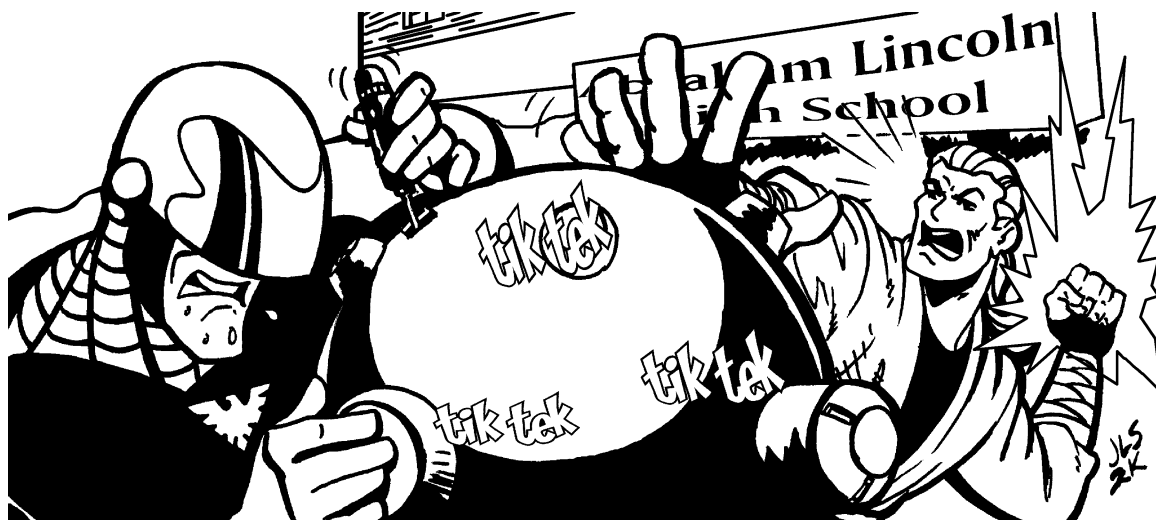
wants his gameworld destroyed, the Doomsday Device had better not go off the way it was intended by the villain... .

Gimme-A-Roll - Some cases are too general for even a Trait to really apply. Noticing a hidden clue without actively looking, or happening to have a widget of the right kind on hand are these kinds of situation. As are times when the Referee doesn't want to slow down the action to figure out what Trait or Ability would be best.

In these situations, the Referee picks a Difficulty he thinks is appropriate and asks the player (or players) to roll. Telling the players the Difficulty is optional.

Only use Gimmes when it doesn't really matter if the players succeed or fail. They can help spice things up and keep everyone on their toes, but should not cost the players a major goal (or allow a deus ex machina success). Gimmes can also be used when you want to let the players think there's multiple possibilities, when in fact there aren't. Just ignore the result and let them think that whatever happens is because of the roll. Helpful when your plan is to ream them mercilessly... as long as one player botches, the Referee is "off the hook."

Overkills, Mixed And Mishap Results

As mentioned earlier, it works best if each player creates unique tables for these results for his character. This allows more individualized mess-ups. This section will start with how to create such tables.

However, it's not always practical to do this, especially when just starting up a campaign. Appendix A will present some tables for use in combat situations. Noncombat results will still be up to the Referee, although it's easier to avoid major problems "winging it" out of combat.

To create a result table, figure out eight possible outcomes for Mishap or Overkill and five possible outcomes for Mixed.

The Mixed outcomes should all be about equally bad, and none of them should be very severe... these are partial successes, after all. Mixed tables are rolled on with a single d10. Each possible outcome occupies two spaces: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 and 9-10. This flat curve is the reason for making them all about equal.

Mishaps and Overkills, however, can vary wildly from mild to extreme. Of the outcomes, there should be two Extreme, two Major, two Medium and two Minor, roughly. What category each one falls in is up to the discretion of the player and Referee, but here's a guide:

Extreme: Could end the combat. Mishaps may take out the character, Overkills take out his target.

Major: Serious swing to the combat, but not as much as Extreme.

Medium: Personally good or bad for the character, but unlikely to have a major effect on the overall fight.

Minor: An inconvenience for the character or his target. In addition, for Overkills there should be at least one result that has negative consequences for the player, such as hitting ally as well as enemy or burning out the power being used.

2d10	
3 or less	Extreme
4-6	Major
7-9	Medium
10	Minor
11	Minor
12-14	Medium
15-17	Major
18 or more	Extreme

Mishaps and Overkills go on the table to the right.

You may notice that the single digit range results are slightly less likely than the double digit range (4-6 occurs slightly less often than 15-17, for example). This is so that if you're pretty sure one result is more severe than another in the same basic group you can put it in the single digits.

Example: Heat Lightning has two Extreme Overkills figured out for his Electrical Attack. One involves everyone in the area taking damage from his attack, the other has his target suffering Level 3 Overflow Effect. He decides that the Level 3 Overflow is far nastier to his foes and has it occur on a 3 or less. The "everyone gets hit" result occurs on a 18 or more.

Sample Tables

Several sample tables are available in Appendix A. Note that there are cases where it is necessary to roll with the Armor Ability, hence notes are included for Defense Abilities on how to deal with it. Tactical Abilities are too varied to have a single table, use Attack or Defense as seems appropriate, or roll and then see which table gives the most appropriate result.

Combat Rules

There comes a time in even the most cerebral superhero story where it is necessary to kick some behind. Most of the mechanics for doing so in Modern Knights are already in place, it remains only to add the final bits of structure which distinguish combat from other forms of task resolution. In short, time and space must be reshaped for combat. Outside of combat, it's fine to use seconds, minutes, hours and so forth for time, and meters or feet (your preference), kilometers or miles for distance. Solid, concrete measurements work well.

But combat is more abstracted. Exact times and distances aren't nearly as important in the more cinematic/dramatic combats seen in comic books. Time and space are split up into rougher units to accomodate the needs of the story to shift them about.

Combat time is in Rounds and Phases, and combat distance is in terms of Ranges.

Combat Time

The basic unit of time in Modern Knights combat is a Round, which lasts a few seconds or so. Or a couple of panels in a comic. Normally everyone takes one Action per Round, although more can be attempted (see Multiple Action Penalty in Task Resolution). Everyone acts more or less at the same time in a Round, with exceptions noted later.

Rounds are split up into three Phases, which can be considered something like declarations of intent. The three Phases are Direct, NPC and Response.

Direct Phase - Player character acts before waiting to see what his opponent is doing. Bold actions taken this way are generally more effective, but at the cost of not being able to defend against incoming attacks. Some actions can only be performed if you "damn the torpedos" and go on Direct. If a NPC is rendered unable to act by Actions taken on Direct Phase, the effect kicks in immediately. The NPC will not get to take his NPC Phase this Round.

NPC Phase - This is where the NPCs' actions start to become evident. It acts as both Direct and Response for the NPCs, who if written up as full characters can choose which effective Phase they're acting on.

Response Phase - Now that the PC has waited the split second needed to see what's being thrown at him, he can tailor his actions to suit. However, losing that initiative means the PC's attacks will be slightly weaker and not all options will still be open to him. PCs can tell if an attack is likely to hit them and take defensive actions to counter the attack.

This set-up can result in some slightly odd situations at first, with players seeming to block an attack **after** it has already injured them. But keep in mind that Actions taken on Response Phase actually occur about the same time as those taken on any other Phase. The player has simply seen the attack about to hit and blocked it, knowing what damage it would have done if unblocked. Since the Wound system in this game is fairly loose, it's not unreasonable to expect characters to be able to guess how bad it would have been: not very bad (Level 1), pretty bad (Level 2) or REALLY bad (Level 3). Similarly, it may seem like the players always go first, giving an unfair advantage. Especially in light of NPCs being taken out immediately by incapacitating actions on Direct Phase. But this is to counter a strong advantage of the NPC Phase: the ability to use the foreknowledge of the Response Phase and the full-strength attacks of the Direct Phase. Referees who wish a somewhat more simultaneous style of play can allow parting shots from NPCs incapacitated on Direct, but should then decide in advance each Round if the NPC will be attacking or defending, so as to take away the advantage of knowing what the players are doing.

Example: Kombat is fighting Heat Lightning and is just about ready to drop. He decides to go on Direct and finish off the equally wobbly villain. If his attack didn't do enough damage to drop the villain, Heat Lightning could have responded with some sort of defense or attacked at full strength. But his attack is powerful enough and the villain falls without getting off his own parting shot.

Example: The Referee is using the alternate rules for timing in the above scene, and decides that Heat Lightning will also be trying to finish off Kombat. Kombat hits and does enough damage to take out Heat Lightning, but then the villain also attacks and manages to KO Kombat as well. In a dramatic scene, Kombat manages to struggle to his feet first and claim victory. Had Heat Lightning elected to defend instead he could have avoided being knocked out, but Kombat would certainly not be taken down.

COMBAT SPACE

This is touched on earlier in the rules, but this section will try to cover the topic more thoroughly. Combat space is divided into three parts: Close (Range), Not Close (Range) and Out of Range.

What constitutes each Range will vary depending on the attack and the circumstances. Five meters away may be Close in one case and Out of Range in another. The important thing to remember is that in most combats, everyone will be at Close Range with everyone else unless someone takes specific actions to change this.

Close Range - A target is at Close Range for hand to hand combat if it could be reached by sprinting for several seconds. Or flying, or skating or what have you. No exceptionally fast movement is needed. For distance attacks like guns and powerbolts, anyone close enough to recognize easily is at Close. Under ideal conditions (flat surface, well-lit area, etc) both of these work out to being about 30 to 50 meters or less.

Of course, conditions aren't always ideal. The Referee should feel free to impose terrain and lighting restrictions to limit the number of targets which are at Close Range. Using a map can be helpful in keeping track of what barriers are between which combatants, but don't get too worried about counting inches of movement or establishing exact Lines of Sight. If there's any question, the Referee can always ask for a Gimme-a-Roll to determine things. Also, conditions can shorten ranges for one type of attack but not another. In dimly lit conditions a distance attack is much less accurate but you can still rush a foe. Whereas if combatants are atop adjacent roofs it may be impossible to close the distance and mix it up in hand to hand, but guns would still be at Close Range.

The Range Ability can be used to enter or leave Close Range. In general, assume that you're either at Close Range with everyone else or not. If combat starts to split into two areas (such as two rooftops) then there's two groups which are Close with respect to themselves and Not Close or even Out of Range with respect to the other.

A good rule of thumb for Close Range is that if two people could fit into an overhead shot without being specks, they're at Close Range.

Not Close Range - The target can still be reached by certain attacks, but is outside the optimum range of the attacker. There's really no meaningful Not Close Range for hand to hand attacks under normal circumstances, although odd powers like stretching can allow fisticuffs at Not Close.

If the target can be seen as even a speck on the horizon and the attack being used has the ability to hit that far out, the target is at Not Close. Generally, any time it's not easy to physically get to the target and the target's not clearly visible, Not Close Range applies.

Use of the Range Ability is the usual way players will get to Not Close from either Close or Out of Range.

Out of Range - The target simply can't be hit by the attack this round. Either distance is too great or there's some barrier which cannot be attacked (or seen) through.

When using Range Ability to get closer from here, the Referee should consider the reasons why the target is Out of Range. If it is because there is a barrier which can be gone around, or because the attacker is using melee attacks, then one use of Range will get the player from Out of Range to Close Range if he wishes. Usually, however, the character will have to first go to Not Close and then to Close. Similarly, if a character can find shelter nearby, he may be able to go from Close to Out of Range with a single use of the Range Ability.

On the other hand, it's possible to be REALLY Out of Range, so far away that there's no way to get back in range during combat. In such a case, the Referee should simply tell the player his character won't arrive until later on.

Note on the Range Ability - Usually possessing this Ability means the character is extremely fast, whether it's speed in running, flying, etc. Sometimes it means the character can teleport, covering vast distances in an instant. But in some cases it simply means the character is trained well enough to attack after a full-out sprint.

Those without Range Ability can change Range by spending their entire Round on it, provided that it's possible for them to do so. A non-flying character couldn't cross the 20 meter gap between rooftops in one round no matter how hard he tried... he'd be effectively out of combat while running down one set of stairs, across the street and up the other. But a speedster could do all of that in a second or so (using Range).

Sometimes a character's Range Ability should not help. A non-flying character can't close the gap with someone firing from mid-air, and someone who is Out of Range can't be closed with at all if the character doesn't know where to go.

NPC Combat

More important NPCs will be written up just like PCs, with Abilities and Modifiers and so forth. The only real difference between regular NPCs and PCs in combat is what Phases they go on, as explained above.

However, less important NPCs have their own set of rules designed to make them easier to create and easier to run in combat. They're called Simple NPCs, or SNPCs.

Simple NPCs

Not all characters will be important enough that the Referee will want to spend the time required by normal character creation. Face it, cannon fodder should not take more than a minute to write up. But at the same time, it should be possible to have variation in such characters.

The Simple NPC deals with this problem. Simple NPCs only have Attacks, Grabs, Snares and Defenses (a generalized ability to block attacks) instead of the full list of Abilities and Modifiers. Instead of Modifiers, they have three types of attack, Broad, Medium and Narrow.

Simple NPCs (SNPCs) write down the following information:

Name:
Hook: (optional)
Effects:
Scale:
Wounds:
Attacks: (Scale, Effect, Power, Dispersion)
Grabs: (Scale, Effect, Power, Dispersion)
Snares: (Scale, Effect, Power, Dispersion)
Defenses:
Notes:

Blank categories may be omitted

Hook: If used, roll on the same charts PCs use.

Effects: Choose or roll whatever Effects you want. SPNCs do not have Primary or Secondary Effects, they can attack at full power with whatever Effects they have.

Scale: Choose like normal.

Wounds: Simply allocate whatever Wounds seem to fit the power level you want the character to have. If you want a random system, roll d10 to determine Level 1 Wounds, d10-1 for Level 2, d10/2-1 (range of 0 to 4) for Level 3 and 4 Wounds. So a random character will have Wounds in the ranges: (1-10 / 0-9 / 0-4 / 0-4)

Attacks, Grabs and Snares: List out each possible offense by Effect, Power and Dispersion. Power can be Weak, Medium or Strong. Dispersion can be Broad, Medium or Narrow. These two factors determine which line the SPNC rolls on to determine the Level of effect his attack has. In addition, if the attack is of a higher Scale than the character is, this should be noted.

Example: Thug1 has a shoulder-carried maser cannon which fires a thin beam of powerful energy. Thug1 is Normal, but the cannon is Paranormal Scale. In addition, it is Strong and Narrow, with the Heat Effect. So his Attack line would read: Attack: Maser (Paranormal, Heat, Strong, Narrow). If he also carried a few

low-power concussion grenades, his attack line would be: Attack: Maser (Paranormal, Heat, Strong, Narrow) Grenades (Blunt, Medium, Broad)

No special notation is needed when the attack is of the same Scale as the character.

Example: Thug2 has a big netgun but nothing else. His attack line is: Snare: Netgun (Paranormal, Blunt, Medium, Broad)

For more compact notation, Power has the choice of (W,M,S) and Dispersion has (N,M,B). The Maser would then be (Para, Heat, S, N) and the Netgun would be (Para, Blunt, M, B).

Defenses: SNPCs simply list a number of Effects that they take 3 Levels less effect from, like improved Armor. This means SNPCs of the same Scale as the PCs are functionally immune to those Effects.

Notes: Any information the Referee wants to jot down about the character, such as Noncombat Abilities that might come up. If the Notes section gets longer than a few lines, the Referee will probably want to write the character up fully instead of simply.

Sample SPNC

Here's a sample SNPC, a minor superhero who the characters may run across. He has light-based powers.

Turbolaser
Hook: Good Citizen
Effects: Blunt, Heat, Light
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (4/5/3/1)
Attacks: Punch (Blunt, Weak, Medium)
IR Laser (Heat, Medium, Narrow)
Turbolaser (Light, Strong, Narrow)
Defenses: Light
Notes: Can fly

Note the pattern of his attacks. If he were written up as a PC, he'd probably have Light as his Primary Effect, Reactive Energy as his Secondary Group and use Blunt as a Level 1 attack. He has no Snares or Grabs.

Here's a possible SNPC writeup of the Ice Cubist.

Ice Cubist
Hook: Open Agenda (greed)
Effects: Blunt, Cold, Sharp
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (3/3/3/2)
Attacks: Ice Spears (Sharp, Medium, Narrow)
Cold Wave (Cold, Strong, Broad)
Hailstorm (Blunt, Weak, Broad)
Snare: Ice Block (Blunt, Strong, Medium)
Defenses: Cold, Heat, Light, Sharp
Notes: Ice ramps allow him to change range.

SNPC Attack Chart

When a SNPC makes an attack, whether it's a normal Attack, a Snare or a Grab, roll 2d10 against this chart. The Level generated is subjective to the Scale of the attack.

Note that results over 20 and under 2 are possible as a result of various factors, such as actions by the target.

Level 0 is included for two main reasons. The first is dramatic effect, the character being hit by an attack which he shrugs off. The second is that Level 0 can be increased to higher Levels by Scale differences and Disadvantages (such as a character who takes one Level higher from Heat). If the target is doing something which prevents a miss, like standing still and letting the SNPC punch him, then a Miss is treated as Level 0 instead.

As you can see, the Broad attacks are more likely to hit, but don't do as much damage, while the Narrow attacks do the most damage but hit less often. Strong, Narrow attacks can fell a character in one shot, so be careful in giving them to opponents.

Power	Dispersion	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1	Level 0	Miss
Weak	Broad	-	-	19+	18-12	11-8	7-
Weak	Medium	-	-	18+	17-13	12-10	9-
Weak	Narrow	-	21+	20-16	15-14	13-12	11-
Medium	Broad	-	19+	18-14	13-8	9-5	4-
Medium	Medium	-	18+	17-15	14-10	9-7	6-
Medium	Narrow	-	16+	15-14	13-12	11-10	9-
Strong	Broad	-	14+	13-8	7-4	3-2	1-
Strong	Medium	21+	20-15	14-9	8-7	6-4	3-
Strong	Narrow	17+	16-14	13-12	11-10	9-8	7-

Expanded Category Definitions

Dispersion:

Broad - The attack spreads out greatly from the point of attack or impact, giving it more chance to hit its target. Imprecise attacks which generally cannot be used for marksmanship. Energy invovled is spread out, though, and doesn't do quite as much damage when it hits.

At Referee discretion, Broad attacks can hit more than one target at once, usually by means of explosions or gas clouds. Broad attacks that can hit multiple targets should be lowered one level in power to stay in parity with other similar attacks.

Medium - Fairly normal attack profile. Rarely affects an area smaller than a fist or larger than a person.

Narrow - Tightly focused attack, which hits less often but packs a bigger punch when it hits. Usually has a cross section of smaller than a fist's, such as bullets or lasers.

Power:

Weak - Often a makeshift weapon or one meant more for intimidation than actual damage. An unskilled user can turn a Medium attack into a Weak one simply by not knowing how to make it work at peak levels. Also likely from someone who is tougher than their true Scale, and hence has a higher Scale (for better Wounds) but weaker attacks.

Medium - The average power level of an attack you'd expect from someone of the SNPC's Scale who was equipped for combat.

Strong - Powerful attacks designed to be the best possible usable by a particular Scale. Often intended for use on a higher Scale target than the attacker is.

Environmental Hazards

Not everything that can hurt you is actually trying to do so, there's a lot of inanimate things out there which can hurt, like house fires, falling and so forth. Such hazards can be treated as SNPC attacks of the appropriate Scale, Mode, Power and Dispersion. It's a big world out there, so it's up to the Referee to make the decision about how strong each hazard is, but here's a few guidelines.

- If it's something that is capable of killing a normal person in real life, pick a combination which allows for the chance of a Metal Wound. For instance, falling off a chair can be fatal, but usually isn't, so it might be a Strong, Medium Blunt attack at Normal Scale. It'll probably hurt, might even break some bones, but only kills in rare cases.

- If it's something normally fatal in real life, but which has been known to have survivors (like falling out of a plane without a parachute), be sure that it's possible to suffer less than a Metal Wound. - If you don't want your player characters to die from it, don't make it fatal. Naturally.

Note that in many cases, a Miss result is not possible, such as when a character runs into a burning building or falls off a tower. In such cases a Miss result becomes Level 0, as previously mentioned.

Example: Tek-7 is repairing a vital plot device, but he can't get at the power source to turn it off. This means that at some point he's going to have to grab a live wire and reattach it. It's a pretty powerful device, so the Referee decides that the wire will inflict a Strong, Narrow Electricity attack at Supernormal level. In

other words, it could fatally injure Tek-7. But since he might be able to hold onto just the insulated part, the Referee decides that a Miss result in this case still counts as a Miss.

Example: Brightsword has to save a child from a burning building. Fortunately, the room in question isn't on fire itself, but it is full of smoke, which can kill people on its own. The Referee decides this is a Paranormal Scale attack, since even a little smoke inhalation is bad for you (this way a Normal would still take a Bruise Wound from Level 0). On the other hand, it doesn't usually kill that quickly, so the Referee assigns the smoke a Weak, Broad rating. The Effect is Chemical, which Brightsword has no special defenses against, but she's only hurt on a roll of 19 or better, since she's made of generally sterner stuff (supernormal Scale). Since the room is full of smoke, a Miss is treated as Level 0, so even though Brightsword isn't likely to be hurt much, she doesn't have much time to find the child before the youngster dies.

PC Versus PC Combat

Not all teams will get along perfectly... and even the few that have harmonious relationships could find themselves in a position where they have to fight each other (mind control or the like). Thus, sometimes you're going to get PCs fighting each other.

However, there **is** a pretty big tactical advantage to declaring your action after your opponent. And you might see your players reluctant to say anything first, lest someone else get the jump on them. Here are a few possible ways to deal with this problem:

1) Sealed Declarations - Get out the scrap paper and have everyone involved in the combat write down what they want to do, who they want to do it to, and what Phase they want to act on. Those who want to go on Response need only say that. Once everyone is done, the Referee collects the slips of paper and runs the Direct Phase as declared. Once this is over, those to declared Response can either react to incoming attacks or make their own offensive actions. If necessary, the Referee can do another round of sealed declarations for the Response actions. This method takes quite a bit of extra time, but is the most fair.

2) Initiative Rolls - Each player rolls a d10, with declarations happening in order of lowest to highest roll. Fast characters roll twice and take the better (higher) result, Fast +1 characters roll three times, and so forth. Players who decide to wait for Response Phase keep this number for purposes of going on that Phase. This method is quicker, but you lose the simultaneous feel of the Phase structure since players with high rolls get the benefit of Response-like knowledge without suffering the penalties of waiting for that Phase.

3) See-Saw - Only applies to one-on-one combats. Each character takes turns going on Direct and Response, in any one Round the two do not go on the same Phase. The character initiating combat will take Direct Phase on the first round, if neither really starts the fight then use Initiative to determine who has Direct first. After that, it alternates each round.

4) Seize The Day - Victory goes to the bold. Anyone willing to go first gains a +1 to their rolls. Only use this if you're having trouble getting anyone to go on Direct in the first place. If there's now conflict over who gets to go first, switch to another system.

5) Roleplay It - Some characters are likely to charge into a fight, others will hang back. Players of rasher characters should have no hesitation in declaring actions before anyone else. Obviously this doesn't work if all the characters are cautious types.

Sample Combat

This won't be a complete combat, since those generally take ten or more rounds to play through. And while it will move more quickly once you're familiar with the rules, this example will cover a lot of ground in

each round, which will bog things down a little.

The premise is that Brightsword is fighting Darkshield. He's just ambushed her at the site of a fire he started to lure her in. As a result, the Referee has decided that Brightsword cannot act on Direct this Round.

Round 1:

"Now PAY for my father's death!" shouted the man in the gloss black armor. Brightsword was stunned for a moment, both by his appearance and his accusation. She'd never killed anyone!

The man stretched out a hand and fired a bolt of lightning at her. She rocked back on her heels as the electricity jazzed every muscle in her body. Shrugging off the effect as best she could, she leaped at the man and tried to tackle him, but missed, landing a little too close to the fire for her comfort.

On NPC Phase, Darkshield fires a Level 2 Attack at Brightsword. Because he has Electromagnetic Energy as his Secondary Effect Group and an EM Energy Group Attack, he can do this with Electricity, Magnetism or Light. He chooses Electricity for the dramatic effect. He rolls high enough to succeed on the Hard roll (Level 2 Attack means Level 2 Difficulty, Hard) and will hit Brightsword if she does nothing to stop it.

Brightsword, unfortunately, has no defenses against Electricity and was unable to Dodge since she couldn't act on Direct. She takes the Level 2 Wound, in this case a Metal Wound. Because of her Traits, she can ignore the normal Pain Effects of a Level 2 Wound.

Since she can't defend, she might as well attack. She tries for a Level 1 Grab on Darkshield, which has a Level 2 Difficulty because she's attacking on Response. Her roll is low, but not low enough to Mishap, so she simply misses.

Round 2:

"I don't know what you think I did, mister, but if you endangered all of these people just to get a shot at me… well, just be glad I don't share my friend Tek-7's disrespect for life!" growled Brightsword, drawing her trademark laser sword. Standing, she thrust the glowing blade at her foe. To her surprise, it dimmed as it hit, causing only a small melted spot on the armor. And as she looked on, the spot repaired itself! Darkshield laughed. "Your father's weapon is useless against my improved armor, girl. And now you can pay for your father's crimes!"

Acting on Direct, Brightsword tries a Level 2 attack using her Attack: Light. Since Light is one of her two Primary Effects, she could have gone for a Level 3 attack, but decided not to risk it yet. Rolling the dice, she scores a Success and hit.

On NPC, Darkshield decides to activate his Absorb Modifier, requiring an Easy roll that he makes handily. The sword's damage is reduced to Level 1 by his Armor, and then the Absorb let him heal back up to a Level 2 Wound, which he does immediately, repairing the damage done.

Round 3:

Brightsword's mind raced. This guy had a beef against her father… of course! It must be the son of dad's old enemy Darkshield! Well, the previous one had always been a bit of a creampuff up close and personal, so… . Brightsword grabbed for Darkshield just as the villain was about to unleash a powerful bolt of magnetic force. The blast went astray as the armored figure found his arms pinned back in a full nelson. Darkshield snorted contemptuously and broke the hold with surprising ease. "I said the armor was improved… can't you listen?"

On Direct, Brightsword attempts a Level 2 Grab. Since she has Brawn, she expects her opponent to be pretty well held, since normally her target would require a Tasking roll to escape. She succeeds on the Hard roll and Grabs Darkshield. This prevents him from making the Level 3 Attack he had planned on using. If the Referee were using the alternate rules, he would have hit her just as she grabbed him, possibly making it harder for her to hold on. On NPC Phase, Darkshield tries to break out. Since he too has Brawn, he only needs a Hard roll, which he makes before sneering at Brightsword.

Round 4:

Brightsword started to realize she was seriously outclassed. Darkshield built his armor specifically for fighting her...it was protected against all her attacks and had powers she wasn't protected against herself. Darkshield seemed to be enjoying his advantage. Enjoying it so much he apparently didn't notice that the flames were getting awfully near him. Casting about, Brightsword found a can of gas, left over no doubt from Darkshield's arson. Let's see if he's protected against flames! She threw the can down by Darkshield's feet, where it broke open and blossomed into flames! Darkshield screamed as his flesh seared, then shouted, "Now you die PAINFULLY!" as he fired a blast of magnetic energy at Brightsword. It only clipped her, but even that was painful.

On Direct, Brightsword decides to try something tricky. Her player asks the Referee if there's anything flammable around to use against Darkshield. He asks for a roll, figuring that anything over 8 on 2d10 will work. After all, he's stacked the deck pretty strongly against her, no reason not to let her get in a lick or two. She rolls a 13 and finds the can, which she throws at Darkshield. The Referee decides that a straight Hard roll will let her do a Level 1 Wound. She succeeds and Darkshield takes the damage, damage his armor doesn't defend against.

Darkshield's action on NPC is to try another Level 3 attack, and he rolls a Mixed result. The Referee decides that in this case that just means less damage, so Brightsword takes another Level 2 Wound.

And so forth. In this combat, Brightsword will probably lose simply because Darkshield **was** designed to beat her. She could try combining Dodges with Blunt or Sharp Attacks to beat him, but by invoking Multiple Action Penalty she's more likely to have a spectacular failure. Her best course of action is to flee, but even then she's not likely to get away. Note that both combatants had pretty good luck on the dice. In regular combats, successes will be a little less frequent.

Advancement Rules

One key to making a long term campaign work is character development, especially on the part of the players. And while much of this will be sheerly in terms of the character's personality, it's generally a good idea to allow changes in the game mechanics of the characters. In other words, adding or changing powers.

Noncombat Abilities

Since there's a great deal more flexibility in Noncombat Abilities as far as game balance goes, there's no real need for a specific system to handle changes in Noncombat Abilities. The player (and character) need only meet a few basic criteria to gain a new Noncombat Ability.

1) Convince the Referee that the new Ability could be gained by the character.

2) Roleplay circumstances where the Ability could be gained.

3) Wait a reasonable amount of game time.

In general, the harder it is to get past 1, the more that 2 will become the focus of the particular game session it occurs in. If the character only needs to take some night classes in the subject, then this can be mentioned in passing. But if a radical mutation is required, then the entire game session might focus on some disaster which mutates the character.

What makes for a "reasonable amount of game time" will depend on the nature of the Noncombat Ability. Learning atomic physics from scratch should take at least a few months of game time even for a supergenius character, but a mutation event could take seconds. Referee has the discretion of increasing or decreasing this time as he sees fit, especially if it fits the needs of the plot. Players should be given an idea how long it will take in advance, but this is only an estimate.

Example: Tek-7 decides he wants a jetpack built into his armor to give limited flight. This isn't the kind of device he normally builds, but it's within reason for the character, so the Referee allows it... with a barrier to overcome. Tek-7 can't design the jetpack himself, so he'll need to acquire working plans, possibly steal them

from his enemies. Once he has the plans (which he nabs under cover of another mission) he can build the jet pack in time for the next game.

Example: Kombat wants to learn how to use his psychopower at low intensity to make people uncomfortable and want to leave the area. The idea is to use it to get rid of bystanders before a fight, or brush off nosy reporters. This is a pretty subtle usage, and he's going to need to actually try using it on people for a few game sessions, risking harming them, to gain the power.

Example: Volcano's player realizes he never gave his character the ability to tunnel through stone, and asks to have Volcano learn how. The Referee knows that a big part of the next adventure requires the players to have difficulty getting out of an underground vault, so tells Volcano's player that it will take a while for Volcano to learn how to do it without collapsing the tunnel immediately. Conveniently, he hasn't learned how in time for the adventure, but may figure it out Just In Time.

Traits and Combat Abilities

Increasing Traits and adding or improving Combat Abilities must get past the criteria listed above, but in addition needs to be regulated a little more tightly. Changes in these parts of the character can seriously throw the balance of the game off, so it's important that the player at least develop his character's personality to keep pace with the changes in power. Modern Knights uses a system of Checkpoints to keep the character's advances within reason. There are nine Checkpoints:

- Clever Plan
- Conflict
- Flamboyance
- Importance
- Precaution
- Purpose
- Risk
- Society
- Unknown

Details of each Checkpoint will be covered below. Actions by a character can allow it to pass various Checkpoints during the course of the game. **Once a Checkpoint is passed**, it cannot be marked off again until all the other Checkpoints have been passed as well.

Example: Kombat has passed the Conflict and Risk Checkpoints in his first session of play. He cannot pass them again until he's marked off the other seven Checkpoints.

Each successive passing of a particular Checkpoint should get harder and harder, reflecting how the character is more powerful and important, and has to have bigger and better experiences. For example, while a character's first fight scene usually marks off Conflict, by the time the same character has passed Conflict three times he's starting to need to get involved in interplanetary wars to have a big enough fight to satisfy the Checkpoint. This provides a natural braking effect to more experienced characters and allows new arrivals to catch up more quickly, since new guys can pass Checkpoints with events that are beneath the notice of the veterans.

Checkpoints

Clever Plan - Breaking from the tried and true is the essence of this Checkpoint. The character must come up with a way of doing things that is novel (at least novel for the character), usually thinking on his feet. The plan itself need not be inherently that clever (or even successful) so long as it's something the character wouldn't normally have done. This Checkpoint is intended to keep players from discovering one or two reliable strategies and sticking to them.

Conflict - Any time when the character must struggle for some reason, whether it's a physical fight or a subtle exercise of wills. The character must be at odds with someone else to mark this Checkpoint, and it's usually the easiest one for players to pass in a superhero genre.

Flamboyance - Sometimes doing new things, sometimes doing the same old thing with a touch of flair. Style over substance, sometimes when such would be patently foolish. It doesn't matter if you succeed, as long as you look REALLY good doing it. For a stodgy old stoic of a character, this could be something as mundane as making a droll quip during a conflict. For wild and woolly types, though, things could get really dangerous.

Importance - It's not enough to carry a spear and stand in the wings all the time. Like plants, characters need some time in the sun to flourish. Making a mark on the community, whether it's as small as the neighborhood or as large as all of reality itself, is vital for both heroes and villains. While early on everyone can usually share in one event, later each character will need to grab the spotlight solo to pass this Checkpoint.

Precaution - The value of planning ahead, thinking before running off after the opponents and getting slapped in Mutant Cuffs. While Clever Plans can get you out of messes, Precaution keeps you from getting into the messes in the first place. Simple things like telling the Referee you're checking out a place during the day for exits you can escape through that night will mark this Checkpoint early on. Later, it will take truly brilliant stratagems to pass this.

Purpose - The simplest way to describe this Checkpoint is that the character sticks to his Hook or has a dramatic change in Hook. Heroes doing things to validate why they're heroes, villains doing the same. A character's Hook is his purpose in life to some extent.

Other Purposes are possible other than those embodied in the character's Hook, and players should define them well before trying to use them to pass this Checkpoint.

Risk - Facing the serious chance of losing or at least suffering great harm. Taking a chance, all or nothing. He who hesitates is lost as far as this Checkpoint is concerned. The risk being taken need not involve Conflict, or be taken Flamboyantly, or use a Clever Plan or even succeed. But it must be a genuine risk.

Society - Also called Place in Society. This is the most strongly noncombat of the Checkpoints and involves furthering your character's status in his chosen community. This may even be the status of the character's civilian identity, as long as it's roleplayed. Heroes will generally seek the accolates of society while villains will seek to be feared. But this isn't always the case, especially in the case of villains who maintain private lives as upstanding citizens. Characters who are outcasts can pass this Checkpoint by any action which either brings them out of that status or reaffirms the reasons why they are outcast.

Note that some characters may have a Purpose which closely matches gaining Place in Society. In such cases, the distinction between Checkpoints is that Purpose cares more about intents and Society more about results. An earnest attempt which fails can still mark off Purpose, while an accidentaly success cannot. The reverse is true for Society.

Unknown - "There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy," said Hamlet. Superpowered beings tend to run headlong into such undreamt-of things. When a character encounters something out of the ordinary which he can neither explain nor ignore, it may allow him to pass this Checkpoint. This Checkpoint requires more work on the part of the Referee than the others, since the Referee is the only real source of odd events.

Passing Checkpoints

At the end of a game session, players should figure out which Checkpoints they think they passed and submit arguments to the Referee to support them. The Referee then decides which Checkpoints really were passed and which ones didn't quite pass muster. If time is short at the end of the game session, the players can write down their "wish list" between sessions and the Referee can make his decision before starting the next game.

Example: Dave notes that everyone's pretty worn out and not in the mood to argue at the end of most games. So he asks the players to write "letter column" entries as if the night's adventure were an issue of a

comic book, and present them at the start of the next session. Chris gets into the spirit of things and creates a letterhack persona named Johnny Twelveyearold to gush over all the kewl things his favorite character Doctor Eschaton has done.

Any single event can only support one Checkpoint, even if it would fit several. The player must decide which Checkpoint he wants the event to support and can't change it later on.

Example: Kombat takes a Flamboyant Risk during one game and decides to use that event to support a Flamboyant Checkpoint. In a later session Kombat does something Flamboyant, but cannot move the old Checkpoint onto Risk to "make room" for this new event.

The Referee can also decide that the event supported a different Checkpoint and award that one instead.

Example: In the previous case, the action wasn't really that flamboyant compared to Kombat's normal style, but it was quite risky. The Referee may decide to award a Risk Checkpoint even if the player asks for Flamboyant.

And remember, it should be harder to pass a Checkpoint the second time than the first. It takes a higher level of effort to push beyond what has already been done. However, the action need not be the most extreme to date, especially if the Checkpoint was passed on a fairly mild event.

Example: At the grand finale of an adventure, Kombat throws himself into a Volcano to break a spell which is holding the world in thrall. This is a pretty big risk, but he's already passed the Risk Checkpoint by cutting the ropes on a bridge while he was fighting on it and hoping he could jump to freedom in an earlier session. Next time he's eligible to mark off Risk, he only needs to outdo the rope bridge stunt, not the volcano dive.

Alternate Means of Passing Checkpoints

In beginning campaigns it will take a while for players and Referee to get the hang of Checkpoints. But the lack of advancement may frustrate all involved, so here are two optional methods of passing Checkpoints without actually meeting the conditions.

Fast - At the end of any session where the character was unable to pass any Checkpoints the normal way, the player may mark off one Checkpoint of his choice. If the player only went through the motions the Referee can withhold this Checkpoint, however. Exceptionally good roleplaying can earn two Checkpoints without meeting specific criteria.

Slow - Like the Fast method, but instead of automatically gaining the mark, players must roll a d10 higher than the number of Checkpoints they currently have passed, with a 10 always meaning success. Obviously it's very difficult to advance once all nine have been checked once by this method. Meeting the conditions for a Checkpoint still allows the player to mark it off, and will soon be the only viable way to advance. This method helps wean both player and Referee into the Checkpoint system.

Advancing Combat Abilities

For every odd-numbered Checkpoint the character passes, he gains another slot for Abilities. This slot is exactly like the ones in original character generation, and can be used to take any Ability that the player can get past the Referee. It's easiest to simply add a bonus of +1 to a pre-existing Ability to reflect training, but new powers can be gained as well. Note that it doesn't matter what order the Checkpoints are passed in. The

first one the character passes earns a him a slot, as do the third, fifth, seventh and ninth. After the ninth and final Checkpoint is marked off, the counter resets to zero and the next Checkpoint passed will pay off with a slot.

Example: Kombat has passed the Conflict and Risk Checkpoints in his first fight. He has two Checkpoints marked, so he gains a slot to spend on an Ability. Next game he marks off Precaution, bringing his total to three, and gains another slot.

Remember, no single Ability or Modifier may be raised to higher than +4, and when a Modifier applies to an Ability you apply the lower of the two bonuses. This way, it takes longer to get better at more complicated (more heavily Modified) Abilities.

Advancing Traits

Every time all nine Checkpoints have been passed, the player can add +1 to any single Trait of his character. At Referee discretion, the player may instead use this advance to trade an existing Trait or +1 Trait bonus for a new Trait. However, Traits are very basic to a character, it should require major changes carried out during play to do this. No character should ever do this more than once without a VERY good reason. Note that for purposes of bookkeeping, adding a new Trait without losing an old one is the equivalent of "cashing in" +2 in Trait Advances for the new Trait.

Example: Later in the campaign, Kombat is Brawn +1, Fast and Mind. He's been working on toughening himself as the rationale for raising his Brawn, but decides to go all the way. At the end of a major campaign event where he passed his ninth Checkpoint, he flings himself into an active volcano protected only by his mental powers and emerges with the toughness of rock. He could decide that he's no longer Fast because of the stony covering and trade that for Invulnerable, but instead trades his Brawn's +1 away for the new Trait. If swapping Traits means that a character's current set of Abilities is no longer legal, the player and Referee should work out what stays and what goes. It may be necessary to totally reconfigure the character. The Referee may wish to impose a penalty of several lost slots if too many Abilities need to be changed.

Changing Anything And Everything Else

Just about anything about a character can be changed with a good enough reason, but those things not mentioned yet will rarely change. Thus there isn't any hard set of rules to deal with it. Here's some suggestions regarding the other attributes which can be changed.

Scale - Should only change if the entire nature of the campaign is changing, or if the character is leaving active play. A Paranormal character brought in from another campaign may become a cyborg with Supernormal Scale to fit in, or a flashy energy projecting Supernormal might lose most of his powers and drop to Paranormal to join a grim and gritty group. Otherwise, the character's Scale should remain constant.

Hook - Roleplay can easily change the character's Hook. Getting final vengeance on an old enemy can force the character to find a new motivation, while a bad experience can embitter a previously bright and shiny hero. Hooks should be a little harder to change than Noncombat Abilities, and should not be changed too frequently. A character with constantly changing motives might as well have no motive.

Effects - Only drastic measures will usually change a character's Effects, both Primary and Secondary. Characters who didn't choose all their Effects initially can fill in the empty spaces without too much difficulty, but otherwise it comes under the heading of Everything. Adding a new Primary Effect can be done by those with Trait Empowered, but a complete overhaul is generally needed to add a new Secondary Effect Group. Keep in mind, there's nothing keeping a character from having an attack with an Effect not in his Primary or Secondary Effects, it will simply be weaker.

Body Type - Usually requires a drastic change of another kind to alter this. If a new Trait is added or an old one lost this can also be accompanied by a change in Body Type. The example of Kombat gaining stonelike skin could also have him change from Tough Organic to Semi-Organic.

Disadvantages - Getting rid of Disads should be harder than picking up Noncombat Abilities, but not too hard. The price of losing a Combat Disadvantage is usually compensation enough. But the character must roleplay how he loses his problems, and the Referee must agree it's possible.

Everything - Sometimes a character concept simply doesn't work out, or a player gets bored with the powers but still likes the person he created. In extreme situations, the Referee can allow a total rewrite of the character sheet to gain new Traits, Effects, Body Type, Abilities and so forth. A reasonable price for this switch-around is to lose half of all added slots and Trait bonuses, rounded down.

Example: Kombat's body is utterly destroyed later in his career and he becomes a being of pure spirit energy. At this point he's added +3 total to his Traits (counting any new Traits as +2, since an advance is lost in gaining them) and 17 slots (he's on his way to +4). He loses +1 Trait and 8 slots, rewriting his character has having 4 Traits or 3 Traits with +2 to spread around, and 9 slots beyond whatever he would start with (21 total unless he has Brawn in his new form).

Such drastic changes can make bookkeeping much more difficult for players and Referees alike, so they should be kept rare.

Referee Tips

Rank

With a rather qualitative character creation system, not to mention the existence of SNPCs, it's sometimes difficult to set up a fair fight. Or to set up an intentionally one-sided fight without getting ridiculous. The system Modern Knights uses to help figure out power levels is called Rank. Characters written up as PCs have a Rank equal to the sum of their Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 Wounds multiplied by their Scale number. An average PC will have about 10 total Wounds of those three levels and a Scale of Supernormal (3) for a total Rank of around 30.

SNPCs use the same equation for Rank, but add one to their Scale number if they have a Strong attack and subtract one if their only attacks are Weak. Thus, Normal SNPCs with Weak attacks are negligible in combat, as one would expect.

If the sum of the Ranks of one side is significantly higher than the sum of Ranks for the other, the battle is biased. If the summed Ranks are pretty close (neither is more than 1.5 times the other) then it's probably a fair fight.

Rank does not take into account whether one side has attacks the other side is vulnerable to or not, so it's not a total guarantee of fairness. Looking at the Sample Combat between Darkshield and Brightsword, we see that it's very biased towards Darkshield, even though his Rank is only 14 to Brightsword's 16. Equal Ranks is no guarantee of a fair fight, but significantly unequal Ranks pretty much ensure an **unfair** fight.

Hitting the Reset Button

Campaigns don't always work out the way you want, especially the first time out in a new game. Referees should not be afraid to make major changes in a first campaign, or even scuttle the whole thing and restart if things are really bad.

If the problem is that the characters don't mesh well or are too weak or too powerful for the game, it might be enough to revamp the characters without changing what they've done. Weak characters can get their powers boosted, powerful ones can suffer setbacks, ones which simply don't fit can be replaced. The events of the campaign still happened, but the nature of the campaign has changed, hopefully for the better.

If things just go horribly wrong despite reasonable characters and setting, the Referee can simply roll back the calendar and restart before the point where things went to pot. If some players were screwing around and let the city get blown up despite the fact that the **characters** never would have let it happen, then go back and try it again. Consider the old sessions to be the rough draft or first script, and now everybody's learning from the mistakes of the old copy to make a better story.

And, of course, it's possible nothing works. Don't be afraid to ditch the entire works and start from scratch. In fact, if you think there might be trouble early on, play a "limited series" campaign which can be tossed in the scrap bucket when you're done. Get out all the kinks on a short, simple story and then move on to the grand worldbuilding once everyone has the basics down.

Munchkins, Twinks and other Combat Monsters

Modern Knights is primarily a Role-playing Game, not a Roll-playing Game. Mechanics are kept fairly simple so they don't get in the way of character interactions or take the place of such interaction. But not all gamers are interested in playing a role, some are more interested in playing the rules. That's fine, and there's plenty of games for that type of player, but Modern Knights isn't really one of them.

The advancement system provides some defense against Rollplayers, since some character development is necessary to advance. But the really dedicated "munchkins" don't need to advance to gain enough power to beat anything in sight… finding loopholes in the rules is their specialty. Sometimes you can just let the rollplayer go on his own way, he'll either get bored and leave or actually learn a little about roleplaying. But too often he'll ruin the game for everyone else, and as Referee you shouldn't be afraid to ask such a player to change his style or leave. The other players are unlikely to get much fun out of watching Combat Chassis

Mark V walk into the combat, blow everyone away and then leave, especially if Mark V doesn't do anything **else** in the game.

It may not be necessary to remove the player, though, and it should never be the first step. Referees should always look over character sheets before the campaign starts, and if anything looks too obscenely powerful he should veto it. Congratulate the player on his ingenuity and then ask him to make something more reasonable. If the player won't, then it's time to ask him to leave... besides, he probably gets more fun out of making the characters than out of actually playing the game.

RoboMACs Conversion

RoboMACs, the Giant Robot RPG, is another product put out by Plaid Rabbit Productions. It is compatible with Modern Knights, but not identical. Part of this is simple evolutionary change between the writing of the two games (such as computation of Rank) but most of it is due to the inherent differences in the two genres.

Giant Robot settings work more on the principle of having a System and then learning how to use it. Your can have a really big gun but no clue how to activate it at first. Often the story revolves around characters simply learning how to use what they have well enough to fight in some important conflict. Thus characters buy systems and skills separately. Superhero stories, however, tend to assume that individuals have at least some basic skill in using any powers they have. Hence the lack of separate categories. You can make up giant robots in Modern Knights, but they don't have quite the same feel as they do in RoboMACs, simply because superhero stories are different from regular robot stories. Similarly, RoboMACs includes suggestions on creating superhumans out of skills and systems, but these superhumans have a different feel than normal comic book superheroes. Enough similarities exist between the two systems that you should have no trouble in having Modern Knights superheroes interacting with RoboMACs giant robots. Keep in mind, however, that the Standard Scale in RoboMACs is one higher than the standard Supernormal Scale in Modern Knights. And it's probably best to compare the two different worlds using Modern Knights's Rank equations, and set up SNPCs using Modern Knights rules when crossing over between the two games.
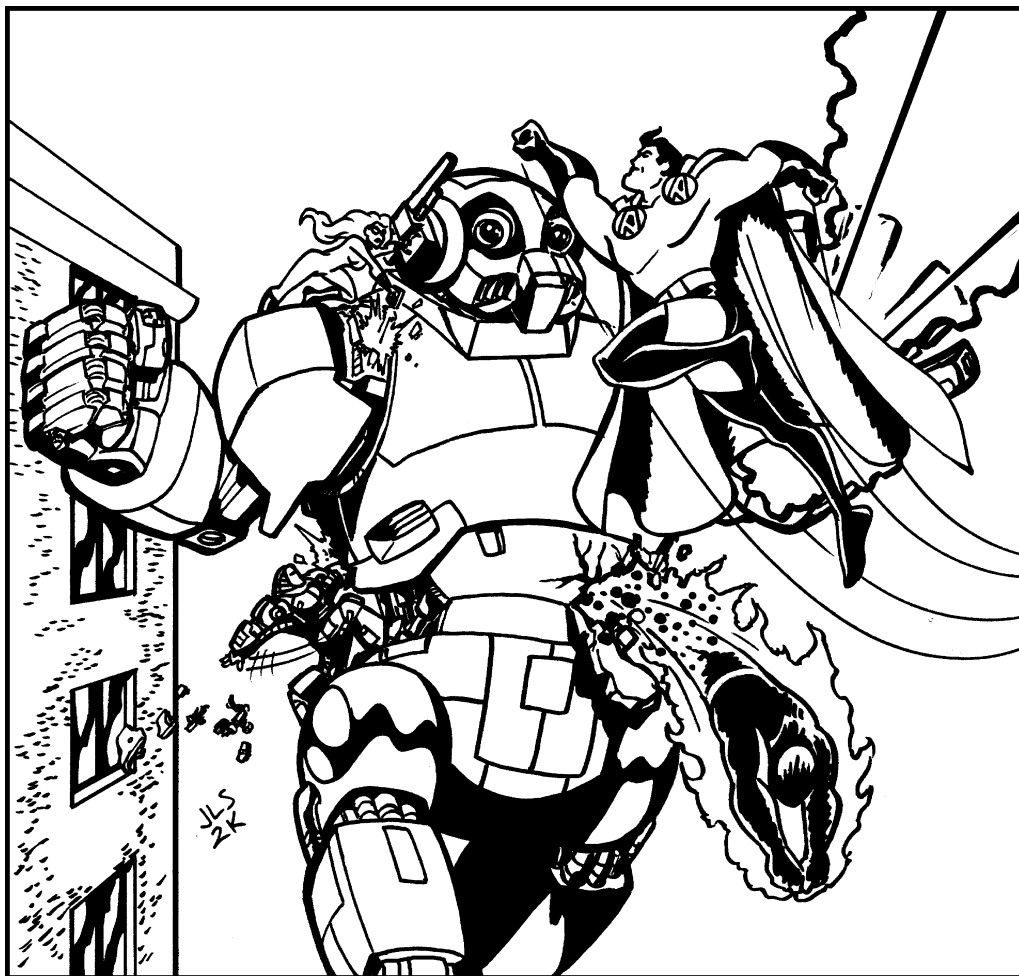
Knightsworld

Introduction

The year is 2001, and the Third Heroic Age finally seems to be winding down. The past decade has been a boom time for superhuman activity, and it has left the world somewhat different from the one the players are used to. But now, less new superheroes are appearing each month, and the supervillains seem to be quieting down and going into more lucrative and less splashy areas. A few of the more iconic figures like Avatar and Shade are still active, but there seem to be more heroes leaving the limelight every week. However, some believe it's merely a breather. Superhuman activity has never been more intense than in the last ten years... the previous two Heroic Ages were mere flashes in the pan compared to this. Some experts believe it would take more than the normal "winding down" forces to stop the current wave of superhuman activity, and that it's only a matter of months before things heat up again.

All in all, it's an interesting time to be a superhuman. And you know what they say about living in interesting times... .

The Knightsworld setting is designed to be usable as either a "standard" superhero universe or as a radically changing world where the old concepts are getting turned on their heads. It all depends on how the Referee and players want it to go. Hence, there are a lot of old familiar elements... government agencies, supervillain societies, global conquerors, a long tradition of superheroing, etc. But there are also numerous twists and places where the direction can be radically shifted away from the expected.

In terms of mechanics, while most of Knightsworld is designed to function under the base Modern Knights rules, there are a few unique mechanics, notably in the realms of magickal and psychic powers. These are intended to show beginning Referees interested in creating their own worlds how the rules can be modified to fit a new setting.

As is standard, Knightsworld is written more for the Referee interested in running a campaign where the players take on the roles of superheroes instead of supervillains. However, there will be several NPC and SNPC heroes provided to help Referees get started in the event they wish to run a supervillain or vigilante game.

The rest of the sourcebook will be laid out in the following chapters:

1: Timeline of the Knightsworld, 10000 BC to 2001 AD

2: Changes and additions to the game mechanics

3: Worldbook - important people, places, groups and things in 2001

4: Villains - NPC and SNPC writeups of a number of supervillains

5: Heroes - NPC and SNPC writeups of a few superheroes

6: Everyone Else - NPC and SNPC writeups of people from the Worldbook that are neither good guys nor bad guys, but might end up in a fight

7: Adventures and Adventure Seeds

Timeline

10000 BC - The offshoot of humanity later to be called Homo Sapiens Magi or simply Magi discover their inborn ability to manipulate the laws of nature. They begin to build an empire.

9000 BC - Golden Age of the Magi. Society similar to medieval times evolves, but more dependent on magic for everyday life. The Council of Twenty ensures that magic is never abused to the point of endangering reality.

8700 BC - The Thirteenth, later known as Omega, splits away from the Council of Twenty and begins to amass followers. He believes in less restrictions on the use of magic. Civil Wars break out several times among the non-Magi followers of each side, but the Magi refrain from combat.
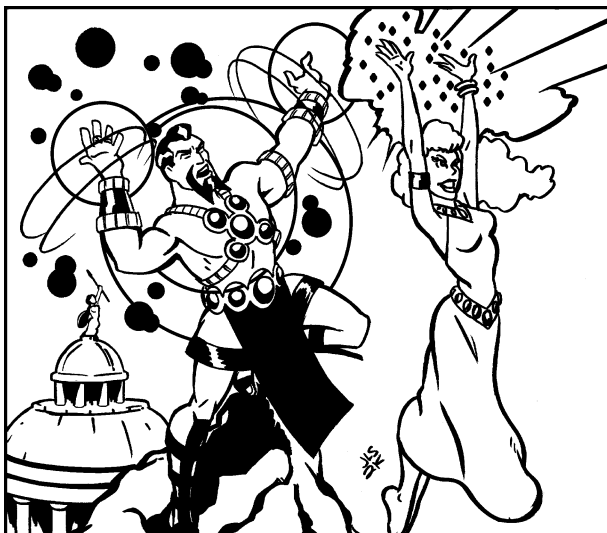
8663 BC - The Causality Wars are triggered when Omega directly attacks the Council of Nineteen by traveling back in time to kill them as youths. Soon all times are embroiled on these wars, and huge chunks of history are rewritten. The embodiment of Time itself takes a role in destroying several of the combatants on both sides. Soon all signs of the Golden Age have been erased, as if it had never happened. The few remaining fullblood Magi retreat to the Astral Planes which are immune to the ravages of Time and causality. A few people with some Magi heritage survive in the new timeline (known as Partbloods), and they swear never to use their powers again.

8000 BC - No archaeological proof survives that the Magi ever existed by this time. The world reverts to a more primitive state while technology that works within the natural laws is slowly developed to replace magic. Partbloods hide their ancestry and thin the blood further by carefully not marrying each other. Meanwhile, the Magi in the Astral realms begin to see themselves as gods and demons and start to seek followers in the real world.

4000 BC to 1000 BC - Magi genetic traits, not bound by normal laws of genetic selection, appear seemingly at random in some individuals, Magi Sports. These Sports perform acts that are the basis of legend. Certain Partbloods, having no knowledge of the oaths sworn by their ancestors, begin to develop ritual magic.

1000 BC to 1400 AD - Ritual magic is perfected, but emerging monotheistic religions limit its practice. The rules of Alchemy begin to bridge the gap between the Five Pillars of Reality and their breaking. Several Sports develop impressive magical powers, but still nowhere near those of the Purebloods. During this time, many Purebloods have begun to lose interest in Earth, and explore other realms adjacent to their Astral abodes. Priestly magic (which depended on contacting Purebloods) fades during this era. Simon Filius (aka Iago Montessi) codifies magic in Cosmoclasty near the end of this era.

1400 AD to 1800 AD - Persecution of Sports, Partbloods and even those merely suspected of having magic powers is endemic. Most Partbloods are killed or driven underground, as are many with merely the potential to pass on the gene. Magic goes into a major decline, and figures of legendary prowess are uncommon as Sports decline in frequency.

1800's - Spiritualism becomes popular and many Partbloods are able to come out into the open. As transmission of the Magene is partly a function of the desire of the parents to have such powers, more Sports are born and Partbloods give birth to children inheriting stronger powers than their parents.

1900 +/- 10 years - Discovery of Modern Physics, with Statistical Mechanics and Quantum Physics, as well as Relativity. Oddly enough, some results are difficult for most scientists to reproduce, as if the initial findings were simply what the observer wanted to see. However, this is explained as sloppy procedure and the sciences develop as they did in the real world.

early 1900's - Many scientists and inventors defy Physical Law with their finds and creations. However, few can reproduce the results, despite the fact no one can find fault with the methods of some of the scientists. And the inventions work, despite violation of the Laws of Thermodynamics. Most are ignored as crackpots and charlatans, but a few critics look for another answer. Most notable among these is Nikola Tesla, who himself was labelled a crank by Edison and others.

1938 to 1947 - The First Heroic Age. Although most of the heroes are simply rough'n'ready detectives and mysterymen, some have genuine powers, like the teleporting Johnny Angel. Others have devices that are impossible by standard physics, like Beacon's Light Lance (which was the basis of the technology used by Doublecross). A paper by Nikola Tesla is found which proposes that the laws of nature are mutable in the presence of a strong enough will. Like much of his writing, it was ignored in his day, but the heroes flying around give it new weight. The Edison Project is started in order to find a Superweapon using supernatural effects, but produces no results and goes deep underground during the Cold War.

1947 to 1967 - Members of the Edison Project work in secret on the basis laid down by Tesla. With the help of a few Partblood sorcerers who told them certain ancient lore, project scientist propose Homo Sapiens Magi as an offshoot of humanity. A test is devised to determine the amount by which an individual could warp the laws of nature, combining Quantum Mechanics and Statistical Mechanics. Theoretically, an individual with Magi genes could cause a result to happen more often than it should (for example, speed up radioactive decay), and this could be measured. The Tesla Index is developed to describe the amount of ability a subject has. However, technological limitations prevent this test from being very useful. Anyone who registered as having a significant deviation from zero was already pretty obviously not normal.

Meanwhile, engineers who didn't care as much for theory as results begin pushing the limits of the laws of nature. Some of them (who would later test quite high on the Tesla Index) develop revolutionary devices that can do amazing things. Unfortunately, there is a limit on how far they could go without making a device only they could use. By this time, almost everyone has a small amount of Magi blood, so limited "Supertech"

(as it was called) can be used by almost anyone. But the most advanced of the supertech can only be used by those with high Tesla Indices.

1967 to 1976 - The Second Heroic Age. Great numbers of Sports are born during and after WWII, owing to the Owens Effect (which is what scientists called the tendency of the Magene to manifest when the parents wished for the ability to do superhuman things). Some of these Sports have high enough Tesla Indices to manifest superpowers, but most rely on various forms of supertech, like Powersuits and miracle serums. A peculiar quirk resulting from the Owens Effect being triggered by superheroes led to the fact that most of these Sports have fixed powers, instead of the regular ability of Partbloods to perform magic. In fact, most of those with full powers have abilities **almost** within the range of science to explain. During this era, the term Pseudoscience moves out of the realm of insults and becomes the semiofficial term for the study of phenomena like supertech and magic as they affect the Natural Order. A demonic invasion of the world is fought off, but only at a terrible price. Of the nation's major hero team, only Doctor Eschaton and a crippled Brightsword survive.

1976 to 1990 - A dearth of Sports is caused by the desire for "normalcy" inherent in the 1950's. Many heroes of the Second Age retire or die as the result of either combat or the side effects of their own powers. The field of Pseudoscience becomes formalized as Violation Physics, and the rules governing it become almost as well understood as those of regular Physics. The Five Clastics are "rediscovered" and applied to Supertech. "Straight" scientists are careful to not let Tesla effects enter their experiments and certain individuals are found who have negative Tesla Indices and act as "Anchors" for the physical laws. These Anchors are often employed by major labs to hang around and keep things normal. Supermarket tabloids stick to gossip, since the paranormal is real.

1990 to present - The children of the 70's come of age, starting the Third Heroic Age. Among them are some of the most powerful Sports ever seen. Many of them, such as Tymythy Twystyd, have the potential to use real magic in addition to whatever unique powers they have. Several Purebloods begin to interfere with Earth again, notably the Presence and the demon Naobata. Other Purebloods who had been worshipped as gods send portions of their essence back to Earth to power Avatars and seek new worshippers, such as Set (who powered both the hero Set and the villain Sutekh) and Odin (who powered Valkyrie back in the Second Age, and acted as a patron to many would-be mages in the Third Age).

The presence of a great many very powers supernormals has a marked effect on everyday life, unlike during the previous two Heroic Eras. While supertech still has little direct impact on normal people, the indirect effects are great, causing ecnomic boons and suffering alike. Several world leaders are supernormals, such as President Quayle (see his entry in the Worldbook section). An entire nation of supervillains on an artificial island in the Mediterranean heightens global tensions. And the various governmental organizations set up by different nations to deal with supernormals gain an ever greater influence on everyday life.

Some Important Dates in the Third Heroic Age:

March 23, 1990: George Bush is assassinatated by a suicide team of supernormals. Khadam is suspected to be behind the attack.

June 29, 1990: New president Dan Quayle survives an assassination attempt when he unveils his superhuman powers.

August, 1990: Iraq invades Kuwait. Rapid response from special forces and government-linked superheroes drives the Iraqi army back in under a week. Quayle starts to shed his negative public image.

September 14, 1990: A rogue Soviet general launches a nuclear strike on the United States. A combination of Quayle's secretly-completed SDI system and the efforts of several superhero teams stop all but one missile, which strikes in Wichita, Kansas (**Note:** Referees wishing to set a campaign in Wichita should choose a different Midwestern city to have been nuked).

April 24, 1993: Detective Randy O'Brien disappears after a somewhat messy inquest into the death of an informant under his protection.

June 12, 1993: Dr. Phillip Smith leaves for a research trip to Malta. At some point during the next few weeks, he becomes the Templar.

January 3, 1994: The first mention of the Shade appears in papers.

July 1994: Dr. Russert uses his Wishing Well to conquer the world. Avatar is "born" and defeats Russert.

August 12, 1994: Despondent over their inability to deal with the Wishing Well crisis, the Academy of Super-Heroes disbands. Some members relocate to St. Louis to form the Cavaliers.

February 3, 1995: Avatar and the Shade team up for the first time, to prevent the Templar from stealing the Cross of St. Blaise.

May 13, 1995: Rook, former member of ASH, leads an ad-hoc group including Avatar and the Shade against an interdimensional invasion. While Avatar and the Shade decline membership, the rest of the heroes form the new Academy of Super-Heroes.

December 1, 1995: The man who would be known as Tek-7 escapes from imprisonment in an illegal lab.

April 28, 1996: Riding a wave of incredible popularity, President Quayle celebrates the passage of the 30th Amendment (allowing those who did not serve a full first term to run for a third) by announcing his candidacy for President. (Note to Referees: the "missing Amendments" prior to the 30th have to do mainly with superhumans, feel free to fill them in as necessary.)

May 2, 1996: Jonathan Free, the patriotic hero of the Second Heroic Age known as Brightsword, dies of lung cancer. His daughter Jennifer's inheritance includes his private journal and the laser torch he used in his heroic identity. Activating the torch, Jennifer's latent mutations are triggered and she assumes her father's role.

October 31, 1996: The Templar shifts tactics suddenly and stops trying to "recover his treasures." Apparently he has accomplished that goal, and on this day he launches a mystic assault on New York City using the Rood of Might. New York City is turned into a medieval castle under his control. President Quayle, on a campaign stop in Manhattan, is trapped inside, but like all other supernormals in the city he is unaltered.

November 2, 1996: While Avatar leads an assault from outside, the Shade infiltrates the city and frees the captive superhumans. In the ensuing battle, Avatar smashes the Rood of Might, but the Templar escapes.

November 8, 1996: Quayle re-elected in a landslide.

October 23, 1997: Kombat arrives in the United States with Tek-7.

May 4, 1998: Doctor Eschaton seeks the aid of the daughter of his former teammate, Brightsword, in regaining his full power. In the process, the two cross paths with Tek-7 and Kombat. They draw the ire of the Templar, who was seeking the same power source Doctor Eschaton was.

June 24, 1998: The Templar tries to get his revenge on all four of the heroes at once, and they band together to protect themselves.

June 26, 1998: The new Power Knights team up with Avatar to hunt down the Templar, and succeed in putting him in jail. Avatar accepts an honorary membership in the Power Knights, mainly so he has an excuse to keep an eye on Doctor Eschaton, who he sees as possibly becoming a threat.

March 15, 1999: The Capital Patrol officially disbands when several of its more civilian members decide to retire. The Colonel and Strafe continue to take on covert missions after this, however.

November 7, 2000: The election is held for a new President, signalling the end of the Quayle Administration. However, trouble with voting machines delays the results of a very close race for weeks, and the final victor is significantly weakened by the controversy.

January 21, 2001: The new President (Referee's choice, or use the one who won in the real world) is sworn in. However, many hostile forces see the lack of a mandate and the divided Congressas an invitation to intrigue against the United States.

Some Options for Players:

If the players decide they'd rather join an existing group than form their own, this history leaves open several spots for them. ASH could have one of its periodic disbandings, and Rook could gather the player characters to meet a new threat. More patriotic characters could join a reborn Capital Patrol. They could also join the new Power Knights, or even play the premade characters for a while until they're comfortable making their own heroes. Most of these options let the Referee have an existing "mentor" hero available to help out inexperienced players.

On the other hand, a small gaming group of just two players and a Referee could run Avatar and Shade, two of the world's finest heroes, for a more advanced campaign.

The timeline is left a little sparse near the present so that there's room for the Referee to add in events of importance to the player characters.

Game Mechanics

For the most part, Knightsworld characters are basic Modern Knights characters, and follow all the rules in the rulebook. However, there are a few alterations, both major and minor, that need to be made to flesh out the possibilities of a world where all supernatural effects arise from a single basis, man's inborn ability to violate the laws of nature.

Magic

Personal power works pretty much the same here as in the base rules, although generally with "Five Clastics" special effects overlaid. The major differences lie in how Favors are used.

Gods and Spirits

The Knightsworld is rife with extradimensional powers, many of whom were once human millennia ago but transcended their mortality. Others are extensions of nature itself. For some reason, all the various pagan gods and spirits have increased their activity on Earth in the Third Heroic Age, making it relatively easy for someone with a bit of natural talent to find a patron. Patrons will even allow petitioners to defer any repayment of favors, accepting mere worship for the time being. Some of the more cautious in the magical community eye this with great suspicion, and attempt to avoid leaving themselves beholden to any gods, but others see only the power offered and not any possible strings. Hints and portents telling of the great cataclysms of the past suggest that another war of the gods may be on the horizon, with the great powers collecting their power bases. Others simply claim that the "market" is good, with the traditional major religions waning in industrialized nations, and the old Purebloods are simply taking advantage of a good situation. As a result of all of this, the penalties for "Warlocks" are very rarely a problem. Characters who don't repay Favors can still get boons of power from most gods, although the natural spirits are still keeping to the old ways more closely. Some gods may require exclusivity, however, and punish any followers who accept power from other, rival gods. The most active pantheons in 2001 are:

The Aesir, Teutonic gods of Norse and Germanic legend. Having been pulled back from the brink of nothingness in the early 1970s, they're aggressively building a following to ensure this never happens again. Odin himself has over a thousand minor mages beholden to him. The Aesir only demand that their followers never bargain with Jotuns.

The Jotuns, ancient enemies of the Aesir, shapeshifting magical creatures who were never human. Many of them have taken on human form and are major figures in private industry worldwide. They prefer to work via technology and politics, but are not above granting magical favors to those who oppose the Aesir or who might help Jotunish political goals.

The Heliopolans, Egyptian deities. Only a few of them are active, but the few that are out there are VERY active. Set has created both a superhero and a supervillain to carry his name, largely to stir up trouble. Horus has used a succession of physical avatars to oppose Set, sometimes being considered a hero and sometimes a villain.

The Titans of myth, losers in early struggles over the Mediterranean area, are determined to gain a new power base. They are just emerging in 2001, and may be the source of at least one player character's power. Their rivals, the Pantheon led by Zeus, are largely acting behind the scenes at this time, trying to make the Titans look foolish and sabotaging their schemes. Hermes is, as one might expect, the most active in this capacity.

Of course, if you have a favorite set of gods, feel free to bring them into the fray. The main exception is that there is no visible presence of either Judeo-Christian, Moslem, Hindu, Buddhist or Shinto power on Earth. Some take this to indicate that the world's major religions are false, but most of the true faithful simply believe that their God is above such petty bargaining for believers, and generally see the presence of the pagan gods as a test of their faith.

The Five Pillars and Clastics

In the Knightsworld, Time and Space are capable of answering pleas. However, they do this through their own set of rules, rules that hold chaos and Null at bay. These rules have been identified by mages and called the Five Pillars. All magic works by the bending or breaking of these laws, either directly or by asking a higher power to do it for you. The Pillars are known by many different specific titles, but in basic form they represent the way nature works in terms of:

1) Forms
2) Forces
3) Spirits/Minds
4) Realities
5) Causality

Physical Review M: Violation Physics

June 1993

A Different Perspective On Magic: The Five Pillars
submitted by Professor Perceval Happersen of University of Warwick (ret.)

Greetings, oh fellows in academia. I trust the esteemed editors will be able to correct any errors in this manuscript, as I am dictating it to a werewolf. [Editor's Note: Professor Happersen is blind. He may or may not be joking about the werewolf part.]

In the half century that scientists have been studying magic, they have gone in directions vastly different than those of "classical" magic. Much of this was due simply to ignorance about the classical laws of magic, and the rest a willful determination not to listen to mages, instead finding the answers the hard way. And in doing so, you have made great progress, discovering secrets of magic lost by the ancients, since you did not have the prejudices that come with training in the classical style. However, the time has come to inform you of the way it used to be done, that you might also repeat the successes of the old ways.

Thus it is that the editors of PhysRevM have asked me to pen this paper on the subject of the Five Clastics of magic, as well as analyze how they need to be modified in light of recent discoveries.

Magic centers around the Five Pillars of Reality, and has for as long as we can determine. To be more specific, magic is the violation of these principles.

The Five Pillars are broken into the Three of Substance and the Two of Existence, but they are generally presented all together, so:

Law I - The Law of Substance
Law II - The Law of Motion
Law III - The Law of Spirit
Law IV - The Law of Space
Law V - The Law of Fate

All magic is performed by conscious violation of these Pillars. The ability to break the Pillars is carried in what you scientists call the Magene or gene for Homo Sapiens Magi. Such a gene was endemic in the time before current history, and empires were built on magic. However, a terrible civil war wiped out all but a handful of Mages, as well as destroying all sign of their empires by changing history itself. Of those that survived, many retreated to other planes and became known as gods or demons. Others had children with non-magical humans and thinned the blood. The few remaining Purebloods, as we call them, have im-

mense powers over reality, but fortunately rarely bother with Earth anymore. Partbloods, the descendants of those that stayed on Earth, have varying degrees of ability and generally are perceived as wizards or witches. Those with quirks of the Magene exhibit powers in certain areas, and are superheroes in this time. In earlier times, they were the stuff of legends.

One very important thing to know, for all of you who work in Violation Physics, is that of the Purebloods there existed, and still may exist, a Council of Nineteen who have the task of keeping the natural order. If you push too hard on the natural laws, one of the Nineteen might come to prevent you from further damaging reality. Having reign over the entire universe means they don't spend much time on Earth anymore, but they do check in from time to time. So beware of where you tread.

Above the Nineteen stand the personifications of Time, Space and Nothingness. They constantly struggle to dominance, and Time and Space have allied to fight Null. Above these stands I know not what. Perhaps the Christian God. Perhaps they are the highest power. I know not, nor do I wish to be anywhere nearby when such a power needs to intervene. But, enough history. I've already rambled enough to give the editors conniptions. On with the detailed description of the Five Pillars. These come from <u>Cosmoclasty</u>, the first work to seriously attempt to codify magic in our history. That the author would survive until the present day and become the fiend Lord Ebon is regrettable, for he did much to preserve knowledge that would otherwise have been lost to the witchhunts and inquisitions. It was also he who coined the term "Clastic" to refer to violations of the Pillars.

The First Pillar

"All things have a unique substance, comprised of varying portions of the Four Elements: Fire, Air, Water and Earth. In a living thing these are called Humours, and named Blood, Yellow Bile, Black Bile and Phlegm respectively."

- Simon Filius, <u>Cosmoclasty</u>

The First Clastic

"The substance of a thing may be changed to fit the will of he who strives. The simpler the change, the simpler the spell."

- Simon Filius, ibid.

This Pillar has perhaps been the most victimized by modern Violation Physics, as well as the simple application of scientific methods of observation to magic itself. A spell to change blood to bile should be as simple as one to change fire to water, yet it is not. And in fact, changing fire to water should itself be as simple as the reverse, but changing water to fire (or anything to fire, for that matter) is one of the simplest spells using the First Clastic.

In fact, Pillar I seems to be more of an empirical attempt to explain transmutation without knowledge of atomic and nuclear physics. Empirically it works, as all the laws do. The inconsistencies are minor, and would be overlooked by mages of earlier times. However, moderm physics allows a better restating of the First Pillar:

"Matter exists in four basic states: Solid, Liquid, Gaseous and Plasma (superheated matter). It will not shift between these states without a change in energy, energy that must be conserved. In addition, all matter is formed of Atoms, which themselves have components. Atoms will not spontaneously alter their composition except through radioactive decay. Alteration of the nuclei of atoms is always accompanied by energy release or absorption."

While not all-encompassing, this revision fits better with the evidence of both science and modern day mages. Turning air into fire is simple... simply add energy. Turning yellow bile into blood requires not just alteration of the individual atoms, but of molecular structure and so forth, and is a more complicated spell.

The Second Pillar

"All things have a natural position and motion, which can only be changed by the addition of impetus. Things Celestial travel on circles, while things base travel in lines. Everything remains in its natural channels."

- Simon Filius, ibid.

The Second Clastic

"Rivers may jump their beds and stars fall from the sky at the command of a man of power and will."

- Simon Filius, ibid.

In more modern parlance, this law states that the forces of Newtonian Physics and classical electrodynamics should hold. Forces are the result of fields and potentials, and obey conservation laws. Essentially, "Macroscopic Phenomena Obey Physical Laws." Of course, which physical laws they follow can and do fill volumes of text. And of course, the idea of impetus was itself abandoned centuries ago.

It's worth noting that where the Second Pillar says that macroscopic physics is obeyed, the First essentially says that microscopic physics is obeyed.

The Third Pillar

"All things have a spirit, unique unto them. It can not be destroyed, nor can it be displaced by any means short of the death or destruction of the thing."

- Simon Filius, ibid.

The Third Clastic

"The spirit in a thing is a potent source of power should it be consumed, and it may also be quickened or subdued. To see the spirit is to see the true self, without the interference of the mind."

- Simon Filius, ibid.

Very little has been done regarding this Clastic. Partly because the talent to use it is rare, but mostly because those with enough ethics to use the talent in research are also ethical enough to not use other humans as guinea pigs for the more extreme tests of the Clastic. Perhaps the article by the doctor from MetaPsych this issue will shed more light on the state of knowledge in this area.

Note that not just people have spirits: animals, plants and even the rocks themselves have spirits to some extent. In fact, the magic used by Centauri [a reptilian race from Alpha Centauri, now all but extinct - Editor] relies heavily on drawing power from the spirits of inanimate things, as well as from living things. There has been much debate on how much of a spirit one must have in order to have "rights", but this is not the place for such a debate.

The Fourth Pillar

"No place can be reached save by Foot, Fin or Wing."

-Simon Filius, ibid.

The Fourth Clastic

"All places can be reached, all worlds traversed."

- Simon Filius, ibid.

In other words, the Fourth Pillar states that in order to get from one point to another, the intervening distance must be travelled. It also implies, but doesn't clearly state, that planes other than our own are normally inaccessible. Simon Filius saw this when he wrote his Fourth Clastic, although he wrote very little else on the subject of traversing these other worlds.

The largest part of the work done in this area has been on General Relativity, which lays out how the structure of spacetime should be. Things like time travel and instantaneous teleportation are forbidden by GR, yet they happen. So the Pillar could be partially rewritten as "General Relativity Holds." Then again, given the non-magical faster-than-light technologies possessed by some alien races, the Fourth Pillar may need further revision.

As for Simon's addition to the Clastic, less research has been done, mainly because of the dangers involved. Several interdimensional invasions attacked Earth during the Second Heroic Age, most of them lured in by portals created on our side. Perhaps the best way to expand the Pillar to explicitly include other realities would be: "There are many universes that differ from ours by physical laws or simply by histories. Normally they are kept from each other and from us and do not meet."

The Fifth Pillar

"No Fate can be reached save by waiting. No Action may be undone. The threads of destiny are unbreakable and unreadable."

- Simon Filius, ibid.

The Fifth Clastic

"There is no fate, all may be known to the probing mind. The past is no more immutable than the future, the threads are in OUR hands."

- Simon Filius, ibid.

The essence of this Pillar is that events are causally connected. A cause must precede the effect, not the other way around. In violating this Pillar, one can cause something to have happened differently than it did before, a sort of Retroactive Continuity, or retcon for short. Also, one can scry into the future, seeing things that have yet to happen (the cause, the future event, happens after the effect, which is the viewer seeing the event). Note that causal connection is limited to the speed of light, so being instantly aware of something falls under the Fifth Clastic as well (again, alien technologies may provide a loophole in this Pillar). One possible meaning for the final phrase of the Pillar, aside from being fatalistic mumbo-jumbo, is that normally information is lost, or unfindable. For example, natural law would have any object eventually decay, lose its shape. A spell can see what it once looked like, reaching back in time and causing the information to be preserved until the caster could get it. Another example is the Heisenberg Uncertainly Principle. This doesn't have to do with causality, rather with "unknowable threads," so the HUP can be violated under the Fifth Clastic.

Being Broken By The Pillars

Haphazardly cast spells can turn on the user, or run wild and attract a powerful response. The rigourous procedure used by you scientists minimizes the chances of this happening, as does ritual spellcasting. Of course, the two are practically identical, now that I think of it. Among mages, we do not rank power by how much we can warp the Laws, but rather by how well we can control the warpings we create. An exertion of will can prevent a spell from running out of control and destroying a large area, but inexperienced mages can be killed by the effort of controlling larger spells. In addition, minor side effects can cause temporary damage or even permanent disfigurement to mages if not controlled. Often a mage will ignore the minor effects in order to save power for the eventuality of a major mishap. As a result, mages are often disfigured in some way, enhancing our unsavory reputation throughout history. And no, I did not lose my sight that way, I had my eyes torn out by a wolf. No one said being a mage was safe.

In closing, I would like to thank you all for giving me the opportunity to present the traditional side of the magical picture to you, and would hope that you profit from the knowledge.

The following historical treatises cover the subject in more depth, but the basic way this magic works is this:

1) The player describes what he wants to do.
2) The Referee decides what Pillars must be broken to accomplish this, and how hard it would be to break each.
3) The Referee assigns a Difficulty to each Pillar, usually related to the Level of effect desired and rarely easier than if a Combat Ability were to be used for the same effect.
4) The player needs to make all rolls, although there is not a Multiple Action Penality assessed. If all are successful, his intended action happens. If some are successful and others aren't, the player can spend a Favor to make it work anyway, or simply let a partial effect occur. If any roll is a Mishap, the player may spend a Favor to prevent the nasty effect from happening.

In general, Mishaps in using this style of magic should be very harsh, since they can be avoided by a mage who hasn't overextended himself. Removal from reality should always be a possibility for those attempting major violations of natural law.

The minor side effects mentioned in the article can be enforced by Referees as the result of either Mixed results or failure of some, but not all, rolls.

The most important change to game dynamics that needs to be considered in using Five Clastics magic is that Favors are now only used in the event of failure, and only after the roll is made. This tends to allow for somewhat quicker play, as there's no need to haggle beforehand, nor any need to spend time paying back favors afterwards if you're successful. However, it is also very dangerous... it's not nice to fool with Mother Nature, after all. Between this and the lax attitude of gods in 2001, even diehard warlocks are never without a source of power. This makes magic much more desireable for players wishing to powergame, so the Referee needs to make sure the penalties that do exist are enforced.

PSIS

The main addition to psi powers in the Knightsworld is how telepathy works. As this is essentially a Noncombat Ability, no new game mechanics need to be introduced. Included instead is an excerpt from a MetaPsych lecture given in 1995 to a nonprofessional audience.

(transcript begins after preamble)

"Although the clinical classification of various Psi-endowed subjects is complex enough that there are no more than one or two individuals in any one section, as research continued it started to become apparent that the way Psis sensed minds could be compared constructively to the operation of the normal five senses. Sight, sound, touch, smell and hearing. "Now, the popular media almost inevitably uses the hearing paradigm, even though it is known to be the rarest one in fact. A 'listener' Psi hears minds like we hear sound. And like hearing, it cannot be shut off. This forces the Psi to erect barriers to the outside, learn how to ignore what he's sensing. And it generally means that the 'listener' is feared and mistrusted, becoming a rather antisocial individual. But as is generally known, all powers require some act of will to violate the laws of nature. Theoretically, any supernatural sense can be turned off. In all known cases, the 'listener' has some underlying neurosis or even psychosis that subconsciously keeps the sense all the way on. Most frequently it's a deepseated paranoia that makes the subject unable to let down his guard and not hear people's thoughts. Once this problem can be overcome, the 'listener' usually becomes a 'sight' telepath, although sometimes a backlash effect can keep the subject from using his senses at that high a level.

"The 'sight' telepaths, or 'Psights' as they're sometimes called, are the most powerful and versatile. Like our vision, the sense can be turned off fairly easily, and can make out a great deal of detail. However, similar to vision, the 'Psight' will sense most clearly what is being focused on, less clearly people with similar mindsets, and not at all those completely unlike the focus. So, if a 'Psight' is focusing on a human mind, any aliens will be on his 'blind' side. With training, a telepath can learn to extend his peripheral senses so as to close the blind spot.

"'Touch' telepaths are the most common true telepaths, and also the weakest. They can sense thoughts directed at them, usually only at short range, or read the minds of nearby subjects with some concentration. It takes more effort to make out distinct thoughts as opposed to vague impressions, especially when the subject isn't cooperating. Now, most of you are aware that there exist passive powers, ones that don't need conscious will to remain active. The mere knowledge that one has the power is enough to keep it going even when you sleep, which is helpful for those with defensive powers. 'Touch' telepathy generally works this way, and since it isn't as disruptive as 'Hearing' telepathy is, few Psis bother with the hypnotic regimen needed to be able to turn it off. However, because they do hear thoughts directed at them, they still engender some unease, and they still suffer from the occasional 'cold fish' personality.

"The other two senses are less discriminatory, and the Psi talents they apply to rarely use the sense analogy, since they have their own names. Smell is a fairly distinguishing sense, but not as finely tuned as touch or sight. Hence it describes what are called Telempaths, a sort of halfway step between true telepathy and empathy. With intensive training and talent, a Telempath can pick up individual thoughts and tell who thought them. But generally they get a melange of images from all around, from which they can pick out prevailing moods and some occasional strong word-thoughts.

"Finally, our taste buds can only distinguish a small set of stimuli, and thus it is with 'Taste' telepaths, or Empaths. An Empath cannot ever sense exact thoughts, but with experience can deduce them from context and the mood of the subject. The analogy with taste breaks down, however, in that not all Empaths are short-range. But since the talent is less useful if you can't connect the emotion to a person, empathy is functionally limited to visual range. Extreme-range Empaths can sometimes lock on to the emotional state of someone seen on television or talked to over the phone, but this is a trick few master.

"Of course, there are 'always-on' Empaths and touch-range Psights to a degree, but the five senses are a fair classification of most types of Psi sensing. Sending is another matter, and is slightly harder to reduce to some cute mnemonics. And in general, the type of sender a Psi is can change with training more easily than the type of receiver.

"Generally, the less training a Psi has, the less able he is to make himself heard by normals. Those with extremely high Tesla Indices can, and sometimes do, broadcast to everyone in their area at first, and have to learn to hold back. But most have to learn to break down the natural barriers of normals through practice. One method used to rate sending is the level of receiver needed to get the thoughts clearly. The stronger the receiver needed, the weaker the sender is.

"In addition to who **can** hear the message, there's a rating on who **does**. Some can only make one person at a time hear them, and are known as Narrowcasters. Others will be heard by everyone sensitive enough to pick them up in the general area, and they're called Broadcasters. Those able to send to whatever number of people they chose don't generally have a separate name, since most Psis are trained to get to this level. Nicknames for this level include Conference Callers, Screencasters... because they decide who gets in and who doesn't... and Omnicasters. For fairly obvious reasons, it's considered more important to train Broadcasters to this level than it is Narrowcasters, since the former can be a public nuisance if untrained. Yes, a question?"

(transcript ends as the Q&A session begins)

Players with telepathic characters should be familiar with this article and define what type of sender and receiver the character is, even if the character is totally in the dark on these definitions. For more on MetaPsych, see the Worldbook in the next chapter.

ANCHORS

One addition to the standard superhero genre that Knightsworld makes is the existence of an entire class of people capable of making supernormal effects stop working. They're referred to as Anchors, because they keep natural law from drifting. Maybe one in a hundred people is an Anchor, but only a small number of Anchors are strong enough to affect anyone else.

Types of Anchor

Most Anchors are Normal Scale, and in fact are just plain normal in most respects. While most "normals" possess very slight paranormal talents allowing them to use some of the supertech designed by "mad scientists," the Anchor can't get anything to work that isn't grounded solidly in physical law. Fortunately, very few items of supertech have trickled down to the level of the normal consumer, but it can sometimes be frustrating. Low level Anchors have no combat effect, their Anchor effect is simply not strong enough to counter a conscious mind. However, by simply touching a supertech or magic item, they can cause it to stop working until someone who isn't an Anchor can come to restart it. Very powerful magic items can resist this effect, and only very weak ones are permanently disenchanted. This is taken as a Noncombat Ability, and the inability to use the items is taken as a Disadvantage. The DSHA rates these people as A0, or zero-level Anchors. All Anchors have these two things, the Noncombat Ability and the Disadvantage.

The next level of Anchor, A1, can extend the effect of the A0 out to several meters, sometimes voluntarily and sometimes not. In addition, an A1 can interfere with, but not totally stop, the operation of Violation effects by touching a subject. This can be bought as the Tactical Ability Confuse, with the Disadvantages Must Grab and Limited Effect (Only Active Violation Powers). The Degree is Automatic if the Grab is successful, and the Ability cannot be used at the "affects everyone" level. The Active Violation Powers (AVP) Effect Group is explained below.

A2 Anchors are more powerful than A1, but lack control. They make it difficult for AVP effects to work in an area around them, and can't stop themselves from doing this. For them, use Confuse with the Disadvantages of Limited Effect (AVP) and Cannot Turn Off (reduces Difficulty by one, but if not Automatic then the roll is made any time someone becomes a viable target) and Only Usable at Full Effect (reduces Difficulty by one, can only be taken on an Ability with multiple levels of effect). A2's still can't shut down anyone powerful, but they inconvenience everyone.

An A3 Anchor has learned to control his field, but still can't prevent the touch range (A0) effects. The A3 has Confuse, Limited Effect (AVPs) with no other Disadvantages. A3's can hamper one person, everyone, or clamp down the effect so that no one else is bothered. If startled by a sudden touch, however, an A3 may take an automatic Confuse on the toucher.

A4 is the highest level that has any use as a broad classification, although there is a great deal of variety within the group. A4 Anchors have the Confuse ability of the A3's, plus the Depower Attack Ability with the Disadvantage of Limited Effect (AVPs). The better the Anchor is, the higher the Difficulty he can attempt. Some also have the ability to affect all in an area, although this generally requires great concentration (Sitting Duck Disadvantage) and sometimes pain. Some specialize in shutting down particular types of Violation Powers, only able to use Depower on Magic or Devices for a -2 Difficulty on their rolls. There are only a

handful of A4's able to totally strip a person of power, and they usually have to spend more time doing so than is possible in combat. Some A4's have a passive field that protects them from many supernormal attacks, giving them Armor versus the AVP Group.

It is theoretically possible for a strong enough Anchor to cause the superhero known as Avatar to vanish completely, due to his nature (explained later in the book), but none has tried yet.

No type of Anchor may have superhuman powers unrelated to being an Anchor.

JOBS FOR ANCHORS

The most common employment for known Anchors is in science and industry, helping make sure that no wayward Violation Effects intrude on a process. Even A0's can generally make a decent living doing this, although the really choice jobs tend to go to A1 or better. Underwriter Laboratories employs a number of A0's to ensure that a product is safe for general use and does not require Violation Effects to work.

A2's tend to get hired by larger research facilities to just sit around and keep things normal. It can be a boring job, but it pays well. For those interested in a more exciting lifestyle, some A2's are hired by casinos and other places where large sums of money ride on chance, to make sure no one fixes the odds. Not all of these jobs are strictly legal. At A3 and higher, you start to see Anchors involved in law enforcement and bounty hunting. Many of these will be Paranormal Scale due to training, and possess a number of Abilities and devices that do not require Violation Effects. The few A4's with the Armor Ability are greatly sought after as members of PSWAT (Paranormal Suppression Weapons and Tactics) teams.

ACTIVE VIOLATION POWERS GROUP

While all superpowers are based on violation of natural law, not all are based on active uses of such violations. Active Violation Effects are those which are currently happening, such as energy blasts or force fields or mind probes. Passive Violation Effects, on the other hand, are static results of previous Active uses. For example, a big burly guy who got his muscles from being paranormal cannot be made into a skinny wimp by an Anchor… the muscle mass stays there. However, his ability to lift cars over his head can be impaired or removed. Similarly, a character who can sprout wings and fly won't lose the wings themselves in the presence of an Anchor, but he won't be able to fly with them until he gets away. Some Passive Violation Effects simply cannot be hindered. A character who sprouts claws from his fingertips will neither lose the claws nor the ability to cut people with them. One who develops chlorophyll in his skin for photosynthesis will keep deriving nutrition from this (although he may not be able to replenish the green stuff).

Thus, Anchors can't stop everything that's a superpower. Plus, many Effects can be generated normally, such as fire from a flamethrower or light from a laser. The Active Violation Effects Group doesn't cover any of these things.

However, it is still very broad and very powerful, as it covers all 15 Primary Effects just as Magic and Devices groups do, and it can also stop all Magic and most Devices. Hence, it is **ONLY** available to Anchors. No non-Anchor should ever be allowed to take this as a Secondary Group or use it in any capacity. There exist no technological substitutes for Anchors in the Knightsworld, nor any magical ways to reproduce the effect. Depower can still be taken by non-Anchors, but not the Limited Effect (AVPs) Disadvantage.

MISCELLANEOUS

SCALES IN THE KNIGHTSWORLD

As will be explained later in the Worldbook, scientists who study Violation Physics have devised their own measurement of a person's ability to alter reality, called the Tesla Index. Many of the terms used to categorize different levels of Tesla Index are the same as those used for Scale in the Modern Knights rules, and for the most part there is agreement between the two sets of rankings. The terms used here are Anchor, Normal, Paranormal, Supernormal and Supernatural. Anchors have already been described, and those who are Normal, Paranormal and Supernormal on one scale are usually the same on the other. To distinguish between the two scales when necessary, a "T-" will be prepended to the term. In Tesla Index formulation, T-Normal means a person has only a very limited ability to alter reality, usually on such a small scale that it can only come out in very sensitive tests. However, it is possible for a T-Normal to be a Paranormal Scale as a result of training and natural (if rare) talent. Most skilled fighters and atheletes are Paranormals, for example.

T-Paranormals sometimes can visibly alter reality with minor feats like enhanced strength, really good luck or mental abilities. Usually, however, their main strength lies in being able to use wild and unpredictable Supertech, which takes advantages of minor alterations in reality to perform amazing feats. T-Paranormals

are frequently only Normal Scale without their devices, but some can rise to Supernormal Scale with the help of powered armor or miracle potions.

T-Supernormals represent the low end of the Supernormal Scale, usually with powers and abilities only slightly beyond those of mortal ken. Those who are strongly "spiked" in one area of specialty may by a lower Scale, but most T-Supernormals are broad-based in their abilities, with greater resilience than any T-Normal human could possess. Some T-Supernormals may be tough Paranormals.

Supernaturals are at the high end of Supernormal Scale, and usually possess some spectacular powers. Around them, the improbable is inevitable, and the impossible happens six times before breakfast. Scales higher than Supernormal are stictly considered Supernatural, but are sometimes labelled Cosmic. Purebloods from before the Causality Wars are Supernaturals who are generally two Scales above Supernormal. It is rare but not impossible for a Supernatural to possess a Scale below Supernormal, especially if his abilities are all noncombatant in nature. Someone who can teleport to a distant star is definitely Supernatural, but without any other abilities or resilience, the Scale of the person is probably no better than Paranormal.

Most Player Characters will be Supernormals and Supernaturals in a standard Knightsworld campaign, although there's room for gadget-using Paranormals. Lower powered "street level" campaigns will frequently contain several T-Normals who have toughened themselves to Paranormal Scale.

Body Types

Having a high Tesla Index brings in a whole host of effects, among them greater resilience and faster healing... but only if the person truly wishes to live. Normal, healthy fear of pain and death alters the flow of time and space ever so slightly around most people of Paranormal or higher ranking, giving them the ability to take greater punishment and recover from it more quickly. As a result, all body types normally heal as quickly as Organics unless the character has a specific Disadvantage stating otherwise. Likewise, Tough Organic is the norm for T-Paranormals and higher, only T-Normals are ever simply Organic.

However, when a person who can alter reality truly wants to die, reality will oblige. Suicidal characters will heal at much slower rates (how slowly is left to the Referee as a plot device), and may even take more damage from attacks.

Death

Given the Third Clastic's implications, it's even harder to stay totally dead in the Knightsworld than in a normal superhero universe. A good thing, too, since it's also somewhat more brutal there. So far, technological and psionic means of contacting the dead have met with very limited success, but magical methods work quite well. Spirits separated from their bodies under the right circumstances (had a task to complete, killed so suddenly they don't know they're dead yet, etc.) can be contacted by a mage with the right training, and can even be placed into physical containers. Usually the container is an unwilling human body (see Lord Ebon later in the book), but sometimes it can be a specially prepared simulacrum of anything from flesh to metal. Additionally, if the spirit's original body can be repaired to the point of being able to sustain life, the two can be reunited.

The upshot of this is that if a character is killed, there's always a way to bring it back if the player or Referee want it to happen. Immortality may only exist for a few, but the rest can at least postpone death a little.

WORLDBOOK

This chapter is intended to fill in the broad background needed to run a Knightsworld campaign, the major differences between Knightsworld and the Real World. Like most standard superhero universes, Knightsworld stays fairly close to the broad swath of real history, differing in only a few major points here and there. This is so that if something major happens in the news that you want to use as a springboard for an adventure, you can be reasonably sure it happened in the Knightsworld as well. You may need to change some names and factor in repercussions on certain major powers, but the basic event will still be there.

The first section will cover the Big Picture... various nations on Earth, alien powers and so forth. The second section will concentrate on differences in the United States, such as who is President and so forth. Next will come the major corporations and private organizations that might impact on any campaign set in Knightsworld, if only as background color. Finally, certain aspects of reality itself, notably the Tesla Index mentioned already, will be covered.

THE BIG PICTURE

Alien Races

Earth has encountered a few dozen alien races from both nearby starsystems and farflung galaxies. Most are left for the Referee to fill in, but the following have played major roles in Earth history.

The Planetary Confederation - A star-spanning republic of sorts, slightly Roman in its style of government. Hundreds of races form the Confederation, but two in particular swing the most power. The T!rir (the ! is pronounced as a sort of click) are an ancient insect-like race which once held a tight grip on most of the galaxy, but they eventually faded and let younger races take over. They use their stockpiles of superior technology as both carrot and stick to keep the other races in line, but are worried that they may be running out of secrets they can safely give out. The Santari form the backbone of the Confederation's military and government, and are amazingly close to human genetic structure. In fact, it is possible that one people was born from the other, a lost colony or the result of an experiment by one of the old pagan gods.

The Planetary Confederation has declared Earth a protected world, and maintains a satellite in Earth orbit to deter unauthorized incursions. The official explanation is that unrestricted trade with an undeveloped race could cause serious problems (which it has already, see below), but the real reason is that humanity is inherently VERY dangerous to the rest of the galaxy. The Magene is unique among all the worlds of the galaxy, and the Santari in particular fear what could happen if Humanity were allowed free passage about the galaxy. They have allowed limited excursions by those capable of interstellar travel on their own, but have not offered to provide FTL technology to Earth.

The Planetary Confederation's "space police" is known in English translation as the Galactic Warrior Corps. The GWC draws members from all Confederation races, including Scytharians (see below), and its job is to maintain law and order. Their secret agenda, however, is to restrict the development, spread and use of Dangerous Technologies. When they started getting reports from their agent on Earth (Delta Rose, see her entry), they decided supernormals were a Dangerous Technology. Any supernormals traveling to Planetary Confederation worlds can expect a "friendly visit" from any local GWC officers. Typical GWC officers are equivalent to the writeup for the Khadam High Guard Gold troopers (see their entry, add a few Wounds at Levels 1 and 2). In fact, the Gold troopers use pirated GWC weapons and armor.

The Pranir Houses - Not very brilliant, or very strong, or very good at really anything but staying alive, the Pranir were an early race given boons of technology by the Planetary Confederation in the days before the current policy of protection. A snake-like race with four arms, short grey or brown fur, and owl-like eyes, the Pranir then found their true niche...
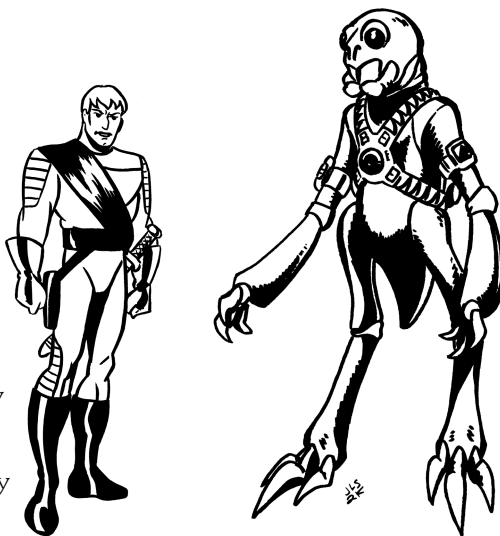
traders. Something common on one world is a delicacy on another, and the Pranir soon had all but abandoned their homeworld to disperse among the stars in profitable endeavor.

The Pranir are, by and large, honest traders. Their talent for finding local surplus and rarity lets them make a good profit without cheating their customers. Unfortunately, as mentioned before, they're not very brilliant overall. They often have no idea what kind of damage a trade good can cause on another world, and few are inclined to pay someone else to figure it out. Hence, they have a reputation as somewhat shady, due to the more spectacular disasters resulting from their sales. A short list of Pranir-induced disasters involving Earth includes:

- An entire world rendered uninhabitable because imported kudzu outdid itself and eliminated the entire plant ecosystem.

- A city in Europe suffered a massive ozone crisis when a device that was supposed to inject ozone into the upper atmosphere and repair the Ozone Layer turned out unable to do so in Earth's thicker atmosphere.

- A massive fireball in North Korea when a fusion power plant turned out to be unstable on a planet with a magnetic field.

Scytharian Mining Corporation - Specializing in extracting resources from hostile environments, the SMC has become a leading creator of artificial lifeforms, a few of which have spent time on Earth. Such lifeforms are collectively known as "Scytharians," even though they rarely have much in common with other models.

The SMC had its greatest impact on Earth when it lost a cargo ship in the Sol system in the early 1900s. This ship was discovered decades later and gave rise to the nation of Khadam (see their entry).

Centauri - A now-dead race which inhabited our nearest stellar neighbor. They were the only other race in the galaxy to use magic, and they managed to drain the lifeforce of their world in the process. With their last gasp, they sent emissaries to other worlds to warn of the danger of excessive magic use, including the one on Earth known as Archon. Archon is, like all his people, rather reptilian in features, although he is warm-blooded. Having found that Earth's biosphere was in greater danger from technology than magic, he has become a leading advocate for environmental causes.

Other Nations – Fictional

Like any good superhero universe, Knightsworld has a few fictional countries dotted here and there on the map. The only one worth mentioning in this basic treatment is the City-State of Khadam, but the Referee is welcome to add other fictional nations as he finds them convenient. The Templar also occasionally establishes the Holy See of Malta as his personal fiefdom, but this "nation" rarely lasts more than a few months in any one place.

The history of Khadam started in 1902, when a Scytharian cargo ship crash-landed in the desert of Northern Africa, between Algeria and Libya. It lay there undisturbed for a little over forty years, the living crew dead or in suspension, and the automatic homing beacon not launched due to a mechanical error.

In 1942, Colonel Dietrich Zugmann proposed an African version of the Maginot Line to help hold Axis gains in Africa. It was to be a line of fortresses built between the southerly mountains and Tunis. It was never completed, and by the time Zugmann had gotten his initial approval, it was obvious to him that it would never work. Not for its original purpose, that is.

Zugmann completed his fortress in 1943 and officially "died," hiding his existence from both the Allies and his own commanders. He then raised a small army of the local nomads and conquered the nearby city of Ghat. With the larger war raging all about, none noticed this smaller conflict. Once his position was solidified, he set up a puppet democratic government and "surrendered" to the Allies. In line with his expectations, they didn't devote even a small force to occupy Ghat.

In the waning years of the war, Zugmann's workers uncovered the Scytharian ship buried in the sands nearby, but were unable to gain entrance. In the meantime, the new "nation" of Khadam was consolidated and laid out its boundaries in "worthless" territory that happened to include the crash site.

On September 2, 1945, the slight increase of radioactivity worldwide caused by the dropping of atomic bombs caused the ship's automatic radiation shields to deploy, exposing a hull breach. The technology inside was surprisingly easy to use, having been designed for use by fairly unskilled miners and dockworkers. And the cargo of Technetium, an element not naturally occuring on Earth (but created in small amounts in cyclotrons), would prove to be a literal goldmine for the new country.

Over the next few decades came official UN recognition, great upsurges in prosperity as first the ship's cargo and then the ship's technology were sold in small amounts, and finally the ultimate coup, the launch

of the first unmanned satellite, the Z-40, in 1957. This was actually the emergency beacon of the ship, freed accidentally by scientists investigating the ship, but this would not come to light for decades. Eventually, the parade was over. The involvement of Colonel Zugmann and his sons as true rulers of the country came to light, resulting in the unflattering nickname of "Zugnovia" for the country. During the 1960s, Khadam came to be a refuge for supervillains and a free port for Pranir, further darkening its reputation. A council of "Technomancers" came into power behind the scenes, run by Karl Zugmann and composed of some of the most dangerous supervillains and "mad scientists" in the world. In 1971, the world had had enough, and threatened Khadam with nuclear strikes if it did not surrender its population of wanted supervillains to justice. Khadam complied, not being powerful enough to survive a determined assault. The Technomancers who surrendered later faked their deaths and returned to Khadam.

The next decade and a half were fairly quiet, with Khadam continuing to sell advanced technology and supertech to all buyers, but not openly harboring felons. In 1988, however, the world came to know of an artificial island in the Mediterranean known as Haven. Haven had been secretly built over the last 15 years and now served the purpose of harboring openly criminal individuals that Khadam officially did not endorse. Officially, Haven is a sovereign state established by the villains themselves, but everyone knows it is really a tool of Khadam. It has been nicknamed "Upper Zugnovia," with Khadam itself known as "Lower Zugnovia." All direct assaults to date on Haven have failed, mainly due to the number of powerful beings that call it home and wish it to stay intact. Political infighting prevents Haven from becoming a truly powerful force, but the inhabitants will put aside their differences when defending their home.

Khadam itself is a nation roughly the size of Rhode Island, and is largely desert and mountains. The former city of Ghat (renamed as Khadam) sprawls for miles of slums and temporary dwellings, with a few more impressive buildings clustered near the spaceport. The hope of prosperity has brought many immigrants, who are welcomed with open arms. There are unproven (but true) charges that these immigrants are routinely culled for use in genetic and cybernetic experimentation. The Citadel, as the original Nazi fortress is called, sits at the south end of Khadam and looks down upon it. The Citadel is where all the powerful and important people in Khadam live and work. Just east of the Citadel is the spaceport, a few control buildings and a lot of blasted rock and fused sand. Far to the west is the crashsite of the cargo ship, but the ship itself was destroyed in 1993 rather than let it be returned to the Scytharian Mining Corporation (who came in answer to the emergency beacon). The official cause of the explosion was an "accidental" overload in the drive section. Overall, Khadam is a combination of tinpot dictatorship and interstellar Hong Kong. A VERY dangerous place to be for heroes, but a place they'll inevitably be influenced by.

Other Nations – Real

Most other countries have been affected only slightly by superhuman activity, although the Referee is free to modify his favorite nations to suit his needs.

Three nations have been strongly affected, however. The former Soviet Union, Iraq and China.

When the Soviet hardliners attempted to seize control of the government from Gorbachev, they had the help of a pair of mind-controlling psis who shared their views. As a result, they gained control of a number of ICBM launch sites during the crisis, and when it looked like they were doomed to failure, they launched the missiles. Only one reached its target, due to a combination of override signals, the United States' SDI program and the efforts of a number of superheroes. As a result of this near-brush with nuclear annihilation, the former Soviet republics are working even harder at disarmament and at ensuring that terrorists do not gain control of decommissioned bombs. Unfortunately, the two mentalists escaped, and are rumored to have built up a number of atomic weapons.

The Kuwait war was over in under a week in the Knightsworld. An officially "civilian" superhero group composed of "retired" military operatives was dropped into Kuwait within hours of the invasion and managed to so demoralize and devastate the Iraqi army that a relatively small force of US troops dropped in three days later were able to finish repelling the invasion. However, this left Iraq with a much larger postwar military force. In addition, since the US acted alone in the action, it was harder to get international support after the fact, resulting in little monitoring of the Iraqis to prevent later buildups. It is considered only a matter of time before Iraq tries something else... this time with their own supernormals spearheading it.

As for China, with its large population one would expect a large supernormal presence...but oddly this has not been the case. In fact, China claims to have no supernormals whatsoever. The truth is that the Premier of China is the world's most powerful Anchor, possibly the strongest ever born. The entire nation should be considered under the continual influence of an A4 Anchor's abilities, which should make missions into the People's Republic interesting for player characters.

THE UNITED STATES

GOVERNMENT

Okay, brace yourself. There's a major difference in the way the U.S.A. is set up in Knightsworld that may strike you as silly or even impossible. Dan Quayle was President for almost a decade.

Now that you've picked yourself up off the floor, we can continue. In the Knightsworld, Mr. Quayle is a rather powerful supernormal, capable of generating impenetrable force fields and a disintegration blast which, while it leaves him exhausted, can destroy just about anything. But in the late 1960s, it was scandalous for a "proper" family to have any "mutants" in it, so the family used its pull to cover up Dan's differences. And since treaties banned use of superhumans in Vietnam (not that they weren't used, but, well, you know) Dan was shuffled into the National Guard to keep him safe from detection.

This overprotection had the result it had in the real world... Dan got a reputation as a bit of a lightweight. However, behind that, he was using his family's clout to wrangle power for himself. How far he went in this process is up to the Referee... if the Referee wants an "Evil Government" scenario, then Quayle's killed (without a trace) many people who got in his way. Taking a cue from Reagan, Quayle feigned foolishness to make people underestimate him. But he was way more on the ball than Reagan ever was. As Vice-President, he worked behind the scenes to implement many programs that President Bush wanted in place, but couldn't sell to the Democratic Congress, such as SDI.

Then, in 1990, a supervillain group attacked the President as he gave a speech on the Mall in Washington DC. Despite the presence of the Academy of Super-Heroes and a host of techological defenses against this sort of thing, George Bush was killed. Most of the supervillains were killed or captured, but the deed was done. Quayle was now President. Three months later, an assassin managed to sneak a nonmetallic pistol into an auditorium and tried to kill Quayle. The bullets bounced off his invisible force field, and his reflexive counterattack reduced the gunman to vapors. Evidence was later found which pointed at a rogue element in the CIA plotting the attack, and a major purge of the agency was undertaken. Again, Referees who are more conspiracy-minded might wish to decide that Quayle arranged his own assassination attempt in order to dramatically unveil his powers to the public, and then framed the CIA so he could replace the top men with people loyal to him. At the other end of the spectrum, the gunman may have simply had paranormal powers letting him get past security without the help of a conspiracy. The world may never know.

Since then, Quayle has been a dynamic and forceful President, pushing his programs through in a way not seen since the days of FDR. He defeated Clinton in 1992 by a landslide (Perot never even ran, being satisfied with Quayle's performance) and and his chosen successor (name left up to the Referee) looked to be a shoe-in for the Presidency once Quayle finished his second full term in 2001. But even with supertechnology, Florida still ended up a bone of contention.

THE WICHITA INCIDENT

Another major change that should be noted by Referees is that the city of Wichita, Kansas is no more. One missile made it through the various defenses during the last day of the Soviet Coup, and the trio of heroes who tried to stop it were not up to the task. Wichita was reduced to a smoldering glass crater by the advanced fusion bomb, and much of the farmland around it has been rendered infertile. The bomb itself was very "clean" as such things go, but attempts to stop it led to a ground-level detonation which generated extensive fallout.

Advanced technologies available via superhumans and some alien factions were able to contain the damage and clean up the fallout within a few months, but the impact on the national consciousness hasn't been so easily fixed.
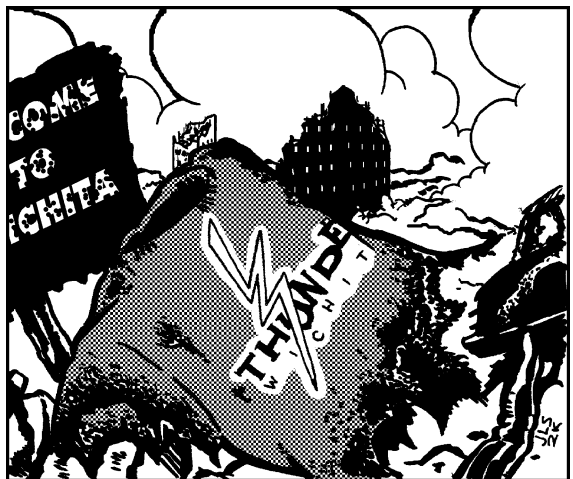
THE DEPARTMENT OF SUPER-HUMAN AFFAIRS (DSHA)

The origins of the DSHA are outlined later, but since the players are likely to encounter this organization frequently, here's some guidelines on their normal operations.

Since superhuman activities tend to vary over time, the DSHA is to law enforcement what a MASH unit is to medicine. Only a few cities have enough activity on a long term basis for permanent large offices to be established. Most large cities have a small permanent office staffed by two or three investigative agents, often sharing space with the FBI or police department. But when activity starts to rise in a city, dozens of agents descend on the place like a cloud of locusts, along with support personnel, heavy equipment and temporary superhuman confinement cells. Usually, the main base is set up outside of town, but in some situations the DSHA needs to be centrally located. Broad authority granted them under one of President Quayle's pet bills allows them to override municipal objections and set up shop anywhere they want in emergencies. However, they try to avoid invoking these powers, since they'd rather not antagonize the local officials. Sometimes a larger headquarters will include a base of operations for a DSHA-sanctioned superhero group (a quick way to get your players set up with the basics) or MuniCOE (see below).

A fully-staffed office will have about a dozen field agents, a trio of special agents (often with superhuman powers in the realms of detection or telepathy), two dozen assault troopers and numerous secretaries and other support personnel. Assault troops are considered Paranormal, and as SNPCs have a Medium Narrow Sharp attack (rifles) as well as various specialized equipment as the Referee sees fit, such as netguns or stunners. A squad of them (8 troopers) should have a realistic chance of stopping a lone supervillain. Or superhero. If they seem too weak, provide them with defenses against the modes used by those they expect to fight. The DSHA has massive intelligence resources, and will try to prepare for any fight they get into. How well-equipped they are is up to the Referee, but some have been known to go into a fight against demonic villains protected by holy talismans and fire-suppression fields. Most, though, should only have reasonably normal defenses (bulletproof vests, maybe drugs to help them avoid the effects of some chemical attacks, etc.).

The DSHA is very much appreciated by most local police departments, since the police really don't have the budget to stand up to superhuman criminals. For its part, the DSHA tries to avoid being relied on too much by the police to deal with problems, as they can rarely handle more than two major crises at once.

The FBI does not like the DSHA, especially since their jurisdictions overlap so frequently (supervillains tend to cross state lines a lot). And since the FBI has its own paranormal investigations branch, there's a fair amount of conflict in any case where the zap-rays haven't started flying yet. The CIA cooperates very extensively with the DSHA, largely due to the recent reorganization having swapped some major personnel between the two groups. While the DSHA has no real jurisdiction outside the US, the CIA has been known to "borrow" some DSHA people to deal with an international situation.

The NSA rarely deals with DSHA, but does somewhat resent the popular nickname the DSHA has gained, "NSSA" (National Super-Security Agency). It's rumored that the NSA is working in secret with elements of the FBI paranormal branch to develop a psychic method of decoding encrypted computer messages. The official name of the project is unknown, but it's been referred to casually as "Pretty Good Parapsychology," or PGPsy.

One odd side-business the DSHA is in is merchandising. Sanctioned superheroes are required to agree to let DSHA represent them in any commercial endeavors using their heroic identity. The "Agent's Cut" taken by DSHA is anywhere from 50% to 95% depending on the gross, most of which goes into the national insurance fund for damage done by superhumans. The rest goes into a medical fund to cover injuries sustained by sanctioned heroes in the course of their crimefighting. The main advantage for the superheroes is that they don't have to reveal any secret identities to get their money: the DSHA provides them with alternate means of identification. In addition, the heroes are rarely ripped off and always get their fair cut (unless they do something like, oh, break the law and go on the run, but you have to expect that). As a result, it's possible to make a living as a professional superhero if your toy line sells. The main disadvantage, of course, is that it's awfully hard to get rich off your costumed identity.

InterDimensional Immigration and Naturalization Services

The IDINS is a branch of the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Services) in charge of dealing with the small number of visitors who arrive each year from other realities, as well as keeping track of dangerous visitors who the government would love to deport to their home dimensions. Interdimensional immigration has tapered off since its heyday in the 1970s, but there are still cases every so often, and the players may find themselves harboring an illegal alien from the IDINS (not all dimension-travelers trust local governmental institutions, after all). Additionally, the IDINS usually ends up dealing with cases of extra-terrestrials after they've been cleared by Delta Rose (see Galactic Warrior Corps above).

A player character who is from another world or another dimension may need to check in with the IDINS occasionally.

CORPORATIONS AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

Obviously the Referee will want to devise his own organizations to bedevil the players, but here's a few major ones in the Knightsworld that can be used if the Referee doesn't have his own replacement.

MuniCOE

The Municipal Corps of Engineers tends to follow the DSHA people around like a janitor follows an elephant. Superhero/villain battles can really destroy property, and MuniCOE is the expert at repairing this damage quickly and completely. A national insurance fund, paid into by all municipalities as well as by the profits of merchandising the images of superheroes, covers repairs of damage done by these battles, and MuniCOE is usually the one to win the contract.

MuniCOE is usually on the scene within a few hours of the fight, although they may have to fly in help from out of town if the damage is too extensive. Some superhumans without a taste for combat have found good- paying careers working for MuniCOE, which provides them with training in architecture and construction.

Fishertronics

If none of the player characters is an inventor-millionaire type, Fishertronics can be the "good guy" multinational firm they can go to when they need technological help. Founded by Peter Fisher, formerly the 1970s superhero known as Mantaray, Fishertronics rose to prominence in the 80s by marketing several of Fisher's groundbreaking technologies. While the key elements of his powerarmor were supertech, Fisher is an electronics genius who greatly advanced normal technology as well.

Since then, Fishertronics has expanded and become a multinational conglomerate with interests all over the board, although mainly technology issues. They also hold the patents on the supertech process of creating "Collapsed Metals," special ultra-high-density versions of common metals that can resist anything up to a multi-megaton nuclear blast. Collapsed Aluminum (or Collapsinum (TM)) is the most common product, being relatively easy to make and very strong. With the density of lead, it is almost impossible to shape after it has been collapsed, so it is usually manufactured in rings, slabs or threads which can be combined into various shapes. The only known weakness of Collapsed Metals is that if they are hit with a laser of a precisely tuned frequency (which is kept a highly- guarded secret) they will de-collapse, usually unevenly, turning into dust.

Magnum Industries

This is your basic Unfriendly Megacorp. Secretly run for decades by a transformed Jotun (Norse giant) who uses his magic to manipulate the company's fortunes, Magnum manages to have its corporate fingers in just about every pie of importance out there. Magnum's products are never quite the best on the market, or the cheapest, but they sell well enough. And since Magnum has no real corporate ethics, they reap huge profits on deals no other company will touch.

Magnum sponsors a number of superhero groups and supplies them with advanced equipment and bases. However, these groups never seem to be able to find any of the villains funded by Magnum or uncover any of Magnum's dirty dealings. They're either patsies, kept away from the real danger under their noses, or out and out crooked. If the players' team starts sniffing around Magnum's interests, they might find themselves fighting a rather high-profile superteam and coming off looking like criminals themselves. Magnum's PR department is very good at this sort of thing.

Stats are not presented for John St. Simon, the head of Magnum, because he will not reveal his true nature for anything short of armageddon. He's gotten VERY good at hiding his Jotunish nature from prying mages,

and anyone who gets too close to his secret tends to never be seen again. However, he is more sneaky than outright powerful. On the off chance he is forced into his true form, he'll probably only be a match for a few beginning superheroes. His powerarmored security force, on the other hand, is much more potent. They can be treated like Darkshield's powerarmor, but one Scale lower and with Sharp and Heat attacks instead of Electromagnetic (Gatling guns and missiles).

MetaPsych

A private organization with loose government ties, MetaPsych seeks to investigate telepathic phenomena and help those having troubles with their mental powers adjust. They are currently mostly a research organization, but have started taking in a few telepaths for training. Most of their charges have psychological problems which prevent them from being able to turn off their powers, such as a paranoid who can't keep himself from reading the minds of all within range to make sure they're not plotting against him. Given public mistrust of anyone who can read their minds, MetaPsych has had to keep a fairly low profile and has most of its small research stations in isolated areas, like Montana or Alaska.

If players lack their own psi talents and need a psi for some reason, they might be able to convince MetaPsych to "loan" them one of the more advanced students.

Superhero Bar'n'Grill

Founded by a few retiring superheroes in the late 1970s, this is a chain of "superhero groupie" restaurants across the country. Business is most brisk in cities with active superhero groups, although some of the older branches do good business in general fandom clientele, as SF and Fantasy authors have gravitated towards the SB'n'G's.

Given that the presence of actual superhumans can be dangerous, every restaurant is fitted with the latest in defensive measures to keep the customers and staff safe in the case of a fight breaking out. Some branches have superhuman "bouncers" as well. And the fact DSHA agents like to frequent these places helps.

Any player character with unusual needs (such as a two-ton character who would need a special chair, or an alien with odd nutritional needs) will eventually be contacted by any local restaurant and offered special accomodations in exchange for his (non-violent) patronage. The owner, Mary Castle aka Valkyrie, has been known to visit her properties under cover of mystic disguises (much as her patron, Odin, was wont to do in his day) and may prove a useful contact. Mary is a slim Argentinian woman with long black hair, who can transform herself into a towering 7-foot-tall warrior woman with a sword and shield. She has Scale Change from Paranormal to Supernormal, and Traits Brawn, Mind +1 and Invulnerable +1, with Primary Effect of Sharp and Secondary Effect Group of Magic. She has 10 Favors and Armor against all groups, plus other Abilities as the Referee sees fit. Only her Favors and the free slots from Brawn are available when she's not Scale Changed.

Many retiring superheroes have found it profitable to invest in the Superhero Bar'n'Grill, so the local branch could provide players with a mentor should they need one.

THE TESLA INDEX

A quick note regarding the next piece. The "David Van Domelen" who exists in the Knightsworld was born approximately seven years earlier than the one who wrote this game. He started as a player character for the author when several campaigns were being run in his universe, the universe which was drawn from to create the Knightsworld.

Physical Review M: Violation Physics

June 1993

A Summary Of Current Tests for Tesla Indices
submitted by: Dr. David Van Domelen, aka "Solar Max" of United Nations Extraterrene Authority (UNEA)

Introduction:

On this twentieth anniversary of Physical Review M, I've been invited to write an overview of the framework of current knowledge in the field of Violation Physics. I apologize in advance for what may seem an unprofessional writing style, but it's been years since I last had to publish in a formal manner.

Much of this article will be written with the view of informing those not specializing in Violation Physics and I encourage posting this article where colleagues and students can see it.

The main body will be split into two parts. The first will be an overview of the concept of the Tesla Index, what it means, and what factors can influence it. The second will deal with the ten most common tests used to measure the

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Tesla Index, or TI.

The Tesla Index:

Around the turn of the Century, Nikola Tesla wrote an unpublished article regarding the spreading changes in what was known in physics. He maintained that although much of what was new was the result of what we now call Modern Physics, some was the result of violation of the laws of nature. He chose to see what many thought were cranks and frauds as honest researchers who had stumbled on a way to bypass causal science. Of course, the fact that Tesla himself was considered a crank did nothing to help him publish the paper, and indeed it was only chance that a copy was saved from destruction.

The main point of his paper was that certain individuals could, consciously or unconsciously, alter the laws of nature and perform experiments that were irreproduceable by other scientists. Several promising scientists, himself included, had been scoffed out of the intellectual community because they continually produced results that went against those of the rest of the scientific community. He proposed that this ability to warp reality was what had been taken to be "magic" in ancient societies, but that such abilities had died down to the point that only highly sensitive (for the time) experiments could be influenced by such individuals. Those who were aware of this theory considered it to be one of Tesla's more erratic ones.

In later years when widespread usage of AC current won Tesla a certain amount of respect, his papers were collected together and his theory on "magic" rediscovered. Most chose to ignore it until 1938. 1938, of course, being the year the first superheroes appeared on the scene. Most of these men were normal humans, using skills and guts to fight crime and saboteurs. But many used devices that defied physics, and a few had geniune superhuman powers. For example, Johnny Angel could teleport short distances at will, an ability even the most hardened skeptic could not deny the reality of.

At this time the papers of Tesla's came back to the surface and got a much better reception. Alongside the more famous Manhattan Project was the Edison Project (named in an intentional ironic comment on the rivalry between Edison's promotion of DC power over Tesla's AC). The Edison Project attempted to develop a coherent theory of how superhuman powers worked in the hopes ofdeveloping some sort of super weapon to end the war. However, by 1945 they had only scratched the surface of what we now call Violation Physics.

At the end of WWII, the Edison Project went deep underground as it became a major player in Cold War politics, and Violation Physics became a National Secret. During the next 20 years, most of the terminology used in the field was developed.

The most basic term is the Tesla Index. The Tesla Index is a measure of how much an individual can violate the laws of physics and probability. Various tests, to be discussed in the next section, have been developed to determine the TI, but all work on the same basic priniciple. An experiment is run, one that has a known mean result and a known distribution curve. Then the person being tested is asked to concentrate on trying to change the results of the experiment. After several trials, the mean result of experiments run under the influence of the subject is calculated, and the difference between that mean and the "normal" mean determined. The number of Standard Deviations (A measure of the width of a distribution) between the two means is the Tesla Index for that test. Since some individuals have highly specific talents (such as those possessed by many superheroes) that give them a very high TI in one area but not in others, most subjects are usually given at least two different tests.

Depending on the TI measured, the subject will fall into one of several categories.

Zero or Less: Anchor. Negative TI is measured by how far away the anchor has to be for a person with a known nonzero TI to affect an experiment "normally." Anchors are valued in places where normal physics must be allowed to apply.

0-1: Normal. No noticeable ability, may be 'lucky' or 'unlucky' at times, but generally won't alter reality. 99% of the population is in this range.

1-3: Paranormal. Strange things can happen around this person. Most people with this level can operate technology that violates physical laws in a minor way, but cannot create it. People with this level are highly sought after by the military and private companies to operate advanced systems that use 'pseudoscience', the popular term for Violation Physics. 3-10: Supernormal. Able to break laws of physics on the microscopic levels at will, often for macroscopic effects if the person has training to know what they are doing. Those with TIs in this range are capable of building "Supertech", devices that violate the laws of physics in major ways. Much of the more advanced supertech can only be used by Paranormals or better, but some is actually able to work its "miracles" in the hands of normals. However, since Anchors can keep supertech from working, it is not used in everyday situations, where a passing person could cause it to break down.

10 or more: Supernatural. Possessed of "superpowers" or magical skill of a more traditional nature. One in a million has this level of TI. Generally when the TI is this high, it isn't tested, since it is obvious the person has supernatural abilities. However, testing of numerous Superheroes in the 70s and 80s revealed that they are usually "spiked" at very

high numbers on some tests, while having scores of near zero on all others. For example, I personally am able to warp spacetime to extreme degrees, measuring near 1000 on tests designed to determine ability to violate general relativity. However, no matter how hard I try, my score on "Maxwell's Demon" is only .236, and on the "Lotto" test I get only a 2.13. Those with scores nearly the same on all tests are unofficially called "Wizards" since most of them studied archaic magic. However, even those in Violation Physics bristle at the mention of magic, so Wizards are officially called Partbloods (more on that later).

Another term of importance developed in the 20 years of secrecy was the Owens Effect. Tests on children born in the "Baby Boom" indicated a markedly higher TI in children born after 1938 than in their parents or in children born prior to 1938. With aid of geneological records and information gained from several minor Partbloods, it was found that when parents desired to be more than human, or desired such for their children, the gene for violation became more dominant. This gene, called the Magene popularly, or the gene for Homo Sapiens Magi by geneticists, itself violated laws of nature. Instead of being a normal recessive or dominant gene, the Magene would change with the desires of the parent, or sometimes in response to external effects, like "curses". Doctor Jon Owens determined this factor, as well as the reverse effect that followed soon after when the postwar desire for normalcy drastically reduced the number of paranormals born.

With the aid of various mages, it was determined that TIs were indeed higher in the past, as postulated by Tesla. It was theorized that there were once "Fullbloods" who had totally dominant Magenes and ignored the Owens Effect, passing full powers to their heirs. However, interbreeding with normals caused the birthing of "Partbloods" who have varying levels of TI, as well as being subject to the Owens Effect. Those who are born with extremely high but narrowly spiked TI curves are termed "Sports", a term that means about the same as Mutant, but without the negative connotations the word had in the B movies of the day. Of course, the general public still calls sports mutants anyway.

In the Sixties when the children of the First Heroic Age came into their full powers, it became impossible to keep the Edison Project a secret. It was merged into the Department of SuperHuman Affairs (DSHA) also known as the NSSA, National Super Security Agency, and many of the records of its prior existence were doctored to make it seem more above board. During the early attempts to develop a "Supernatural Detector" the Haumann Effect was discovered. Basically, anyone could will themselves to not show up as having any TI, provided they had some idea how the test was being made. Since most TI tests require active will of the participant to read anything, it was very hard to read an unwilling subject. In fact, Dr. Haumann, who had been searching for the actual Magene in early DNA tests, found that the gene could hide itself if the subject did not want to have the gene found. Even today it is almost impossible to tell if someone has a nonzero TI without their participation, knowing or otherwise (hidden detectors can be used while a tester tricks the subject into using their ability). Detection of paranormals (aside from those who develop gross physical mutations as a side effect of their Magene) who wish to stay hidden is more an art than a science, but the popularity of things like lotteries has provided plentiful work for those who claim to be able to make sure a paranormal doesn't "cheat". But I digress.

The most startling development regarding the Magene in recent years has been the Bose Transformation. Timothy Bose, a metaphysics major in Canada, had a near zero TI on all scales (Metaphysics departments generally work closely with Violation Physics groups to test their students). However, two years after these tests, Tymythy (as he now called himself) had managed through a combination of drugs and meditation to raise his TI to the low 20s. His recent training with the mage Wanderer has raised his TI to an estimated 50 average, with a spike of 250 or more in the General Relativity area. He still tests very low in the Psychic regions, but the fact that he managed to raise his own TI instead of that of his progeny is a dramatic new development. However, the fact that most of the substances he used are illegal in most nations has stunted research into duplicating the Bose Transformation.

Tesla Index Tests:

There are ten standard tests of the TI, broken into four categories: Quantum Mechanical, Thermodynamical, Psychic and General Relativistic.

Quantum:

Larsen Test: Only recently graduating from theory into practice, this test has a person try to influence a measurement to find position and momentum more precisely than allowed by the Heisenberg Uncertainly Principle. The TI in this case is the inverse of the multiple of h-bar that the error is reduced to.

Martisovits Test: Using a double slit interference setup with detectors near both slits and the screen, the test is to try and measure both which slit the particle went through as well as get an interference pattern. The mean is to be able to measure none of the particles as they go through the slit if the interference pattern is to remain. Every .002 percent of the beam strength that can be measured as going through one or the other slit without altering the interference pattern is considered one standard deviation.

Bullock Test: Using the photoelectric effect, the subject is told to keep an ammeter from registering any current as light is shined on a strip of metal in a photoelectric effect experiment. The photons will be redshifted by the subject or deflected (further, less common tests show which) and reduce the current flowing thought an ammeter.

Thermodynamic:

"Maxwell's Demon": One of the two most commonly used tests. A block of metal is hooked up to thermocouples at each end and insulated. The subject is asked to concentrate on making one side hotter than the other, by making the faster electrons go to that side. Variations in temperature between the two ends are measured and plotted to determine the TI. Note that metals with very high melting points are usually used, since a TI of over 40 will melt steel with ease. Science students often make this apparatus for a Senior project, and those who test too high are encouraged to go into supertech.

Chung Test: Similar to Maxwell's Demon, but instead of trying to create a heat gradient, the subject is asked to try to magnetize the metal. Since this is a harder mental image, it is usually only used for testing scientists and the like.

Kelly Test: Liquid Crystals are suspended in a bath. The subject tries to darken the mix by polarizing the crystals. Smartasses tend to make the bath show words or pictures.

Psychic:

Reiss Test: Similar to the old psychic test with the cards that have symbols on them (star, wavy lines, etc). However, the cards are shuffled and not looked at by anyone, and they have 20 symbols. The subject will try to predict the next card, then turn it over. Statistical analysis of the success of the subject determines the TI.

Carlton Test: A highly advanced test of telepathic ability, which is basically forcing resonance in brainwaves, this test has the subject try to project words and images to a target who has already been tested as having a low TI.

"Lotto Test": A long string of random numbers is generated. Then the subject is asked to make his own string, trying to duplicate the previous string. Statistics students often are given this test as a homework problem, but it isn't terribly accurate in most cases, especially at finding lower TIs, since it is quite likely that a person could get 3 standard deviations away from the mean by sheer chance. However, getting every number right tends to indicate more than chance. This test, along with Maxwell's Demon, is one of the two "Standard" tests.

General Relativistic:

"Slimquick" or Matheson Test: The subject is weighed while sedated so that they cannot affect the measurement. After they recover their senses, they are weighed again, first being told to think heavy, then light. Changes in their weight reflect violations of General Relativity. However, TI less than 10 in this area is lost in the "noise" so this test is rarely used. Ability to fly by sheer willpower is often due to a high TI in this area.

In closing I would like to say that there is still much we do not, or perhaps cannot know about this field. However, it is comforting to know that it isn't the laws of nature that are screwy, it's us.

Supervillains

What would life be for superheroes without supervillains? Pretty boring, although some might prefer it that way. This section will try to cover the basic archetypical supervillain characters of the Knightsworld, although the Referee should feel free to replace any of them with his own creations, or modify these villains to make their histories include the player characters more intimately.

Worldbeaters

Some villains are so powerful that no goal short of world (or universal) domination is worthy of them. They may not be that powerful in a fight, but their overall power level thanks to followers, technology, magic and money puts them up there with most large nations in terms of the threat they can pose.

The Knightsworld has a trio of Really Bad Badguys: Devastator, Doublecross and the Templar. They want to destroy, replace or control all humanity, and the players will probably get in their way eventually. However, keep in mind that beginning players will probably get chewed up and spat out by a direct attack by any one of this unholy trinity, so the Referee should keep them peripheral to begin with. Additionally, a heavy hitter of the early 1990s, Lord Ebon, is also presented. He seems a natural team-up for the Templar, but actually is a bitter rival of that villain.

Devastator
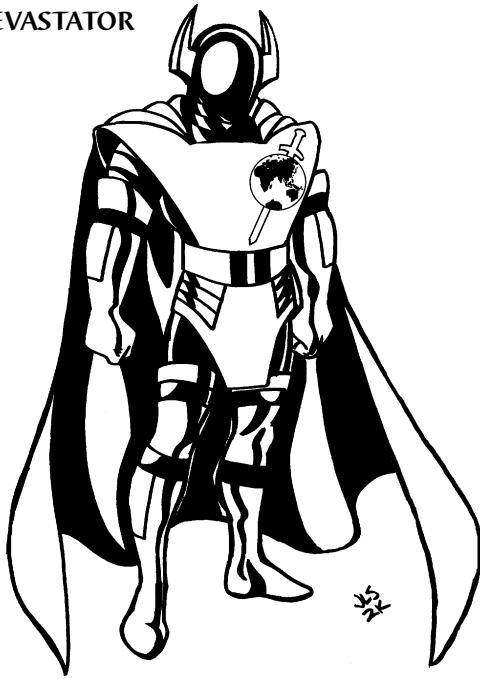
Devastator was once Dr. Derek Williams, a brilliant scientist devoted to helping supernormals understand and control their powers, a combination of Violation Physics researcher and physician. He himself was only a borderline Paranormal, which mostly expressed itself in his incredible intellect.

However, in the late 1980s, while trying to save the life of the superhero PowerRush… he failed. PowerRush exploded, his energy powers running beyond his body's ability to cope. The containment chamber he was in shattered, sending fragments of armorglass into Dr. Williams's face even as the dimension-rending energies poured over his body. The shock sent Dr. Williams into a coma as his body tried to assimilate the energy and his Magene expressed itself in a manner almost never seen before. Several sessions of plastic surgery were able to restore his face to a semblance of normalcy, but in addition to the maze of thin scars that would never heal, Dr. Williams had also been blinded, his eyes reduced to opaque orbs.

Dr. Williams never woke up. But five months after the accident, Devastator did wake up… .

Devastator is an expression of Dr. Williams's repressed hatred of his fellow man, hatred the doctor fought every day of his old life. But now it was free, and Devastator used Derek's genius to begin plotting the end of all human life on Earth. In addition to his vast powers of force manipulation, Devastator has an intuitive grasp of extradimensional physics thanks to the nature of the energies he absorbed.

Several times, Devastator has nearly succeeded in his plans to destroy humanity (none of which involved sparking a nuclear war… he didn't feel it would ensure 100% results), stopped only barely by various superhero teams. In 1994 he disappeared after a battle with his archfoe, Solar Max, but there's been recent hints that he's returned.

Devastator's emblem is a globe with a sword thrust through it. This and his full-face eyeless helmet are the only constant elements of his attire, although he usually dresses in greytones with red accents. Smart-aleck heroes who recolor his costume somehow tend to be dealt with severely the next time they encounter Devastator.

Traits: Brawn, Empowered +1, Invulnerable +2, Mind, Tech

Scale: Supernormal
Hook: Open Agenda - Destroy Humanity
Primary Effects: Blunt, Electrical, Magnetic
Secondary Group: Physical
Body Type: Tough Organic
Wounds: (13/11/5/4) Level 1 = Bone

Attack Abilities:

Attack: Physical +2 - Force planes, crushing force, winds, etc.

Attack: Electromagnetic +1 - Mostly less-flashy effects like static charges and magnetic slams

Grab: Physical +1 - Force bubbles and the like

Attack Ability Modifiers (apply to all Attacks in any combination):

Group Attack: Note - while he can theoretically generate Light with his Attack: Electromagnetic, he prefers not to, since he doesn't do it very well.

Burst: He's quite good at fine-tuning his area attacks to avoid hitting things he'd rather not destroy.

Explosion: On the other hand, sometimes he'd rather destroy it all. Unstoppable: When he concentrates, he can generate an attack INSIDE an opponent's defenses.

Defense Abilities:

Armor +1: Physical, Reactive, Electromagnetic - Any non-mental attack suffers -2 damage levels against him.

Armor +2: Blunt, Sharp, Abrasive - Don't even try to hurt him physically.

Parry: Physical - Force fields. He almost NEVER uses this for personal defense… he doesn't need it.

Dodge: He can dodge, but why bother?

Defense Ability Modifiers:

Defend: Applies to Parry: Physical.
Draw Fire: Applies to Parry: Physical

Tactical Abilities:

Advanced Senses: Force Vision, see below for details.
Range +2 with Carry: Telekinetic flight

Noncombat Abilities:

Bases and Agents - Devastator has numerous bases of operations, including an orbiting satellite (the Devastar) capable of traveling between dimensions. His preferred agents are the Annihilator Squads, although he has also used various genetic monstrosities created by his loyal henchman, Dr. Otto Pue. The fact that he can raid dead Earths for any resources he needs gives him vast resources on the "Plot Device" level.

Force Vision - While totally blind to light, he can sense forces around him and their effect on things. Thus, in a gravity well, he can "see" masses. The range of this sense is theoretically unlimited, but generally the "fog" of nearby objects keeps him from sensing more than a few hundred meters. But he can otherwise "see" through any solid object short of mystic fields specifically designed to stop him.

Total Invulnerability - He can will himself to be unaffected by ALL forces. While he cannot attack while using this ability, neither can be be attacked by non-mental means.

Command Of Forces - If he can picture a force, he can control it. This lets him do things like fly, move objects at a distance, generate artificial gravity for his satellite base, etc.

Sciences - Devastator is perhaps the world's leading expert in dimensional travel, and the second best authority on the workings of superhuman physiology (Dr. Pue is the best). In addition, his supernatural genius has allowed him to master most areas of conventional science to the point where he's in the top ten of any field he's put his mind to.

Disadvantages:

Arrogance - He will often underestimate an opponent because he's so full of his own power. However, he is not a fool, and will at least take reasonable precautions against anyone he feels is dangerous. He simply won't take extraordinary precautions, and might let a fallen foe go because he has no reason to kill or capture the foe.

Light - He can't see it, he can't deflect it, he can hardly do a thing about or with it. None of his defenses work against Light-based attacks, and if caught unawares (i.e. he doesn't know his foe can make a light attack) he takes one Level higher damage from Light. What little effect he can have on light when aware of such an attack merely lets his normal Wound levels apply. He will give priority to disabling a light-using opponent. Also, because of his limitations, he cannot sense Doublecross or his Light Brigade at all, and takes great steps not to cross that villain's path.

Annihilator Squad Members:

They were human once, but have been outfitted with extensive cybernetic modifications and brainwashed to the point of being little more than robots. Permanently bonded to their powersuits, the Annihilators are Devastator's enforcers and personal guard. They work in groups of 6, with five normal units and one leader (Annihilator Prime) who can channel the power of all six into a massive blast. The Annihilator suits are red with thicker white armor pieces on the chest, gloves, boots and "trunks," and have white skull-like helmets with red eyeslits. Prime units are black where the others are white and have gold belts.

Annihilator

Hook: Blind Obedience
Effects: Blunt, Heat
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (4/4/3/2)
Attacks: Force Bolt (Super, Blunt, Strong, Narrow)
    Nova Beam (Super, Heat, Medium, Broad)
    Punch (Super, Blunt, Weak, Medium)
Defenses: Blunt, Sharp, Emotional (no emotions)
Notes: Flight-capable, doesn't speak, communicates with others by shielded comlink. Very little imagination or initiative, follows orders of Prime unit or a simple "attack who attacked you" tactic. If a Level 3 Wound is suffered, one of the ranged attacks is lost at random.

Annihilator Prime

Hook: Blind Obedience
Effects: Blunt, Heat
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (5/5/4/2)
Attacks: Force Bolt, Nova Beam and Punch as Annihilator
    Gestalt Blast (Super, Heat, Strong, Narrow) +3 on roll
Defenses: Blunt, Sharp, Emotional
Notes: Gestalt Blast is a massive Nova Beam drawing power from all 5 regular Annihilators at once. They cannot attack this turn. Prime units are more imaginative and have a grasp of tactics. Otherwise, same as Annihilators.

Dr. Otto Pue

Dr. Pue is physicaly unremarkable, a balding man in his fifties with a slight stoop and thick glasses. However, thanks to his utter lack of morals, he has amassed more knowledge about how superhuman physiology works than anyone else alive. He helped refine the Annihilators for Devastator as his first assignment, and has since gone on to create numerous horrors for his master. He has no grand goals beyond his work, and will keep doing Devastator's bidding as long as it involves experimentation that would make a Khadamite Technomancer blanch.

No stats are presented, as Dr. Pue would drop at the first hit from just about anyone. However, he's almost never without ample defenders in the form of Annihilators or his own creations, and he hasn't left the Devastar in years.

Doublecross

Bennett Rush was once an up-and-coming wunderkind in the FBI, until he was caught in a compromising position with his supervisor's wife. He soon found himself shuffled into the then-young DSHA investigation branch, placed in charge of a warehouse of Dangerous Technology. Having little else to do besides fume over his trashed career, Rush started to learn how some of the items worked (totally without permission, of course). Among the abandoned and seized technology he found the Light Lance of the WWII hero, Beacon, and recognized it as a revolutionary version of a laser... a version not yet developed even then in 1975! While the power source had required Violation Physics to work, the principles behind the actual laser were sound and followed regular physics, as far as he could tell. But this laser could do a lot more than the current crop... he found with a little work that it could generate free-standing holograms or even semi-solid coherent light masses that could act as protective forcefields. With the Second Heroic Age winding down, less and less attention was paid to the DSHA and to Rush... which was just how he liked it. In 1977, his old supervisor died in the middle of a meeting, a hole burned through his brain by an unseen (invisible behind a hologram) attacker. Over the next decade, Rush rose as rapidly through the DSHA ranks as he had risen through the FBI before his indiscretions were discovered. Thanks to the ability to
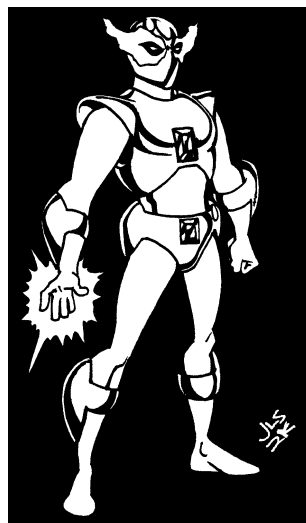
invisibly follow rivals and enter secure rooms, Bennett had the edge he needed to ruin the career of any who got in his way, and do it so subtly none ever suspected him of being a double-crossing backstabber. In fact, he cultivated a reputation as a fairly nice guy. When the Third Heroic Age got underway, Bennett was there, getting assigned as district head of the most active regions of the country, gaining reams of information on both heroes and villains. At this time, Rush devised the villainous identity of Doublecross and used all the information at his disposal to defeat the heroes he could and destroy the lives of those he couldn't directly beat, as well as undermine any supervillains who may have gotten in his way. With a small group of "Ringer" agents, who used holographic disguises to infiltrate and powerful minilasers to kill, Doublecross was well on his way to becoming the shadow ruler of the United States.

Then things went horribly wrong. A group of oddball superheroes known as the Raiders got too close to his secret, and he had to fake the death of his normal identity. While he had backdoors in all the important computer systems in the nation, they would eventually be closed, so it was important that his plans be accelerated. But he underestimated the ragtag group of heroes again, and was forced to abandon an underwater base via an experimental teleportation unit.

A unit that the Scytharian-created hero "Blitzkrieg" had recognized as such on his way in, and damaged. Doublecross was turned into data and instead of being beamed to his backup hideout, he was dumped into the Internet, partially entering an alternate dimension that was in resonance with the 'Net.

When he escaped, he was no longer human anymore. He was a being of solid light. He was also somewhat unbalanced, and quickly became convinced that his new mission in life was to create more light-based lifeforms like himself and replace matter-based life entirely. Some of his old Light Brigade agents (more powerful versions of the Ringer agents) agreed to be subjected to the transformation, gaining vast powers of their own. Unfortunately, not all who tried survived.

Currently, Doublecross has started searching for ways to more reliably transform humans into light-beings, and is letting his old network of informants and blackmail victims slip from his fingers. But several of his former Ringers have decided that they'd like a shot at running the world, and are working on rebuilding the network… .

Doublecross used to be a middle-aged man who wore a red and white powersuit that could project illusions, generate powerful laser beams and let him fly. Now he's composed of semisolid light, and usually looks like a flickering version of the powersuit… but can look like anything he wishes to.

Traits: Empowered +1, Fast +1, Invulnerable, Tech +1

Scale: Supernormal

Hook: Psychotic/Open Agenda (replace humanity)

Primary Effects: Light, Heat, Sensory (vision)

Secondary Group: Electromagnetic

Body Type: Inorganic (Light)

Wounds: (8/7/3/2) Level 1 = Bone

Attack Abilities:

Attack: Electromagnetic +2 - Usually lasers, but he can employ the other effects as well.

Attack: Heat +1 - Strictly speaking, he could use Group Effect on this attack, but it wouldn't make sense. Infrared light is used in this attack.

Grab: Sensory +1 - Holographic illusions. Again, Group Effect is not used, since there's no reason for holograms to have Lifeforce or Awareness components.

Snare: Sensory - A blinding flash renders foes at +1 Difficulty for d10 rounds or until they can figure out how to "break" the Snare. Since this is a really tough thing to do, the Snare is weakened to the form presented.

Attack Ability Modifiers:

Group Attack: Electromagnetic only

Barrage: Usually takes the form of blasts from both hands and the eyes, go to separate fingers if he's feeling tricky and goes for more than three shots.

Explosion: Big lightshow if used on the Attacks or Snare, large illusion on the Grab.

Burst: Obvious for the attacks. On the Grab, he's learned how to make his illusions visible to some, but invisible to others.

Defense Abilities:

Armor +1 Physical, Reactive, Electromagnetic - being made of light, whether he's semi-solid or totally nonsolid, makes him very hard to hurt.

Armor +2 Sensory - He has so few senses and such control over the ones he has that sensory attacks are pretty useless against him.

Dodge +1 - He can get out of the way at the speed of light.

Hide +2 - Invisibility or holographic camouflage.

Note: he's still new enough to his powers to have not developed more refined defensive uses.

Tactical Abilities:

Range: He can fly at the speed of light, appearing to teleport at times.

Noncombat Abilities:

Light Control - Even the most outlandish applications are possible, especially with semi-solid light constructs (they generally feel like really tough gelatin, yet can be stronger than steel). Light Body - Being solid only when it suits him, Doublecross can do just about anything a normal beam of light can do, including pass through windows or transparent force fields at will. Spy Network - While he no longer really controls it, he still has access to all sorts of information, and may know the weaknesses of any hero who has been around for more than a few years. Agents and Bases - Doublecross knows about all the abandoned supervillain lairs of the past two decades, and uses many of them as his own now. And while his Ringers may no longer really serve him, the human and non-human members of the Light Brigade still do.

Disadvantages:

Claustrophobia - Being trapped in a computer network not really designed to hold an entire mind has had a profound effect on Doublecross. He has a strong dislike of being in an enclosed region, and if trapped inside something may panic. Even if he intellectually knows he can easily escape (for example, the old mirrored-inside ball doesn't work, he can burn through the impurities in seconds), the fear can take over. This phobia also extends to being slightly uncomfortable operating a computer, and he tries to leave such tasks to underlings now. Reduced Senses - He can no longer smell, taste or feel by touch. He can hear only with difficulty, and usually communicates with his followers via radio waves. This sensory isolation is driving him slowly more insane than he already is, and if he doesn't learn how to simulate these additional senses in the way he did hearing, he might eventually lapse into catatonia or uncontrolled rage. Arrogance - Totally over the top. Convinced he's the first of a new step in evolution, the leader of a new master race. His agents have to work doubly hard to get him to take even the most basic of precautions.

Light Brigade:

There are two types of agents in the Light Brigade: human and light-being. The human agents use powersuits similar to that once worn by Doublecross himself, while each of the light-being agents has his or her own unique power set.

Defenses: Blunt, Sharp, Abrasive, Light
Notes: Turning intangible effectively lets her step out of combat for the round, neither attacking nor taking damage. However, she finds this, like using flight in combat, to be "wimpy" and generally avoids it.
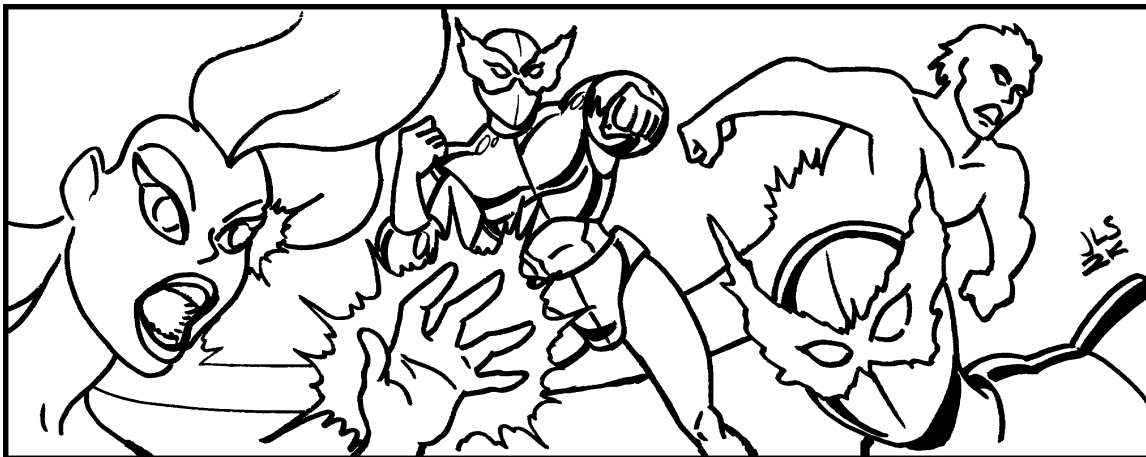
Armored Light Brigade Member

(There's currently seven: Ruby, Flame, Sunbeam, Verdant, Sapphire, Twilight and Blacklight)
Hook: Various, mainly Open Agenda (greed) or Pressure (wants to leave now that the boss is nuts, but is afraid he'd kill them)
Effects: Blunt, Sharp, Light
Scale: Paranormal
Wounds: (3/3/2/1)
Attacks: Punch (Para, Blunt, Medium, Medium)
Needler (Para, Sharp, Strong, Narrow)
Laser (Super, Light, Medium, Narrow)
Defenses: All Physical, Reactive, Electromagnetic, but only -1 Wound Level, effectively making them Supernormal for those Effects.
Notes: Flight via jetpacks, laser-based communications systems, have holographic projectors which can give them Hide +2 when used.

Crimson

Crimson is the most powerful of the Light Brigade, mainly because she has mastered the ability to make herself into an ultratough semi-solid light construct. She can punch through tank armor and lift masses of several kilotons if they don't break apart first. However, her energy powers are limited and weak compared to the others. She can fly and turn intangible, but prefers not to. As her name implies, she is normally a solid red silhouette of her former body. She can assume other appearances at will, but only bothers if ordered to.
Hook: Vengeance (on a superhero who ruined her face back when she was just an armored agent, feel free to make this a PC)
Effects: Blunt, Sharp, Light
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (6/5/3/2)
Attacks: Punch (Super, Blunt, Strong, Medium)
Bladehand (Super, Sharp, Strong, Narrow)
Laser (Super, Light, Weak, Narrow)
Grabs: Bear Hug (Super, Blunt, Strong, Medium)

Midnight

Midnight specializes in uses of his power to manipulate emotions, with flickering subliminals and his odd ability to absorb ambient light and create deep shadows. He had a slight mystic bent before his transformation, and now truly believes he is an embodiment of fear. This makes him hard to deal with, but he never was Mr. Popularity. He prefers to appear as a deep man-shaped shadow, but when he relaxes he's an indigo silhouette much like Crimson's red one.
Hook: Psychotic
Effects: Light, Emotional, Sensory
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (4/3/3/2)
Attacks: Laser (Super, Light, Medium, Narrow)
Pain Induction (Super, Sensory, Strong, Medium)
Grabs: Fear Aura (Super, Emotional, Strong, Broad)
Defenses: Blunt, Sharp, Abrasive, Light, Emotional
Notes: Pain Induction uses quick zaps of high-energy light to trigger the pain nerves without causing noticable damage. Can fly and turn intangible as Crimson above, and will do so if at a disadvantage.

Laserlash

Laserlash only partly transformed, for some as-yet unknown reason. His arms have become light constructs, and he's gotten very good at using them in either semi-solid or pure-energy modes. He wears a modified suit of power armor to compensate for his "halfbreed" nature. Since he's not totally human anymore, he has difficulty getting along with his human comrades, but he's still mostly sane and is frightened by the light-beings around him. Disliked by both sides, he's the most likely to try and leave the Light Brigade and turn himself in... except he knows Doublecross would find him and kill him for it. Laserlash's arms are generally yellow light constructs, and he has blond hair and green eyes. But he does have the ability to alter his appearance with holograms.
Hook: Pressure (fear of being killed)
Effects: Blunt, Light
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (3/3/3/2)

Attacks: Laser whip (Super, Light, Strong, Medium)
Laser whip (Super, Blunt, Strong, Medium)
Grabs: Laser whip (Super, Blunt, Medium, Narrow)
Defenses: -1 Wound Level from all Physical, Reactive and Electromagnetic
Notes: Has flight and other systems from the armored agents. Laser whip can be semisolid or pure light.

Emerald

Emerald (not to be confused with the superhero EMerald) has never been able to become even partially solid since her transformation. She's drifted away from the others into a self-imposed isolation, and sometimes even drifts away from a fight she's in. While the total sensory deprivation is getting to her (she can't even hear, only see), for the first time in her life she feels totally safe. Eventually she may just figure out how to become invisible to even Doublecross, and vanish. She appears to be a faint green shadow most of the time, and rarely alters her appearance, since without the ability to speak or hear she's not a very good infiltrator.

Hook: Unmotivated
Effect: Light
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (3/3/3/2)
Attacks: Laser (Super, Light, Normal, Narrow)
Defenses: All Physical, Reactive and Electromagnetic
Notes: Very hard to hit or hurt, usually has Hide +2 active on top of her potent defenses. Depending on whether another person is urging her to attack, she may not even pay attention to a combat.

Overall, Doublecross and his followers are insane, and will probably self-destruct within a few years in one way or another. But until that happens, they are VERY dangerous. And, of course, the old Ringer network may re-emerge as a threat in itself.

The Templar

Phillip Smith had always known in his heart that he was a bold man, a man of action and adventure, of mighty deeds and legendary courage. Unfortunately, his body betrayed him, slender and frail thanks to a childhood illness. To make matters worse, he stuttered, so he couldn't even sound heroic.

So he did the next best thing, and threw himself into the study of the heroes of history, the knights and wizards of legend… and as he slowly discovered, fact. While in Malta on a research trip to the ruins of the castle of the Knights Templar, Phillip
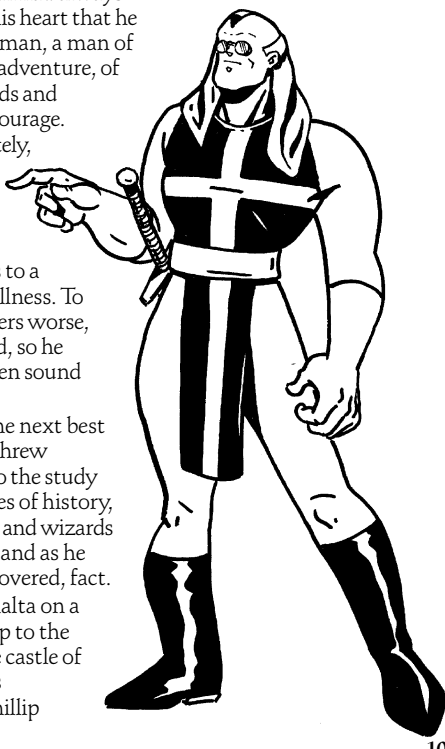
finally deciphered the meaning of a number of rare texts he had… borrowed… from a university library. This secret code led him to a hidden room which had not been seen by human eyes in over half a millennium.

It was the lost treasure of the Templars. It would have been the crowning moment of his professional career, if not for one small detail: it was haunted by the spirit of the Templar who had died guarding it. The spirit entered Philip's body and remade it into a strong, knightly frame, then moved on to taking over the scholar's mind. But perhaps Phillip **was** as grand in his mind as he thought he was, for he kept control of his mind and of his new, more powerful body. Even his stutter was gone! But he didn't win quite so completely as he had thought, because from that moment on, Philip became convinced he was the living heir of the Knights Templar, and that all of their secrets and treasures rightfully belonged to him. Equipping himself with holy artifacts from the hidden room, he sealed it once more and set out to recover what museums and universities had "stolen" from him.

Once he had satisfied himself that enough of the treasure of the Templars was in his hands, he turned his sights on grander things. He didn't simply wish to rule the world, however… he wanted to restore it to the way it was in the glory days of the Knights Templar. This is one thing both sides of his personality agree on. The ancient spirit has obvious motives, and Phillip has always loved the past more than the present. Ironically, now that his body matches the image he's always had for himself, it turns out he's really somewhat nebbishy and cowardly after all. He'll bluster and rant when in a position of strength, but when things start to go wrong, you can see the timid academic shaking in boots too large for his spirit.

Traits: Brawn, Mind +1, Tech +1
Scale: Supernormal
Hook: Open Agenda - Restore the glories of the past
Primary Effects: Lifeforce
Secondary Group: Magic
Body Type: Tough Organic
Wounds: (5/3/3/2) Level 1 = Bone
Attack Abilities:

Holy Strength (Attack Blunt): While hardly his preferred method of combat, the Templar is no slouch when it comes to fistfighting. However, he's no match for Avatar in this department, and can only inflict a Level 1 (Bone) Wound.

Grappling (Grab Blunt): The Templar prefers not to wrestle with his foes, so he has no real technique, just brute force. Wrath of God (Attack Lifeforce, Burst) +3: The visible effect of this mystic attackk is that the victim begins to wither. He can focus it on several targets at once.

Spear of Antioch (Attack Sharp) +2: Many relics claiming to be the spear which pierced Christ's heart exist, and this is one of them. Twisted by the Templar's magicks, it is now a terrible weapon. When used at Level 1 it is merely a sharp spear, but at Level 2 it pulses redly and any wound it makes leaves ugly scarring (and counts as a Magic attack). The Templar has further enchanted the spear so that he can summon it with an act of concentration. Hammer Against Witches (Depower Magic, Extra Range) +1: When this hammer strikes its target, it drains any mystic energies it finds, but otherwise inflicts no harm. It may be thrown any distance within sight. It is not a physical object, but rather the manifestation of a spell.

Defense Abilities:

Armor of Malta (Armor: Blunt, Sharp, Lifeforce, Spiritual): This enchanted suit not only protects the Templar against physical harm, it also protects him against certain forms of

magic. It may be removed from him, but he can enchant a new suit given time.

Dodge: The Templar worked on his evasive ability after feeling a few too many of Avatar's punches through his armor.

Parry (Sharp, Blunt): The ancient knight's training lets him block any melee attack. At Referee's discretion, the Templar may be carrying a mystic shield which lets him also block bullets and other ranged attacks.

Tactical Abilities:

Rally +2: The Templar makes up for his lack of natural charisma by employing a variety of spells to rouse the fervor of his troops.

Device Points (5): Various magical treasures of the Templars. While he cannot create these on the spot, he often has them concealed in his armor or within his cloak. His devices count as Magic Effect Group, not Devices Effect Group.

Magic Favor (1): More of a ritual spellcaster, the Templar has very little flexibility in his magic on the spur of the moment.

Noncombat Abilities:

Wealth: While emotionally attached to certain Templar treasures, the rest is just gold and jewelry, to be disposed of as necessary to attain his goals.

Tunnels: One power the Templar has so far kept secret, this ability has let him escape captivity on many occasions, and is very helpful in his thefts. If he meditates for several minutes, the Templar can "find" secret passages in any structure and vanish into them. The doorways disappear once he goes through them, and so far it doesn't seem like any but he can travel down these passages. He values the secret too much to let anyone in on it.

Ritual Magic: Among the treasures of the Templars are many tomes of mystical lore, tomes which Phillip's scholarly skills let him make use of. He's not too inventive, but he can follow a recipe well. Mystic Affinity: While not useful in combat, the Templar can attune himself to mystic vibrations in an area. He's especially good at finding holy relics and other enchanted items. This sense also helps him figure out how to best use an item.

Knights: At any given time, the Templar will have anywhere from a handful of followers to a small army, often equipped with weapons he has enchanted to overcome the advantages of modern firearms. Existing minor supervillains have also become "Knights Templar" when it suited the Templar's purposes.

Plot Devices: Every so often, the Templar finds something really powerful that only he knows how to use properly, like the Rood of Might, which other mages didn't even realize had magic in it.

Disadvantages:

Bravado: Phillip is still really a coward at heart. While the spirit possessing him helps bolster his courage, if things go too badly it will not be able to prevent the scared little man inside the hulking body from running. How confident the Templar is on any given day is up to the Referee.

Disdain for Technology/Modern Things: If it was made after the Middle Ages, the Templar's not too keen on it. This often leads him to do things the hard way, or to turn down help from possible allies. High-tech powerarmor types will not be found working for him. Women will also generally not work for him as warriors, since he has a rather, well, medieval point of view on their role.

Nearsighted: The transformation from nebbish to knight did not cure Phillip's poor eyesight. He tolerates eyeglasses as a necessary evil of the modern age, but will not switch to contact lenses or more secure goggles. If his glasses are

destroyed or knocked off in a fight, he's at -1 to all rolls involving close combat, and +1 Difficulty for anything outside the reach of his arms. He may find a mystic cure for this after the players have taken advantage of it the first time.

Description:

A tall, muscular man with an oddly scholar-like face, complete with wire-rimmed glasses perched at the end of his nose. His long white hair is receding, but otherwise he seems youthful and vigorous. He dresses archaically whenever possible, often in elaborate plate mail armor and cloaks. When at ease, he wears a simple tunic and breeches.

TYPICAL KNIGHT

Knights Templar: Most of the time, these are mercenary soldiers who have been outfitted with armor and weapons enchanted using some of the simpler spells in the Templar's library. Initially he had a hard time recruiting soldiers, since they would not generally give up their modern conveniences and weapons even when presented with superior mystic replacements. So now the Templar keeps his troops in line with various alchemical potions placed in their food. After the first few meals, they willingly abandon their rifles for crossbows.

Hook: Variable, usually Greed (they're mercenaries)
Effects: Sharp, one other (Heat in this example)
Scale: Paranormal
Wounds: (4/3/2/0)
Attacks: Enchanted Sword (Paranormal, Sharp, Strong, Medium)
Firebolt Crossbow (Paranormal, Heat, Strong, Narrow)
Mailed Fist (Paranormal, Blunt, Medium, Medium)
Defenses: Sharp - Armor ensorcelled against blades and bullets
Spiritual - Only defends them against loyalty-based attacks. They are ensorceled to remain loyal to the Templar.
Notes: Usually foot soldiers, but may be mounted on magical steeds.

LORD EBON

It was the transition time in Europe, between the superstition of the Middle Ages and the scientific enlightment of the Renaissance, and the old ways of alchemy were giving way to more organized practices of chemistry. Baron Iago Montessi was a man who straddled this line, applying some of the new scientific thinking to the old magical ways, and codifying magic more completely than had ever been done in the current version of history. Calling himself Simon Filius, or "Son of Simon," after the legendary magician who

was believed to be a contemporary of Jesus, Montessi was able to reach that highest of alchemical goals thanks to his organizational structure. He had found the secret to immortality. Or, at least, A secret. Unfortunately for him, it didn't work quite the way he'd planned. Instead of his body being made immortal, his spirit was set free of the fetters of the afterlife and would remain on Earth even after death. In addition, the process took several weeks to complete, during which the Baron fell into a deep coma. His retainers, not privy to his magical dabblings, eventually found him and thought he had died. He was buried with full Christian ceremony at the village church… for while he had secretly dealt in forces that were unholy and vile, on the surface he had been a benevolent lord of the village. When he awoke in the coffin, he found that the holy ground he was buried in blunted the few spells he could cast without his chemicals and apparati. Additionally, the burial ceremonies had ironically tied his spirit to his body, trapping him in the ground.

Centuries passed, and eventually Iago learned to separate part of his spirit from his body and roam the world as an insubstantial and invisible spirit, learning of all that had transpired during his long imprisonment. However, he could affect nothing, nor could he remain away from his body for long before he felt the inexorable pull back to it. Finally, in 1993, Tymythy Twystyd was hitchhiking through Europe and felt something… strange… in an Italian graveyard he was passing. He probed it with his recently-gained powers, and that was enough to break the remaining barriers keeping Iago's body trapped. Proclaiming himself to be Lord Ebon, the dark master, Iago went on what he knew to be a cliched "Supervillain Rampage" in Naples. The Raiders, who were in the Mediterranean area after a trip to Khadam, defeated Ebon and destroyed his body. Which was exactly what he wanted. Free of his grey, decaying corpse, Ebon was able to seek out a new, fresh body. Possessing the body of the small-time mystic villain Hellrazor, Ebon devoured the shriveled soul of his host and set about increasing the power of his new body. Only because he underestimated the power of technology was he defeated again and deprived of this body. Now he's in a new host and moving more slowly to gain power. He's immortal, he can afford to be patient. And while he's at it, he'd like to acquire some of this technology for himself… .

Lord Ebon is a variable power-level menace, since he can only affect the physical world when he has a body. And while he can perform rituals and do exercises to increase the power of his body, he may start out fairly weak. This makes him a good arch-foe for a beginning group, since he doesn't have to be a worldbeater right away… but eventually will be. The Referee should be very careful to keep the identity of Ebon's host a mystery. This character sheet shows Ebon at low-ebb, as he would be a few weeks after taking over a Normal. If you have him take over a previously- introduced minor villain, add the Traits and Abilities shown here to the character sheet, and make the Body Type Tough Organic if it's Organic.

Traits: Empowered, Invulnerable, Mind
Scale: Supernormal (will increase Scale by one level a week until it hits this level if a Normal is taken over)
Hook: Hidden Agenda (Amass enough power to become a god. He hides this behind a facade of standard "take over the world" villainy)
Primary Effects: Lifeforce, Chemical
Secondary Group: Magic
Body Type: Tough Organic
Wounds: (6/4/2/2) Level 1 = Bone
Attack Abilities:

Attack: Magic - Various mystic attacks, usually centered on alchemical or elemental themes
Snare: Lifeforce - Necromantic spells
Snare: Spiritual - Temporary possession

Attack Ability Modifiers:
Group Attack: Magic
Burst: Usable on any attack, he's skilled enough to split his attention among multiple targets

Defense Abilities:
Hide +1: Cloak of shadows makes him hard to see, hard to hit
Armor: Mental (Damaging), Mental (Non-Damaging) - A centuries-old mind is hard to affect.

Tactical Abilities:
Focus: Mental disciplines allow him to concentrate more fully on his spells.
Magic Favors: 2 - He does not bargain with other powers, he uses raw willpower to bend the universe to his will. As he gains power over time, priority will be given to adding to this Ability until he has at least 10 Favors stored up.

Noncombat Abilities:
Cloak of Shadow: He always has this active when he's playing the role of supervillain. It makes it impossible for anyone to determine who his host is underneath the shadows. He's VERY good at this part of the spell, having perfected it back in his old life in Italy for use in covertly obtaining people to experiment on. Players with enhanced senses will not be able to pierce this darkness.
Alchemical Creations: He frequently creates elemental automatons to act as henchmen, and may also have devised some potion to use as a plot device, such as mind-controlling a city by dosing the water supply.
Vast Knowledge: For centuries he spied on all manner of events as a ghost. He knows a lot of secrets, as well as where most of the bodies are buried (literally and figuratively). If a character has been active since 1993, Ebon will probably know at least some of his secrets and weaknesses.
Resources of Host: He prefers to take over someone with more to offer than just a body. He's probably taken over the head of some industry or a government official, and will have all appropriate resources.

Disadvantages:
Obsessive Behavior: You don't spend centuries locked in a tomb without becoming a little unhinged. Ebon has at least one nervous habit that he isn't aware of yet, and it may even be one inappropriate to his current body (such as stroking a beard he doesn't have). The Referee shouldn't simply say, "X is doing Y," he should actually perform the nervous habit while talking in that character's role. Of course, the Referee should also give at least one other important NPC a nervous habit, so players won't know right away who Ebon is.
Magical Aura: Staying in his body requires active violation of the Third Pillar, so he will always show up on tests that look for that. He will avoid meeting magically sensitive people if he can manage. For example, if he's a captain of industry, he may deny a visit from a mage on the grounds that it might mess up the delicate technology in the plant.
Monomania: He keeps it pretty well under control most of the time, and is not the lunatic that Doublecross is, but if Ebon's goal of apotheosis seems near, he will drop everything to pursue it. He may even take stupid chances if they look like they could pay off big.
Hunger: Ebon has acquired a taste for human souls, and has difficulty resisting the temptation of devouring his host's. The main disadvantage here is that once the spirit is

devoured, Ebon loses access to the host's personality, and it becomes harder to maintain the charade. Memories, being biological, remain, but once Ebon gives in and eats his host's spirit, the change will be obvious to anyone who knew the host.

Elemental Henchmen: The following quartet are a sample of the kinds of elementals Lord Ebon concocts to do his dirty work. Feel free to vary the power level of them as Lord Ebon's own power varies, and keep in mind he may not always send the most powerful elementals in his arsenal. In general, each is immune to attacks of its own element, and defenseless against attacks of the "opposing" element. The opposing pairs are Air/Earth and Fire/Water. Referee's discretion what constitutes an attack of a particular element (such as, is acid water?).

Air Elemental
Hook: None
Effects: Sharp, Abrasive, Cold
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (3/2/2/1)
Attacks: Gale Force Winds (Super, Abrasive, Medium, Broad)
Straw In Hurricane (Super, Sharp, Strong, Medium)
Biting Winds (Super, Cold, Weak, Broad)
Grabs: Tornadic Whirl (Super, Abrasive, Medium, Medium)
Defenses: Abrasive, Blunt, Sharp, all Mental (no real mind)
Notes: Against Earth attacks, the Defenses don't work. Refined metals or worked stone don't count, but ripped up chunks of concrete usually will. Manifests as a grey whirlwind filled with debris and can move freely through the air.

Earth Elemental
Hook: None
Effects: Blunt, Sharp
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (6/5/4/2)
Attacks: Avalanche (Super, Blunt, Medium, Broad)
Jagged Rocks (Super, Sharp, Strong, Narrow)
Grabs: Burial (Super, Blunt, Medium, Medium)
Defenses: All Mental (no real mind)
Notes: Against air attacks, suffers one Wound Level higher. Gas-based attacks meant to do their damage by toxic effects are not considered "air" attacks. Manifests as a pile of rubble, a sort of wave of rocks that sweeps along at high speeds.

Fire Elemental
Hook: None
Effects: Heat
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (4/2/2/1)
Attacks: Flames (Super, Heat, Strong, Broad) - Reflex Attack
Defenses: All Physical, all Mental (no mind)
Notes: Anyone directly trying to strike the elemental with a part of their body takes an automatic attack from the flames. Water-based attacks ignore the Defenses against Physical. Manifests as a pillar of flame.

Water Elemental
Hook: None
Effects: Blunt, Abrasive
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (5/5/4/2)
Attacks: Crushing Pressure (Super, Blunt, Strong, Wide) - only vs grabbed
Pounding Surf (Super, Blunt, Medium, Medium)
Erosion (Super, Abrasive, Weak, Broad)
Grabs: Drowning (Super, Blunt, Strong, Medium)
Defenses: Sharp, All Mental (no mind)
Notes: Sharp defense will not work if players manage to freeze the elemental. Fire based attacks inflict one Wound Level higher damage. Crushing Pressure gets +4 to rolls against Grabbed targets, but only works against them. Elemental can heal back all Level 1 Wounds if near a large source of water, but only once per combat. Manifests as a large wave.

Non-Worldbeaters

Not all supervillains are as dangerous as the above trio (thank goodness!), but most of the ones listed in this section are at least pretty powerful. A few oddballs aside, the lower-power villains are disposable and the Referee can make them up as he goes, or use the list in section 4.3.

Conclave of Super-Villains

From an alternate reality where good and evil are swapped, the Conclave was that world's most powerful villain group until they found themselves stranded in the Knightsworld. Infighting since then has reduced their numbers, but they remain at the top of the heap in Haven. Challenger is the leader, followed by Strafe, Horus, Fracture and Chimaera. Horus is the current avatar of the Heliopolan god, for whom different dimensions are no real barrier. When Horus is out of commission, Sutekh has been known to work with the CSV, although they don't trust him very much... or anyone not from their world.

Challenger (alternate David Van Domelen)
Concept: A Violation Physics researcher who tortured his fellow scientist until the man divulged the secret of his alchemical formula. In trying to use the formula, Dr. Van Domelen erred, and the resulting explosion knocked him into a coma. He awoke to find himself on the vivisection table of Dr. Derek Williams, and lashed out with a power he hadn't had before, destroying Dr. Williams's face and fleeing into the night. Once he had determined the extent of his newfound powers over spacetime and solar energy, he destroyed the Space Shuttle Challenger as a demonstration of his power. However, his reign of terror was cut short by Dr. Williams, who had gained powers of his own from the power blast and now called himself Vindicator, having renounced his old ways.
Taking the name of the shuttle he had destroyed, Challenger set out to form a supervillain team that could help him overpower the vast might of Vindicator... the Conclave of Supervillains.
Note: Just as this is the evil version of Solar Max (see section 5), Vindicator is the good version of Devastator from the Backworld.
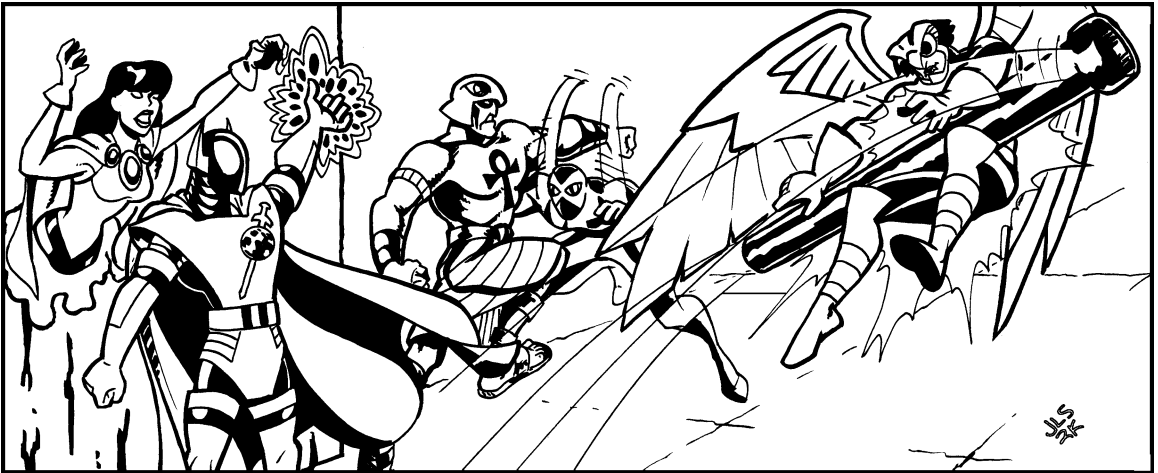**Traits:** Brawn, Empowered, Invulnerable +1, Tech
Scale: Supernormal
Hook: Open Agenda (amass power and conquer the world)
Primary Effects: Light, Heat
Secondary Group: Physical

Body Type: Tough Organic
Wounds: (10/8/3/2) Level 1 = Bone
Attack Abilities:
Attack: Physical - Forcefield staves, swords and other shapes.
Attack: Electromagnetic - Usually just a blast of light channeled from the Sun, but he can fine tune it for minor Electrical or Magnetic effects as well.
Attack: Heat - Plasma ball pulled from the Sun's core. Even one the size of a pinhead can melt metals.
Grab: Blunt - Either using his enhanced strength, or a forcefield cage.
Attack Ability Modifiers:
Group Attack: Applied to the Physical and EM attacks.
Unstoppable: Can pull enough power from the Sun to bypass any defense, but this triggers the Pain Disadvantage for a Level 2 Wound.
Explosion: Usually applied only to the Heat attack.
Defense Abilities:
Parry: Physical, Electromagnetic, Reactive - All three are Linked, allowing him to erect a powerful forcefield for defense.
Armor: Physical - Specially designed suit has its own forcefield to help him avoid bulletholes. Cybernetically bonded to his flesh, it's not counted as a Device.
Dodge: He's agile.
Defense Ability Modifiers:
Linked: On Parries.
Defend: On Parries, he can erect force walls large enough to protect his whole team, but he's not that good at it.
Tactical Abilities:
Range with Carry: Flight via either his suit systems or drawing on his personal power (which is much faster). Also capable of short teleportation jumps.
Device Points: 2 - His suit is configurable to allow a number of stunts, especially since he can power all of his devices personally.
Noncombat Abilities:
Spacewarping: He can teleport, fly incredibly fast, even enter a sort of hyperspace for interstellar travel (although he doesn't trust his allies enough to leave them alone long enough to go star exploring).
Safesuit: Bonded to his skin, this suit provides armor, backup flight and life support for space and underwater situations. It also contains a scrambled communications link to the rest of his team.
Sciences: He's an expert in Violation Physics, and has no

ethics to keep him from discovering all sorts of interesting facts via use of human subjects.
Haven: As the leader of Haven (for now), he can order around dozens of supervillains who live there, and they might even obey. He also has surreptitious aid from Khadam.
Disadvantages:
Scale Change: Challenger cannot remain at full power for more than an hour at a time without suffering great pain. When he powers down, he drops to Paranormal Scale and loses all powers other than his Safesuit and Device Points.
Pain: Whenever he uses his Unstoppable attacks, he suffers a Level 2 Wound. Every minute he's powered up beyond his hour-long limit (which may be even less if he's been very active) he suffers a Level 1 Wound.
Description: His Safesuit is always on, and it's predominantly red with orange boots and gloves and yellow trim. The eyeslits are yellow, and a yellow pattern based on the explosion-pattern of the Challenger is on the chest. His hair pokes out the top of the suit and is tied back in a long ponytail (a forcefield seals off the top). He's 5'10" and about 220 lbs of power-enhanced muscle.

STRAFE
Concept: No one but Strafe knows his real name... and some wonder if even he does. He was just another nobody captured for use as a test subject for an experimental powersuit that turned its wearer into a loyal robot-slave... but it backfired, making him ruthless and evil as his would-be masters had intended, but not at all enslaved. After destroying the experimental complex, he joined up with the CSV as a stepping stone to greater power.
What even his allies don't know is that the man inside the suit died long ago... the suit's AI simply maintains the fiction of a wearer because it is convenient.
Traits: Brawn, Fast +1, Invulnerable, Tech
Scale: Supernormal
Hook: Bad Citizen
Primary Effects: Electrical
Secondary Group: Physical
Body Type: Inorganic
Wounds: (6/6/4/2) Level 1 = Bone
Attack Abilities:
Attack: Physical - Blunt is simple punching, Sharp is use of the close-attack blades on the suit's forearms or the horns on the helmet, Abrasive is rarely used but generally involves grabbing a target momentarily and inflicting "road rash."

Attack: Electrical +2 - Particle cannons housed in the forearms. Have several options (see Modifiers).

Grab: Blunt - A grip of steel.

Attack Ability Modifiers:

Group Attack: Physical

Barrage: The computer mind is able to launch multiple attacks with the particle cannons in one round.

Burst: Also for the particle cannons, this is a multiple attack on multiple targets.

Extra Range: The particle cannons can be retuned for long range sniping.

Defense Abilities:

Armor: Physical, Reactive, Mental (non-damaging), Mental (damaging) - It is a suit of armor, it doesn't have soft parts to hurt on the inside. However, Electromagnetic effects are a bit more useful against it, which is why it also has… .

Parry: Electromagnetic - Active defense using the particle cannon to shoot down or deflect any EM attacks.

Dodge +1: Tactical computer routines anticipate a foe's attack.

Tactical Abilities:

Range: Thrusters built into the suit allow flight.

Advanced Senses: Radar, sonar, infrared and ultraviolet scanners.

Speed Point: 1 - Capacitors store a charge for one ultra-fast reaction per combat, allowing the suit to react almost as fast as the AI can think.

Noncombat Abilities:

Flight: See Range. Not orbit-capable.

Not Alive: As it's effectively a hollow robot, it doesn't have to worry about things like eating or breathing, and those who don't know its nature can have a hard time with mental attacks.

Autorepair: Given an external power source and raw materials, the suit can repair itself fully within a day.

Disadvantages:

Computer Mind: Lacks some of the creativity of a human mind, and has a rather non-scintillating personality.

Pinocchio Syndrome: Longs for the human life denied it, and tends to get destructive at times when it's obvious such things are impossible. Players may stumble across a string of bizarre electrocutions of prostitutes, for example.

Description: A 6'3" tall suit of blue and grey armor with gold accents and horns on the helmet. Gloves and boots are bulky to hold the particle cannons and thruster units respectively. Weighs about 200 lbs, which is just the armor. Helmet has a mirrored faceplate.

Horus

Concept: When Set's twisted sense of humor led him to create a heroic avatar on the "backworld," Horus created a villainous avatar to oppose his brother. Since the Knightsworld had both a hero and villain avatar, Horus continued to power this avatar when he crossed the dimensional boundary.

What he was like before is unimportant, although he was probably an archaeologist. Now he's a hulking mass of muscle obsessed with opposing Set wherever he can find him. The CSV takes advantage of this to motivate him by pointing out Set where he isn't.

Traits: Brawn +3, Invulnerable

Scale: Supernormal

Hook: Open Agenda (Slay Set)

Primary Effects: Blunt

Secondary Group: Physical

Body Type: Semi-Organic

Wounds: (9/12/7/1) Level 1 = Bone

Attack Abilities:

Attack: Blunt +4 - Fists like piledrivers.

Attack: Sharp +4 - A golden sword of righteousness.

Grab: Blunt +4 - Arms like treetrunks.

Defense Abilities:

Armor: All +1 - Skin like rock and a brain to match

Tactical Abilities:

Focus +3: Only used when fighting Set, or someone he believes is Set.

Noncombat Abilities:

Utterly Unstoppable: Once his mind is set on something, just TRY to stop him. You can't. You probably wouldn't survive trying. This guy defines "persistent."

Disadvantages:

Singleminded: Okay, this guy is insanely tough and strong and in a straight fight even Devastator would have trouble, but he's also pretty thick. Mentally, that is. Simple tricks won't get him (he's been fooled enough times to not fall for things like "Hey, Set's over in that lake!") but a clever ruse can get him to thunder off elsewhere.

Slow: He's so muscled up that he's lucky to make it up to a jog. As long as he has nothing handy to throw, he can be escaped fairly easily. Also, if dumped off a cliff or into a lake or something of that nature, it'll take him a while to return.

Description: 500 lbs of ultradense (and in more than one way) muscle with a baaaaaad attitude. He wears a hawk-motif helmet and an ankh is branded into his chest. He also wears a blue and gold skirt/loincloth combination, but rarely more, since it shreds as soon as he moves.

The other three regulars aren't as important, and will be written up as SNPCs.

Fracture

Hook: Psychotic

Effects: Sharp, Sensory

Scale: Supernormal

Wounds: (6/3/3/1)

Attacks: Shattering Hands (Super, Sharp, Strong, Narrow) Sonic Boom (Super, Sensory, Medium, Broad)

Defenses: None, but permanent -4 "dodge" from his vibrations

Notes: Superspeedster who's always vibrating at a high rate… this has rattled his brains. Everything he touches shatters if it's rigid and weak enough… he has to eat out of plastic bags of babyfood. He's always blurry and indistinct.

Chimaera

Hook: Adrenaline Junkie

Effects: Blunt, Sharp

Scale: Supernormal

Wounds: (6/5/5/3)

Attacks: Stone Fist (Super, Blunt, Strong, Medium) Stone Claws (Super, Sharp, Medium, Narrow)

Grabs: Stone Tail (Super, Blunt, Strong, Medium)

Defenses: Abrasive, Blunt, Sharp

Notes: A gargoyle-like stone being, he can glide on his stone wings thanks to a bit of magic. His powers come from a curse which will end with him an immobile stone statue on his 30th birthday, so he's out to grab all the gusto while he still can. He's currently 27.

Sutekh

Hook: Hidden Agenda (usurp his patron, Set's, powers. Hidden behind Bad Citizen.)

Effects: Lifeforce, Awareness, Psychological

Scale: Supernormal

Wounds: (2/3/2/1)

Attacks: Life Drain (Super, Lifeforce, Strong, Narrow) Sleep Of Death (Super, Awareness, Strong, Broad)

Grabs: Mental Domination (Super, Psychological, Strong, Narrow)
**Snares:** Enslavement (Super, Psychological, Strong, Broad)
Defenses: All Mental (powerful will)
Notes: Very fragile in physical combat, he'll usually grab a pawn or two and try to get out of the direct line of fire. A wrinkled old man, he usually wears a full jackal-head helmet and robes to conceal his frailty.

Khadamite High Guard

The nation of Khadam doesn't have a large army, mainly because they're not out to seize territory militarily: they'd rather take control by economic or technological means. However, they do have a small, elite force dedicated to defending the borders against any reprisals or attacks, as well as for keeping the population in line.

Leading the High Guard is Onslaught, a genetically-engineered cross between a human and a Scytharian combat unit, the son of the current ruler. Onslaught is superhumanly strong, fast and resilient, and is capable of emitting a sonic scream that disorients his opponents. And his powers are NOT violation-physics driven. Neither is his battlesuit, which is built from Santari technology acquired through the Pranir. The battlesuit gives him additional
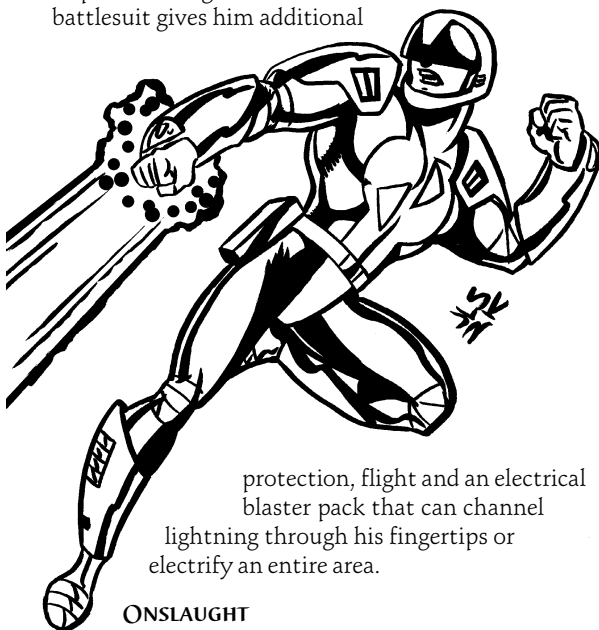
protection, flight and an electrical blaster pack that can channel lightning through his fingertips or electrify an entire area.

Onslaught
Hook: Good Citizen... of Khadam
Effects: Blunt, Electrical, Sensory
**Scale:** Supernormal
Wounds: (5/5/4/3)
Attacks: Punch/Kick (Super, Blunt, Strong, Medium)
Lightning (Super, Electrical, Strong, Broad)
Scream (Super, Sensory, Weak, Broad) - attacks all at Close
Defenses: Blunt, Sharp, Senory (all from suit)
Notes: He can maintain the scream while using other attacks. The scream does not actually do damage: instead, the victim is at -1 on his actions the next time he acts if a Level 1 Wound is scored, or -2 if a Level 2 or more is
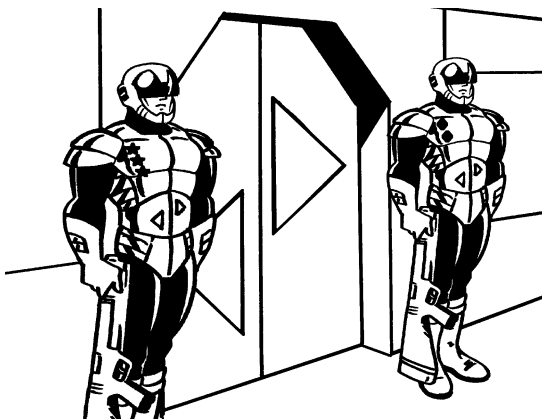
scored. Onslaught can fly while in armor, and has scrambled communications links with his troops. Armor is gold, with white and green accents and Khadam's flag on the chest. The flag is a gold/white/green variant of the Nazi flag, but with two green triangles replacing the swastika.

High Guard Gold Trooper
Hook: Variable, usually Good Citizen of Khadam
Effects: Sharp, Electrical
Scale: Paranormal
Wounds: (4/4/4/2) Level 1 = Flesh
Attacks: Particle Rifle (Super, Electrical, Medium, Narrow)
Pistol Sidearm (Para, Sharp, Medium, Narrow)
Defenses: Blunt, Sharp, Sensory (from armor)
Notes: The best-equipped soldiers, Gold Troopers are chosen for skill and loyalty to the Technomancers. Nicknamed "Citadellians" because they rarely leave the Citadel. Have flying "skycycles" available for rapid transport if they do leave the Citadel (3 Metal, 1 Structural) and their helmets shield them from Onslaught's scream.

High Guard White Troopers
Hook: Various, usually Open Agenda (greed) or Good Citizen of Khadam
Effects: Sharp, Chemical
Scale: Paranormal
Wounds: (4/3/2/1) Level 1 = Flesh
Attacks: Riot Gas (Para, Chemical, Strong, Broad)
Rifle (Para, Sharp, Strong, Narrow)
Snare: Glue Grenade (Para, Chemical, Strong, Medium)
Defenses: Blunt, Sharp, Sensory (from armor)
Notes: White Troopers are usually used for capturing troublesome paranormals or subduing riots. While political unrest is rare in Khadam (the people know that to speak out could mean death), visitors in the main city tend to be a bit rowdy, especially if they've been on a spaceship for months. White Troopers are trained to subdue targets with non-lethal means to avoid killing the customers.

High Guard Green Troopers
Hook: Various, usually Open Agenda (greed)
Effects: Sharp, Blunt
Scale: Paranormal
Wounds: (2/2/1/1) Level 1 = Flesh
Attacks: Kinetic Baton (Para, Blunt, Medium, Medium)
Rifle (Para, Sharp, Strong, Narrow)
Defenses: Blunt, Sharp, Sensory (from armor)
Notes: Green Troopers usually get the job of culling the slums of the outer city for experimental subjects, or rousting out possible spies. They're the everyday enforcers of the public order, and keep the peace with a few

well-aimed baton strikes. The pay is great, but Green Troopers tend to be the first to run into any trouble... and in a city of aliens, occasional supervillains and infiltrating heroes, trouble can be a lot more than can be clubbed into submission.

The Guys

A loose confederation of mercenary villains with a decidedly over- macho outlook. Blue collar villains who kick back on the off days and watch pirated satellite TV from their rooms in Haven or wherever they happen to be holed up at the time.

Contrary to the name, you don't have to be male to join. Originally this was the case, but after making exceptions for some odd-gender aliens and non-gender robots, the Guys have decided that as long as someone has enough sheer damn manliness, they could join. Even women.

Members of the Guys get a special codename to use when operating as part of the team, but many have separate identities and solo careers outside the group. Guys codenames are usually designed to sound like real, if implausible, "guy names." Use the examples below as inspiration.

Jack Zap (no alternate)
Hook: Bad Citizen
Effects: Electrical
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (3/3/3/1)
Attacks: Big Zap (Super, Electrical, Medium, Narrow)
Wide Zap (Super, Electrical, Strong, Broad)
Defenses: Electrical
Notes: Also has limited ability to control electrical devices. Jack Zap is the group's leader, not because he's the most powerful, but because he came up with the idea. And he knows how to pirate cable using his powers alone.

Harry Kane (aka Hurricane)
Hook: Open Agenda (Greed)
Effects: Blunt, Abrasive
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (4/3/2/0)
Attacks: Wind Slam (Super, Blunt, Medium, Medium)
Wind Rip (Super, Abrasive, Strong, Broad)
Grabs: Vortex (Super, Abrasive, Medium, Narrow)
Defenses: Heat, Cold
Notes: Can carry the whole team on his winds if necessary. For dramatic effect, he's always generating a small wind to blow his hair around in combat, because it looks cool. When operating solo, he mainly does aerial hijacking.

Yul Byrne (aka Blazer)
Hook: Psychotic (pyromaniac)
Effects: Heat
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (7/3/3/2)
Attacks: Flames (Super, Heat, Strong, Medium)
Defenses: Heat, Cold, Chemical
Notes: Can generate thermals to fly on, but not very quickly. Sometimes helps Hurricane on his skyjacking, and often wanders off on his own just to burn something down.

Ben Sidhe (aka Shrike)
Hook: Adrenaline Junkie
Effects: Blunt, Sensory
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (4/4/3/1)
Attacks: Martial Arts (Super, Blunt, Medium, Narrow)
Sonic Scream (Super, Sensory, Strong, Broad)
Defenses: Sensory
Notes: Currently the token female member of the Guys, she joined mainly to show she could be just as tough as any man. She's got a major chip on her shoulder, but it usually disappears once she gets into a good fight. Solo, she acts as a contract killer, adding a sword (Super, Sharp, Strong, Narrow) to her arsenal. "Ben Sidhe" is pronounced "Banshee."

Alan Steel (no alternate ID)
Hook: Fugitive
Effects: Blunt, Cold
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (6/6/4/3)
Attacks: Punch (Super, Blunt, Strong, Medium)
Thermocouples (Super, Cold, Weak, Broad) - Attacks all in area
Grabs: Iron Grip (Super, Blunt, Strong, Medium)
Defenses: Heat, Sharp
Notes: Alan is a robot who had an accidental core memory dump during his training program. Suddenly he found himself in the middle of a combat situation with people shooting at him, and fled. After a few days, he stumbled across the Guys robbing a nearby government lab, and sort of attached himself to Jack Zap. He's more of a team mascot than member, but he likes the feeling of fitting in and having a family of some sort. He still doesn't know who made him, since the Guys aren't known for information-gathering skill. But he's not sure he cares anymore. He usually acts as the bartender at whatever base the Guys are at, using his heat-absorption systems to keep the beer cold.

Feel free to add as many more members to the Guys as you wish. Their membership is large and always changing.

Solo Agents

Not every villain has an organization behind him. These are some of the more notable solo villains. Some use normal henchmen or paranormal sidekicks, but these are usually disposable. Important followers will be listed after the main villain.

The Cobbler
Hook: Open Agenda (greed)
Effects: Variable
Scale: Paranormal
Wounds: (3/2/2/1) Level 1 = Flesh
Attacks: Whatever He Has On Hand (Super, variable, variable, variable)
Defenses: Devices
Notes: Anyone with the money can buy a supertech item from the Cobbler, who has a talent for making devices even normals can use to great effect. He has a mental affinity for technology, and it won't hurt him.

Doc Droid
Hook: Victim of Circumstance
Effects: None
Scale: Paranormal

Wounds: (2/2/1/0) Level 1 = Flesh
Attacks: None
Defenses: None
Notes: A brilliant designed of artificial intelligences and android bodies, he accidentally created Teratron, one of the biggest menaces to humanity in the Second Heroic Age. An outcast, denied funding to work on his beloved androids, he turned to crime to finance his work. He supplies droids to villains as muscle, as well as designing cybernetic replacement parts for injured villains.

Droid
Hook: None
Effects: Blunt, Electrical
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (4/4/4/2)
Attacks: Punch (Super, Blunt, Medium, Medium)
Arcwelder (Super, Electrical, Weak, Narrow)
Defenses: All Mental (unless attacker specialized in computer minds)
Notes: This is a typical utility droid designed by Doc Droid to help him build more droids. Not too skilled in combat, their main purpose is construction. In fact, a small army of these units built Haven, and to this day serves as the maint staff there. Given a few minutes, Doc Droid can usually increase the output of the arcwelders to do Normal damage, but they use up their fuel in a few minutes of this.

Megadroid
Hook: None
Effects: Blunt, Heat
Scale: Cosmic
Wounds: (4/4/2/1) Level 1 = Metal
Attacks: Stomp (Cosmic, Blunt, Medium, Medium)
Eyebeams (Cosmic, Heat, Weak, Narrow)
Defenses: All Mental (see above)
Notes: A really big version of the standard Droid, but with heat vision eyes. Doc Droid only makes this model to act as a distraction while he sends his regular units on a mission in the same area, since the huge Megadroids tend to be less intelligent and are best-suited to Mindless Rampaging.

Herr Stark ("Mr. Strong")
Hook: Bad Citizen
Effects: Blunt
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (10/8/5/2)
Attacks: Punch (Super, Blunt, Strong, Medium) +2 to rolls
Defenses: None
Notes: Probably the strongest man on the planet in terms of pure muscle power. This German villain is the grandson of a Jotun and son of a superhero of the Second Heroic Age, and slew his own father in rage when he was denied the inheritance of his father's magical axe. If he ever gets this weapon, he may be a match for Horus in the "get out of his way!" department, but his lack of skill and planning keeps him from being too dangerous now.

Mosasaur
Hook: Vengeance (on US government)
Effects: Blunt, Sharp
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (8/8/6/3)
Attacks: Stomp (Super, Blunt, Strong, Broad)
Bite (Super, Sharp, Strong, Narrow)
Defenses: None

Notes: Once a petty thug hired as muscle on a job to break into a government research lab, Max Beard got caught in some crossfire and something exploded near him… and the next thing he knew, he had turned into an ancient aquatic dinosaur known as a mosasaur! With efforts, he can return to human form (Scale Change to Normal), but under stress he grows to over forty feet in length with teeth, claws and tail. He blames the US government for his fate, and takes every opportunity he can get to make them pay.

Radiak
Hook: Victim of Circumstance
Effects: Light, Lifeforce
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (4/4/2/1)
Attacks: Radiation Blast (Super, Light, Strong, Narrow)
AND (Super, Lifeforce, Strong, Broad)
Defenses: Lifeforce
Notes: When he attacks, roll both lines above. Radiak really wanted to be a superhero. Unfortunately, his powers are lethal to everyone around him given time, and he didn't seem to be able to accept that. He wears a lead-impregnated costume to help keep those around him from getting radiation burns, but when he cuts loose with his powers, people drop like flies. His earnest desire to do good would be funny if he weren't so dangerous.

Ultra-Destructo-Man!!!!
Hook: Loopy
Effects: Magnetic
Scale: Paranormal
Wounds: (3/2/2/1) Level 1 = Flesh
Attacks: Magnetic Burst (Para, Magnetic, Weak, Broad)
Defenses: None
Notes: He thinks he's a lot more powerful than he is. However, he has learned a little about where he's most effective, and usually tries to hold magnetic media hostage, since use of his powers can erase tapes and disks within 50 meters. Needless to say, he's a fan of CDs and laserdisks for his personal entertainment. UDMan is good for a little comic relief after a tough adventure, especially if he tries a scheme that he has no chance of making work.
Oddly, UDMan almost always manages to escape custody shortly after the heroes leave, which suggests there's more to him than first meets the eye. Some think he's a hologram projected by the real villain, others think he can teleport.

OTHER VILLAINS

Here's a list of undeveloped villains the Referee can use when he's having trouble coming up with ideas for disposable villains. Note that the list tends to avoid common name elements like Dark, Death, Lord, Master and so forth, since those shouldn't be too hard for the Referee to come up with on his own.

Actionmaster: Sports-themed athletic villain.

ADAM-4: Android creation of Doc Droid's that struck out on its own.

Albatross: Annoying flying foe you just can't seem to get rid of. He just keeps coming back. Some think he's related to Ultra-Destructo-Man.

Amazing Fred: Kicked out of The Guys for being too much of a wuss. He has major energy powers, but

is gunshy.

Assault: Gun-toting armed robber.

Atlas: Strongman, sometimes works with Herr Stark as a flunky.

Battery: Stores and releases energy of all sorts. Partner to Assault. Don't use these two unless you have a fairly silly campaign.

Blaze: Fire-wielding villainess with a streak of white in her otherwise red hair.

Blunderbuss: Telekinetic with the ability to accelerate anything he touches away from himself at high speed.

Broadside: One of the Cobbler's customers, he carries two huge cannon in a massive support harness that braces him when he fires. Specializes in breaking down fixed barriers and then stealing what's on the other side.

Cat'n'Mouse: Teleporting assassin who delights in getting his target alone and then playing with the target before striking the killing blow. Uses a variety of weapons suited to his intended target.

Char: Arsonist for hire, his hands are hot enough to melt metal. Has to wear special gloves to touch things.

Crusher Jim: Big strong guy with an almost unbreakable grip, sometimes hangs out with The Guys.

Daedalus: Mad inventor type, generally tries to have an ancient Greek motif to his creations.

Damocles: Frequent partner of Daedalus, Damocles excels at the creation of deathtraps, and is no slouch in personal combat himself. Uses a special sword Deadalus build for him that hurls lightning.

Deadfall: Flier who likes to pick up his victims and drop them from a great height. Uses an acid gun against tougher foes and to weaken structures they might be standing on.

Doctor Despair: Mentalist able to inspire deep feelings of despair in his victims. Keeps a pistol hidden up his sleeve in case his victim is too strong-willed to be manipulated into suicide.

Dumbbell: Ultradense metal man. Very strong, but very slow, so his punches tend not to do too much damage. Instead, he sits on opponents, crushing them to death.

Eddy: Water controlling teenage girl on the run from her problems and the law.

Elder James: Sorceror with a small school of magician/thieves under him. Few of his students have attack powers, mainly concentrating on stealth/intrusion spells.

EMPeror: Magnetic powers. What Ultra-Destructo-Man would be with a serious power level.

End Run: Speedster. Avoids direct confrontation when possible, if working with a group he'll be the one to go after the objective while his teammates fight the heroes.

Equalizer: Mercenary Anchor, rated A4. He's decided he can make more money working with supervillains to damp out the heroes' powers than he can in a legitimate career. Wears High Guard armor he got in Khadam and carries one of their Particle Rifles.

Faultline: Able to generate minor earthquakes as well as shatter any rigid object he touches. Used to try blackmailing cities with his powers, but found he rarely got away with the money, so he's looking for a new angle.

Fedbuster: Shoots lasers from his eyes. Hires himself out to organizations looking to get government agencies off their backs, and has adopted a 1930s gangland motif. "The gangs are 'busting back!"

Fetter: Specializes in restraint systems, and often goes hunting heroes to test out his inventions.

Figment: Illusionist, rarely is anywhere near the site of his "appearances," thanks to his ability to project his illusions directly into the minds of anyone he's met. The illusions can do Sensory damage.

Forger: Shapeshifter who can simulate the powers of his victim by use of technology.

Fulcrum: Power enhancer, a sort of anti-anchor. Has no powers of his own, but can give anyone +4 to their rolls or -1 Difficulty, but only when using violation effects.

Garrison: Can split into 16 copies of himself, all Paranormal, all armed with whatever weapon he was carrying at the time (usually big).

Gearshift: Inventor who specializes in combat-modified vehicles. Will often join a fight just to test a new design.

Gen-R8: Punk kid with electrical powers. Not an active villain most of the time, but often gets into trouble by using his powers in crowded areas and causing a panic.

Giftwrap: Woman with the ability to cocoon her foes in a polymer shell. If she's feeling generous, she'll leave air holes.

"Goggles" Nelson: Uses heat-beam projecting goggles as hired muscle for various concerns. Also carries at least one other purchase from the Cobbler just in case.

Goldrush: Speedster who leaves a sparkling golden trail behind him.

Guzzler: Able to drink any amount of liquid and store it in a dimensional pocket for later ejection at high pressure.

Haphazard: Insane martial artist with electrical powers, usually hired to just do random damage or act as a distraction. Works poorly with a team since he tends to attack whoever he feels like.

Hellbore: Plasma projection powers and a slightly

demonic appearance.

Highleaper: Bounding bounder with an electrified rapier.

Hobnail: Man with superstrong legs that can kick through walls.

Hunter Green: Archer assassin, uses trick arrows if he knows he'll be facing superheroes.

Ice Cubist: See main rules for stats.

Idiotboy: Too stupid to die, too irritating to annoy. Another "distraction value" villain.

Illwind: Wind powers, very pessimistic.

Imagician: Magical illusion powers with a few more potent spells.

Intruder: Shadow-melding intrusion expert with Lifeforce draining powers.

Jackhammer: Woman who can turn into solid copper and gains superhuman strength and minor electrical powers.

Jarhead: Ex-marine who now organizes terrorist units. Paranormal level strength and endurance, uses lots of big guns.

Jet Jammer: Young man with the ability to generate combustive blasts for flight or attack.

Joe Normal: A horrific demon with the mind of a human placed in it.

Kali: Thinks she's the avatar of the goddess of death, but is not. Uses blades and poison to sacrifice victims to her patroness.

Kutter: Able to transform his body into steel blades at will.

Labrat: Genetically-enhanced rat with dreams of conquest. Leads a swarm of normal rats which attack as a single Abrasive attack.

Lastchance: Mercenary of last resort... he'll fix any problem. For a price.

Legman: Supernormal spy, he's an expert at gathering information for any customer with his fee. Considered a criminal because he's gotten information for Khadamite employers on occasion.

Loser: Nothing turns out right for this guy. He's got the superhuman power to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, but he's managed to make a living as a sort of stalking horse for villains. Somehow, he survives.

Lowroad: Sewer-crawler, he can get around the city faster underground than most people can on the streets. He's also added his own network of tunnels to the underground, and is an expert in smuggling goods and fugitives. Sometimes breaks into places from underneath, but is careful to collapse any tunnels that might lead back to his main network.

Lurker: He sticks to the shadows (and may have an agreement with Lowroad), gathering information to use in blackmail. If forced into a fight, he strikes with what seems like a whirlwind of blades.

Madhouse: Dozens of personalities, each with its own power set. The "Swiss Army Knife" of supervillains.

Majikmann: Wild magic talent with little control over his power and less over his wild behavior.

Mekkamax: Cyborg driven mad by the body-alienation he feels. A loose cannon, his "employer" usually doesn't power him up until he's in the area he's supposed to destroy.

Meson: Tiny woman stuck at the size of one inch tall. Can fly fast enough to act like a human bullet.

Metalon: Power armor villain with a hawk motif and flight. Uses steel talons on his feet to attack opponents.

MiG-25: Soviet emigre who built himself a suit of power armor mainly from the parts of a MiG-25 fighter jet. Clumsy on the ground, but fast and deadly in the air. Considered somewhat unbalanced.

Millstone: Stone hands and super strength allow this villain to grind away at his enemies.

Monstrosity: Your basic Big Ugly Monster guy.

Motormouth: Speedster who just won't shut up.

Mudslinger: Mentalist who specializes in spreading lies an innuendo about his victims, he's a character assassin. If he expects superhero trouble, he'll hire some muscle just in case, but usually he works alone.

Muzzle: Lots of guns, also known to use dogs to down his foes.

Namestealer: Telepath who can induce amnesia in his victims.

Nebbish: Wimpy-looking little guy, who can throw cars around.

Nine-Eyes: Other-dimensional anthropomorphic spider with mystic powers focused through his ninth eye (8 being normal for his race).

Nom-du-Guerre: Created in a supersoldier project, he broke loose of his handlers and still thinks the war is on. Carries various supertech weapons, but mainly a backpack-mounted laser.

Noyze: Sonic powers with various applications.

Nuance: Martial artist with enhanced speed (can run about 60mph). She's there and then she's gone... .

Obit: Superhuman hitman with minor time-control powers, he leaves a copy of the victim's obituary on the body. Often kills by disrupting a victim's place in time (Lifeforce).

Operative 13: Mysterious superspy gone freelance. He's a full shapeshifter, able to do anything from imitate a face to form weapons out of his limbs.

Outre: Surrealist villain who commits crimes no one can quite figure out the motives for. He claims he seeks to deconstruct the entire notion of good and evil. Seems to have a new set of powers every time he appears.

Ox: Big. Strong. Dumb. Ideal henchman.

Ozzie: Dresses and acts like a dad out of a 50s sitcom, all the while committing crimes with bizarre 50s B-Movie technology.

Pan: Avatar of the Greek deity, not really evil but a real troublemaker who will switch sides half a dozen times in a battle just to keep it going.

The Paranoid: Everyone IS out to get him. And when they get too close, he goes berserk and gains phenomenal strength and the ability to spit flames from his mouth.

Peatmoss: Shambling bog thing that engulfs its victims and slowly drawns them in muck.

Pepper: She uses various irritant gases against her foes, and is personally immune to most toxins.

Phreak: Can travel through phone and electrical wires, control electronic devices and zap anyone he touches.

Pickaxe: Hands turn into steel spikes.

Piñata: Soaks up damage like nobody's business and feels no pain. He's gotten very good at taunting foes so that they attack him and not his associates.

Pistolwhip: As good at using his guns in hand to hand as he is at firing them.

Playtime: Adult who looks like a small child and uses weapons concealed as innocent toys.

Plutocrat: Can create money out of thin air. Unfortunately, it vanishes moments later, but he's learned how to use it in several useful ways.

Potluck: Has a magic bag he can pull useful items out of, but has no control over exactly what he pulls out. Usually it's dangerous.

Powderkeg: She explodes. However, it takes her about a minute to reform afterwards, so she usually carries a gun to use until it's time to go boom.

Pratfall: Can make everyone around him completely inept and bumbling, then lures them into fatal accidents.

Purity: Can purify by touch... which in the case of people, turns them into pure carbon. Nasty power.

Quoit: Generates rings of solid light and uses them as weapons.

Ragged Edge: Able to drive foes to exhaustion with psionic powers (Awareness attack) while cutting them up with blades.

Rayburn: Light and heat powers, sometimes works with The Guys as Ray Byrne and acts like Yul's brother (but he isn't).

Redeye: Cyborg with enhanced strength and one cybernetic eye, which has various sensors and can fire a ruby laser beam.

Rev: Spinning speedster.

Rictus: Face frozen in a grin, this homicidal maniac uses various chemical weapons to kill his victims.

Riff: Has built various weapons into his electric guitar. Robs banks and the like mainly for kicks, since he makes plenty of money in his secret ID as a rock star.

Ris-K: Moving in the same circles as Gen-R8, she's got electrical and magnetic powers and enjoys trying to embarrass any "whitebread" superheroes she meets.

Rockethead: He wears a bulky suit of power armor with a head that launches as a weapon (the wearer's head is down in the chest of the suit). Usually uses brute strength, though, since the head is a one-shot weapon of last resort.

Roger KaBoom: Generates explosions wherever he points.

Rox: Pretty generic ice powers, he chose his name because of his musical interests. He often has a headset on while fighting, the loud music audible to everyone at Close Range.

Rubicon: Gadgeteer villain who uses high tech weapons and armor made to look like the equipment of a Roman Legionnaire. Favorite phrase is, "Never cross the Rubicon... ."

Rumble: Superfast gang member who can dart from place to place only in short bursts, making it look like there's several of him at once due to persistence of vision. He often fights an entire gang at once.

Sacriledge: Demon-worshipper who goes out of his way to taunt any religious heroes in combat. Has limited magical powers.

Saffron: Martial artist assassin with strange chi-based powers.

Sawblade: Magnetic powers allow him to control a whirling field of saws that he uses in combat.

Scumbag: A walking pile of toxic waste in the shape of a man. Lethal touch, smells bad, the works.

Sear: Not just heat powers, she dries out her targets, doing Chemical damage as they wither and crumble.

Serengetti: Can transform into various animals, preferring those from his namesake plains.

Shipwreck: Nautical villain who plants bombs on the hulls of ships and then salvages the wrecks from his submarine.

Shutdown: Can force people into unconsciousness with his touch. Sizzler: Heat powers, shimmers in a heat aura that makes him hard to see or hit.

Slammer: Strong and tough, another basic thug.

Solipsist: Power over reality as he sees it, which is represented by Magic Favors and lots of defenses.

Sorespot: Can induce pain in her victims directly.

SugarRush: Speedster who needs to consume vast amounts of sugar to maintain his powers.

Suzerain: Lots of minions, magical armor.

Swank: Uses mind control to live in the style to which he's accustomed, but is not above personal combat using his bioelectric talons.

Tapdance: Incorporates dance moves into his combat style and uses a cane that fires either hypervelocity needles or microwave beams.

Tarantula: Bigscaryspiderguy. No venom or webs, but big fangs.

Taser: Electrical powers. Low rent villain, usually sticks to mugging and robbery, but hopes to make the big time.

Teardrop: Emotion control powers, has a teardrop tattoo under one eye and usually carries a gun.

Tech-head: One of the Cobbler's rivals in the supervillain supply department, he's more likely to actually go out in the field to show off his creations for potential buyers.

Tetrad: Splits into four supernormals, each with an elemental power.

Thicket: She has plant-control powers and tends to favor fast-growing thorn bushes.

Timebomb: Explosives expert with minor time-shifting powers, allowing him to go back in time to set a charge right under where an opponent will be.

Tizzy: Able to confuse foes and send them into spasms which exhaust them (Awareness attack).

Touchstone: With a touch, she can determine all the weaknesses of a foe, then take advantage of them with her stiletto or shock baton. Game effect is that her first attack will be a punch, and after that she gets +4 on later attacks on that target.

TufGuy: Strong and tough, prefers not to fight female opponents since it wouldn't be "manly" enough. Considers The Guys to be a bunch of pansies.

Turbulence: Wind and water powers.

UberBong: A Tymythy Twystyd wannabe who gained the ability to transfer his own drug-induced high to others (Awareness).

Vanguard: Supposedly a hyperevolved human, he uses his superior powers to dominate anyone weaker than he is.

Vulpine Unit-E (aka Vinnie): A really annoying little fox robot with charged cattleprods in his ears and tail.

Waif: Thin, girlish woman who can draw the life and heat out of anyone she looks at.

Watermain: Gates in water from some unknown location and fires it at high pressure at his foes.

Waxman: Shapeshifter and mad scientist in the area of genetics. Far behind Pue in skill, he makes up for it in luck and persistence. His own powers come from self-experimentation.

Whiteout: Can literally erase people from existence.

Wick: Can absorb any energy directed at him and use it against his opponents.

Witherstick: An old man of surprising vitality, he has a magical staff which lets him drain the lifeforce of others into himself. Workload: Not superfast in movement, but able to perform many tasks at once, all of them lethal.

Wrex: Strong and tough, he has an intuitive understanding of the way the load is distributed on a structure, allowing him to hit it in just the right spot to send it all tumbling down.

Xerxes: Delusional, believes himself to be the ancient Persian king. Combines magic (supplied by the ancient gods he worships) and technology in his gambits.

Yesman: Always found as a henchman to another villain, he feeds the villain's ego and boosts his abilities.

Zarr the Mighty: A leftover dimensional invader from the 1970s, he uses remnants of his technomagical arsenal to try and make a dishonest living for himself. Accustomed to ruling, he refuses to take a legal job.

All of these people and things are around in the Knightsworld, but at any given time over half of them will be in prison or hiding out on Haven.

Superheroes

It's an odd phenomenon, that in comics you see hordes of villains held at bay by only a few superheroes. Despite outnumbering the good guys by twenty to one or more, the bad guys never manage to win. Part of this is dramatic device... the heroes are just purer and better and all that stuff. But most of it comes from a fairly simple logistical fact: When villains get beaten, they go to jail or into hiding. When heroes get beaten, they're back on the street the next day. The heroes are generally not likely to be put away for long stretches, so they can always be "on duty," while villains may spend 1 week active for every few months planning, hiding or cooling their heels in jail. Thus, in order for there to be enough villains to keep the heroes occupied, there has to be a massive imbalance in power.

"But why don't the bad guys all get together and smash the heroes?" Well, for about the same reasons the thousands of criminals on the street in any given real city don't get together to eliminate the few hundred police. Bad organizational skills, everyone wants to be leader, they hate each other more than they hate the cops, not wanting to risk the really nasty punishment that comes down if they're caught after failing, etc. Even Haven barely holds together as just a place to hang out... they've never managed to pull together for anything other than self-defense.

Therefore, there's not nearly as many heroes as villains, and this section will reflect that. If you need more heroes on the fly (especially if you're running a villain PC game), many of the "Frightful 150" in the previous section can be turned into good guys easily enough.

The Referee Character

The Referee runs all the non-player characters, of course, but it's helpful for there to be one NPC out there who can be the Referee's representative. The RC can drop in at the last second and help bail out the players if the Referee made the opposition too hard by mistake, although this shouldn't happen too often. The RC can also be a source of information the players need to move the plot along but wouldn't be able to discover themselves. Especially if the PLAYER figures out something, but the CHARACTER shouldn't have been able to figure this out. The player can have the RC be the source for this information.

Of course, the RC isn't omniscient (or if he is, he doesn't tell all he knows). The RC should also feed players misinformation if it will help the plot, or if they get too dependent on the RC for help. The RC can also come in and kick the PCs' behinds if they start to go down the path of the supervillain too much, so it helps to have a reasonably powerful RC. Superman (TM) of DC Comics is a good example of the type of character you could use as an RC... powerful, experienced, PCs have reason to look up to him, all that.

For the Knightsworld, the default RC is Solar Max, who was the author's RC in playtest (and is the Knightsworld version of the author himself!). Solar Max should still be around even if the Referee makes up a different RC, but will probably be off on one of his interstellar exploration trips.

Solar Max is an expert on Violation Physics should the players need one, and is also well-versed in races from other planets and other dimensions. He's also fought most of the really powerful supervillains in the Knightsworld at some point, so he could give the players advice on dealing with them, even if he's not in a position to help directly. Note that he's slightly more powerful than Challenger, his Backworld counterpart. This is because he's been out living life for the past decade, while Challenger has spent much of his time in jail or riding herd over the politics of Haven.

Solar Max (Dr. David Van Domelen)

Concept: In 1988, while working on his Doctorate in Violation Physics, the man who would become Solar Max was working on a device which would allow him to move faster than light in short bursts... a teleporter that folded space. But in the next lab over, another researcher was dabbling in alchemical formulae uncovered in the notes of Iago Montessi... and there was an accident. All of the Normals in the building died immediately, and the Paranormals went into comas as their bodies tried to cope with the influx of magical energy. Van Domelen was the second to awaken, and found he had the ability to tap the Sun via spacefolds for tremendous power, power which he could either project as a weapon or internalize to strengthen himself. After helping the fledgling ASH defeat the final incarnation of Teratron, he realized the limitations of his powers and built a number of devices to compensate for them, becoming the superhero Solar Max (named after the satellite he had helped extend the service life of by pushing it into a higher orbit).

Since then, he's learned many more applications for his powers, including the ability to travel at speeds unmatched by the most advanced alien FTL drives, and has spent months at a time exploring the universe. He's since replaced his old Space Armor design with an alien suit of space armor that wouldn't depend on Violation Physics to keep him protected.

When he's not out among the stars or fighting supervillains, he's NASA's one-man space program, carrying small satellites into orbit and fixing those already there.

Traits: Brawn, Empowered +1, Invulnerable +1, Tech
Scale: Supernormal
Hook: Good Citizen
Primary Effects: Light, Heat, Blunt
Secondary Group: Physical
Body Type: Tough Organic
Wounds: (11/9/3/2) Level 1 = Bone
Attack Abilities:

Attack: Physical - Forcefield staves, swords and other shapes. The Level 3 attack is a wave of crushing gravity.

Attack: Electromagnetic +1 - Usually just a blast of light channeled from the Sun, but he can fine tune it for minor Electrical or Magnetic effects as well.

Attack: Heat - Plasma ball pulled from the Sun's core. Even one the size of a pinhead can melt metals.

Grab: Blunt - Either using his enhanced strength, or a forcefield cage.

Snare: Blunt - Can set up a freestanding gravity cage around his target.

Attack Ability Modifiers:

Group Attack: Applied to the Physical and EM attacks.

Unstoppable: Can pull enough power from the Sun to bypass any defense, but this triggers the Pain Disadvantage for a Level 2 Wound.

Explosion: Usually applied only to the Heat attack.

Defense Abilities:

Parry: Physical, Electromagnetic, Reactive - All three are Linked, allowing him to erect a powerful forcefield for defense.

Armor: Physical, Electromagnetic, Reactive - Space armor acquired from an alien race near the core of the galaxy, he's repainted it to match his old costume colors. He's learned to
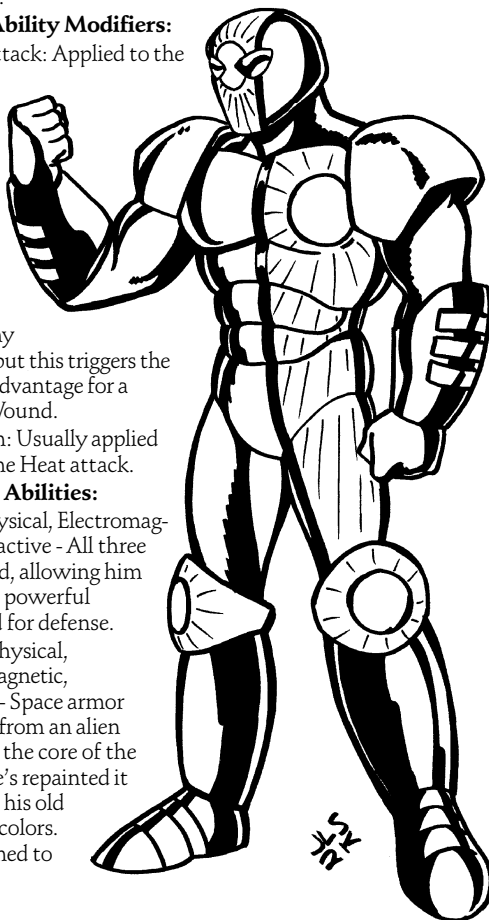
store it in a spacewarp pocket "next to" himself in time, so even when he's not apparently wearing it, it's only a thought away.

Dodge: He's agile.

Defense Ability Modifiers:

Linked: On Parries.

Defend: On Parries, he can erect force walls large enough to protect his whole team, but he's not that good at it.

Tactical Abilities:

Advanced Senses: Various tactical displays in his armor, not all of which he has deciphered. Also, a built-in AI transferred from his old suit keeps track of his position in the universe and helps him avoid getting lost. On his own, he's started to learn how to sense ripples in spacetime in a manner similar to Devastator's "force sight," but limited to gravity.

Range with Carry: Flight via either his suit systems or drawing on his personal power (which is much faster). Also capable of short teleportation jumps.

Device Points: 2 - His suit is configurable to allow a number of stunts, especially since he can power all of his devices personally.

Noncombat Abilities:

Government Connections: As a highly-visible government-supported superhero, Solar Max has a lot more clout than he usually uses. He can use this to help or hinder the players as he sees fit.

Sciences: He's an expert in Violation Physics, and has also been exposed to many alien sciences that are more advanced than those on Earth.

Space Armor: The alien armor, modified to fit him and shorn of its various weapons systems, provides Solar Max with protection from vacuum and attacks without needing to draw on his own power. It also has thruster which let Solar Max fly at low speeds in the atmosphere without drawing on his personal power.

Spacewarping: He can teleport, fly incredibly fast, even enter a sort of hyperspace for interstellar travel.

Disadvantages:

Scale Change: Solar Max cannot remain at full power for more than an hour at a time without suffering great pain. When he powers down, he drops to Paranormal Scale and loses all powers other than his Safesuit and Device Points.

Pain: Whenever he uses his Unstoppable attacks, he suffers a Level 2 Wound. Every minute he's powered up beyond his hour-long limit (which may be even less if he's been very active) he suffers a Level 1 Wound.

Description: When in armor, which is very bulky and not totally humanoid in appearance, he stands over seven feet tall and weighs over 500 pounds. Mostly red, the armor has a yellow stripe down the left side of the torso with an orange and black sunburst on it. This sunburst pattern is repeated on the kneepads and faceplate of the suit.

Out of the armor, Dr. Van Domelen is a thirty-something man in fairly good shape (unlike the author) with short brown hair and blue eyes behind glasses (the armor has corrective optics built in). If he's on "vacation" he may have a short beard, but usually keeps his face cleanshaven to avoid irritation while in the armor. At 5'10", he's a relatively lean 170 pounds (space suit rations tend to have a slimming effect).

THE "ICONICS"

Light and darkness, the demigod and the man who has become all a man can be. Two heroes in the Knightsworld fill the positions of modern icons: Avatar and the Shade. Avatar is the bright, shining hero who can move mountains to save the world, while the Shade is a darker warrior, specializing in the alleys and back streets of the night. Both represent something for the players to aspire to, depending on their inclinations. You'll note that they're not overwhelmingly powerful, and have only two traits raised by +1 each. For a campaign with beginning characters, this is suf-   ficient to place these two above the players. As   the campaign progresses, you'll want to raise the power level of these two slightly, since they're also active and gaining experience. But eventually, it should be possible for the player characters to meet Avatar and the Shade as near-equals.

Avatar

Real Name: Avatar (currently using a false name of the GM's choice)

Concept: Professor Charles Russert was on the verge of unifying the quantum and relativistic aspects of gravity, a discovery he knew could revolutionize the way we think of the world. However, he was already past the verge of losing funding for such an "impractical" avenue of research, and was eking out a living teaching at a junior college. That is, until he created a quantum gravity well almost by accident... and found that it could alter reality to fit his whim. Dubbing it the Wishing Well, he set out to demonstrate that he was right all along. By conquering the world.

Professor Russert was actually a careful planner, he fell for none of the usual "mad scientist" pitfalls... he took all foes seriously, he was doubly careful to protect himself, he prepared for every eventuality. In five days he was undisputed master of the planet. The world's heroes and villains alike had been neutralized, but not killed... you can't convince a corpse of your superiority, after all. Still, he had won. He'd made no mistakes that would let anyone alive unseat him.

But he'd made one mistake that did end in his defeat. His control apparatus for the Wishing Well wasn't 100% perfect. Other thoughts could intrude on it. No single mind was strong enough to wrest control of the Wishing Well away, but when the entire planet started wishing for a hero who could save them... .

Avatar appeared, smashed the Wishing Well, defeated Professor Russert, and then miraculously didn't vanish with the rest of the Wishing Well's creations. Perhaps humanity's collective unconscious kept him alive. Perhaps he internalized the Wishing Well. No one really knows. But since then, this man has been the bright and shining protector of Earth. Strong, fast, intelligent, invulnerable, able to fly and always knowing the right thing to do, he is Avatar.

Once in a while, Avatar tries to assume a normal human identity, feeling that if he lived as a real person he might better understand how to help humanity. But he doesn't get tired of his role, and if he's fated to always be the hero, well, he was made for the role.

Traits: Brawn +1, Fast, Invulnerable +1, Mind
Scale: Supernormal
Hook: Good Citizen
Primary Effect: Blunt
Secondary Group: Mental (non-damaging)
Body Type: Semi-Organic
Wounds: (9/10/7/3) Level 1 = Bone

Attack Abilities:

Mighty Strength (Attack Blunt) +3: Avatar can lift anything short of a jet plane over his head, and an energy field he emits keeps the objects from falling apart under their own weight. He can punch through a bank vault door.

Inexorable Might (Modifier to Attack Blunt): Attack Blunt is Unstoppable when he uses this ability. Given time, there is almost nothing he cannot break through or push aside.

Grab (Blunt) +1: When a foe is too fragile to punch, Avatar often simply grabs him in his sinewy arms and restrains him until he can be delivered to the authorities.

Rightness of Cause (Snare Spiritual, Explosion, Limited Use): An extension of Avatar's ability to know the right thing to do, he can also convince those around him of this, as part of his nature as a truly iconic hero. He can only use it to convince those in range that his actions are truly correct, which doesn't necessarily stop them from fighting him. It has been known to have unpredictable effects on the insane and the guilt-stricken, so he prefers not to use this ability often. The "Limited Use" Disadvantage gives a -1 Difficulty.

Defense Abilities:

Armor +1 (all Effect Groups): Avatar is simply very difficult to hurt by any means, physical, energy or mental.

Defend (modifier to Armor): Avatar can interpose himself between an attacker and the target.

Tactical Abilities:

Advanced Senses: All of his "normal" senses are very accurate and sensitive. He can read a newspaper from across the room, hear a whisper in a crowd, taste a grain of salt in a jug of water. He also has the ability to know the morally right thing to do in any situation, although often there is no single morally right course of action.

Rally: Avatar inspires hope in all around him just by his presence, so when he puts his mind to it, he can really get the good guys going. Range (with Carry): Avatar can fly near the speed of sound, and easily carry several tons while doing this.

Noncombat Abilities:

Flight: See Range above.

Moral Sense: When people wished for someone to save them, they had many different ideas of what this would mean, but almost all wished for someone who would always do the right thing. Avatar can instinctively know what the right thing is, although he has learned that sometimes there's no "right thing" or many equally valid

choices. This acts as almost a sort of precognition, if he trusts his intuition his actions might seem wrong in the short term, but always turn out for the best. At times (and the GM may decide this is one of those times) he has doubts about this ability, as he learns more about the complexity of the world around him. This often happens after he has done something that seems wrong, and the good hasn't yet come of it.

Immortal: Avatar has been around for several years with not even a hint of aging. He needs not eat, although he feels hunger when he goes without eating. He has found that he can survive without air, but it's not very comfortable. The few times a force great enough to overcome his invulnerability has brought him to the brink of death, he has always recovered. He may be killable, but nothing's done the job so far.

Charisma: As mentioned in his Attack Abilities, he inspires people. Even when disguised as a normal person, he can't hide his natural charm. He's a really nice guy. Even people who mock him behind his back are left impressed by a personal meeting.

Disadvantages:

No real ID: Avatar sprang into being thanks to the Wishing Well. He has no real birth records or other name. Shade has helped him establish false identities in the past, but they rarely last for long.

Odd Life Experience: He never had a childhood or much of a real life. While he does the right things, he often does them in a somewhat odd and off-kilter fashion, because there's parts of life he doesn't yet understand very well. He's learned all the facts about life (he's a quick study), but the emotional connections often aren't there yet.

Description:

Tall, muscular, dark-haired and bright-eyed, he looks like a god among men. His costume is in bright primary colors with large A's on his cape clasps, and his cape flutters gently in the slightest breeze.

The Shade

Real Name: Randy O'Brien (listed as a Missing Person)
Concept: Detective Randy O'Brien was a pretty good cop. He wasn't perfect, he looked the other way at corruption a few too many times, kept his silence at times when he should have blown the whistle, but he was basically a good man and a successful cop, albeit less successful in his off time, since he was still a bachelor.

Things went bad when one of his usual stoolies decided to go all the way and spill his guts big time about a local druglord, but he demanded police protection. He got it, and O'Brien personally guaranteed the man's safety. Unfortunately, another detective was on the druglord's payroll, and the stoolie ended up dead in less than a day after going into protection. When O'Brien came to check the murder scene, the stoolie's wife tried to kill him, using a gun slipped to her by the corrupt detective (in hopes of eliminating O'Brien, who might get too close to the bad cop's secret). O'Brien was faster on the draw, and he lived. She didn't.

The inquest was a joke. Someone didn't want any facts coming out about any of the events around the shooting, so had the whole thing buried. O'Brien went into the mandatory counseling and off-duty time for an officer who has shot someone, and had time to think.

He came to two decisions. One, he would never kill again, or put himself in a position where he might kill. Two, the department was too corrupt to enforce the law anymore, so he'd have to go outside it if he wanted any redemption. That night, Randy O'Brien vanished, and so did over a

million dollars in drug money from the evidence room (the case involving the money had been dropped with the death of the stoolie, so O'Brien felt no real guilt in removing another piece of evidence).

Six months later, the Shade started to prey on the criminal element. He bribed corrupt cops to find out the locations of good targets, then turned over evidence of the bribes to a local television station. Within a year, half of the police force had been brought up on charges ranging from accessory after the fact (all the cops like O'Brien who looked the other way) to murder, and a number of major crime figures had mysteriously turned themselves in.

But O'Brien himself was now wanted on many charges, so he could never walk the streets again. Instead, the Shade prowls the rooftops and backalleys, using the tools of fear to deal with a criminal element unafraid of mere death.

Traits: Brawn, Empowered, Mind +1, Tech +1

Scale: Paranormal

Hook: Guilt (he was a part of the problem, now he's going to be a part of the solution)

Primary Effects: Emotional, Psychological

Secondary Group: Devices

Body Type: Organic

Wounds: (6/2/3/2) Level 1 = Flesh

Attack Abilities:

Martial Arts (Attack Blunt) +1: Shade is skilled at unarmed combat, and can inflict a Flesh Wound with his bare hands, or a Bone Wound with a weapon (Device Group, see Weapons below). His preferred hand weapon is the tonfa, which he was trained in as a cop, but he has been known to use other weapons.

Martial Arts Holds (Grab Blunt) +2: Shade concentrates more on nonlethal holds and throws, although he's not strong enough to keep a supernormal in his grip for long.

Weapons (Attack Devices) +1: Shade has a plethora of weapons he hides on his person, such as shock batons, chemical sprays, flares, lasers and so on. He will favor non-lethal attacks, but usually keeps a blade on hand for use more as a tool than a weapon.

Restraining Weapons (Snare Devices) +2: Because of his oath not to kill, Shade has gotten very good at restraining a foe in inventive ways. Most of his Snares are Blunt (nets, bolas and the like), but he also carries odder restraints when he thinks they'll be useful, such as gluebombs or freezers.

Fear Gas (Snare Emotional) +2: One of the places Shade put the drug money to good use was in developing a chemical that induces fear without triggering permanent side-effects or heart attacks. However, just in case there's a side-effect he hadn't yet discovered, he refuses to put the gas in any wide-dispersal mode like a bomb, to avoid catching innocents. Instead, he uses small pellets fired from the back of his glove or gas emitted from the palms of his gloves when he holds someone. He has an antidote and takes it before using this gas.

Mind Games (Grab Psychological) +1: When outright fear isn't enough, Shade can enter a one-on-one conflict with his target and manipulate him. He often uses the fear gas first, then plays upon the fears which rise to the surface. This is how he gets criminals to turn themselves in or at least show him where damning evidence is. Shade has also used this skill to get information out of people without them realizing he's questioning them.

Defense Abilities:

Armor (Sharp): Shade's costume is bulletproof and blade-resistant.

Dodge +2: In the years he's been active, Shade has run into many Supernormal threats, and has learned to get out of the way of attacks which his costume won't help against.

Hide +1: Shade is an expert at skulking around in the darkness. If there are enough shadows, he can even attack unseen.

Tactical Abilities:

Device Points (3): While not a walking armory, Shade has an assortment of gadgets available to him aside from his usual weapons. He frequently (but not always) uses one of these points to get a Confuse ability via smokebombs.

Noncombat Abilities:

Detective: Shade has several years of experience as a police detective, followed by several years as a vigilante. His eye misses little.

Psychology of Fear: When he realized that a vigilante who won't kill is going to be ignored, Shade decided to learn to make the criminals fear him more than they feared death. He's always learning new things about the nature of fear, both how to cause it and how to fight it.

Street Skills: Shade can do all the various things necessary to live life at the edges of the law. He knows the right people to get things done (and even lets some of them stay in business for a while if they're useful enough), he can get forged identities, etc. If it'd be useful for a street-level vigilante, Shade at least has a familiarity with it.

Money: Technically, Shade is a thief, stealing from druglords to finance himself. He'll overlook the technicality for now.

Disadvantages:

Fugitive: Randy O'Brien is a wanted criminal, and Shade is on the hit list of a dozen or more crime figures. He can't show his face in daylight without getting shot at, and he's **not** a master of disguise. At best he can wear fake facial hair, bleach his hair and a few other simple tricks, so he's always looking over his shoulder when he has to go out in public.

Will Not Kill: Shade will let himself be killed if the only alternative is to kill someone else. The face of the woman he killed still haunts his nightmares. He is, however, cynical enough to want to be sure that someone has died before he goes off the handle… criminals faking being killed by him tend to get an extra boot to the head for their trouble.

Description:

Shade's costume is a black bodysuit and a gray cloak, designed to give him a supernatural appearance while causing a minimum of encumbrance. Out of costume, he's got short bleached blond hair and is cleanshaven, which makes it easier for him to add on disguises. His natural hair color is flaming red, and his eyes are blue, but almost always covered by colored contact lenses.
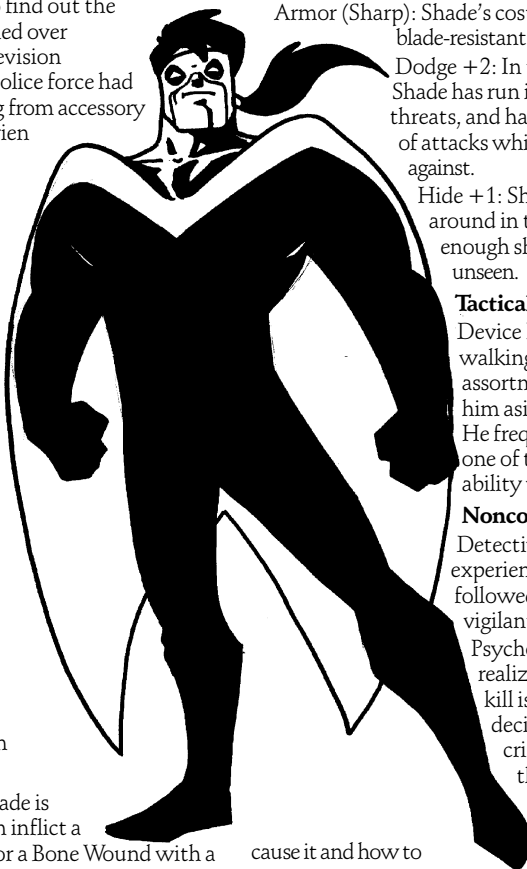
THE ACADEMY OF SUPER-HEROES

The Academy of Super-Heroes, or ASH, is one of the longest-running teams in the Knightsworld, having been founded in 1988. It has a constantly revolving membership, however, for as the name states, it is an academy. Organized by the DSHA and run in the field by an experienced superhero, ASH takes in all sorts of novice heroes and helps them to learn how to work as a team. Even some experienced loner-type heroes join so they can learn team tactics and get help against an enemy too tough to face alone. The team is currently stationed on an artificial island in Lake Michigan off the shores of Milwaukee, but moves frequently as they wear out their welcome with excess property damage. In other words, if you want the Midwest to be relatively hero-free, boot ASH to a coast. If the Referee wishes, the players can be part of the new batch of ASH members, with the Referee Character being the leader. Rook (see below) would work well in this role.

Otherwise, ASH will simply be something out there as background. The players could be former ASH members who have "graduated" to form their own team. Or some could be ex-ASH and others not, leading to conflicts over how to work together. ("Rook used to say… " "Yeah, well Rook ain't here, and I never heard him say anything anyway!")

ASH will probably be the biggest and most powerful superhero team in the Knightsworld at any given time, but they're also one of the least experienced, and players may end up having to rescue them at some point. A number of possible members will be presented as SNPCs, but can be fleshed out as PCs by the Referee if a player is having trouble coming up with a conceopt (notes on conversion will be given).

Rook (aka Roland Anderssen)

Concept: Roland's power is to turn his skin as tough and coarse as stone, even to the point of his skin looking like grey stone. Not interested in the hero game or the villain thing, he decided that he could make his fortune as a mercenary in the never-ending succession of microwars in third world countries. A bulletproof merc would never be short on work. But after a decade
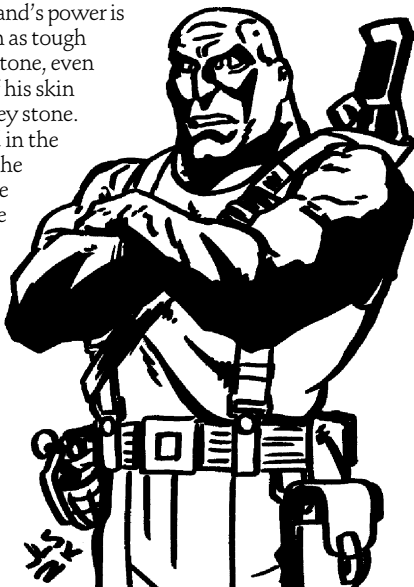
of this, things were looking bad. He could no longer turn back to normal. All his hair fell out as his skin got too tough for the follicles to survive. His sense of touch started to deaden. Years of always watching his back had induced a form of traumatic stress disorder unique to people with high Tesla Indices: he couldn't make himself shut down his power. Subconsciously he was too afraid of a sneak attack to ever relax.

Roland, who by then had gotten the nickname "Rook" after his resemblance to the chess piece (big stone thing moving in straight lines with no finesse), decided to retire and maybe unwind. He joined ASH in 1993 in the hopes that other supernormals like him might have figured out how to lick the power problem, but ended up staying to lead "the kids."

Still a bit jumpy, still stuck as stone, Roland has made his best effort to train his charges to be safe without being paranoid. He's always walking the thin line between risking losing a student who got too cocky... and seeing a student turn into another Rook.

Traits: Brawn, Invulnerable +1, Tech
Scale: Supernormal
Hook: Guilt
Primary Effect: Blunt
Secondary Group: Devices
Body Type: Semi-organic (stone skin, flesh and bones inside)
Wounds: (9/8/5/2) Level 1 = Bone
Attack Abilities:
Attack: Blunt - He's not too much stronger than is possible for a normal human (bench presses about 600 lbs), but having stone skin lets him hit harder.
Attack: Devices +1 - He's always had a talent for cobbling together weapons and so forth out of what was at hand, and now that he has supertech lying around he puts it to good use. He usually has Sharp and Chemical (acid) attacks on his person, but could conceivably have anything that can be made from current tech.
Grab: Blunt - General commando training holds.
Attack Ability Modifiers:
(**Note:** these all apply to Attack: Devices. Not all will be used at once, but this allows him to build a number of possible devices by mixing and matching Modifiers.)
Barrage: Usually used for an automatic rifle.
Burst: Also usually on rifles.
Explosion: Gas bombs or incendiary grenades.
Extra Range: Sniper scope or laser sight on a weapon.
Group Attack: Devices.
Defense Abilities:
Armor: Physical +1, Reactive - Stone skin.
Hide +1: Skilled at camoflage and ambush in both urban and wild settings.
Defense Ability Modifiers:
Defend: On Armor. He's gotten used to diving in front of bullets meant for a buddy.
Tactical Abilities:
Device Points: 2 - He's usually got a satchel of spare parts with him.
Rally +1: A natural leader, he's good at motivating scared rookies.
Noncombat Abilities:
Disguise: Not a master of disguise, but he can make himself look mostly human with makeup and a few gadgets.
"Hollow Leg": Between his superhuman metabolism and lots of practice, few people can outdrink Rook. While sometimes he's irked that it's almost impossible for him to

get really drunk, he's got the drunk-soldier act down to a tee, and often uses it to get people to dismiss him as harmless.

Mercenary Background: He's got lots of contacts still in the field, as well as various survival skills picked up from fighting in different hellholes around the world.

Disadvantages:

Mercenary Background: He's got a lot of old enemies, some of whom have powers too… .

Stone Skin: It won't shut off, which leads to some obvious problems. However, once he does relax enough to shut it off, this will act as a Scale Change down to Paranormal scale and loss of some of his powers in normal mode.

Description: Bald man with stony skin. Usually dresses in some sort of military-appearing clothing, if only because it's more durable and takes longer to wear out on his skin. A chess rook symbol is painted on his forehead when he's in action.

Other Members

Crasher

Hook: Good Citizen
Effects: Blunt
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (6/5/2/1)
Attacks: Ram (Super, Blunt, Strong, Narrow)
Punch (Super, Blunt, Medium, Medium)
Grabs: Grab (Super, Blunt, Strong, Medium)
Defenses: Physical
Notes: Flies around and rams into targets. Tremendously strong, but while not clumsy he has horrible luck and is always coming across like a bull in a china shop. Traits Brawn, Invulnerable, Fast. Tough Organic Body Type. No Speed Points yet. May not even have all of his starting slots spent yet. Wears a green costume with gold accents and a crash helmet.

Crystal

Hook: Victim of Circumstance
Effects: Cold, Lifeforce, Sharp
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (6/5/4/2)
Attacks: Heat Drain (Super, Lifeforce, Medium, Narrow)
Cold Wave (Super, Cold, Strong, Broad)
Ice Shards (Super, Sharp, Normal, Narrow)
Snares: Chill (Super, Lifeforce, Weak, Narrow)
Defenses: Heat
Notes: MInor cold-using heroine who was bitten by a vampire. Her abnormal genetic structure affected the way this curse took hold, and now she has to absorb heat to live. Sensitive to sunlight, but otherwise not subject to vampiric weaknesses. As a PC, she's Empowered, Fast, Invulnerable and Mind. Body Type is Semi-organic. Wears a white bodysuit with red accents. Her eyes flare red and give her face a sinister cast.

Emerald

Hook: Good Citizen
Effects: Electromagnetic, Blunt
Scale: Supernormal
**Wounds:** (10/7/2/1)
Attacks: EM Fields (Super, Electric/Magnetic/Light, Strong, Narrow)
Magnetic Pulse (Super, Magnetic, Strong, Broad) -
Burst Punch (Super, Blunt, Weak, Medium)
Snares: Cable Shooter (Super, Blunt, Medium, Narrow)
Defenses: Electromagnetic
Notes: Originally was a guinea pig for one of Doublecross's experimental armor suits, when he ceased to be useful he tossed her aside. She was able to rebuild the EM-field generators herself and acquired a new set of powerarmor from a dimension-traveling hero. Because she's been around for a while, she's more powerful than a starting character, but she stays with ASH for sentimental reasons. Traits are Brawn, Empowered +1 (All EM are Primary effects, Physical are Secondary), Invulnerable and Tech +1. Outside the armor she loses Empowered and Invulnerable and drops to Paranormal Scale. Her chrome-green armor has various sensors and flight units. She's a Tough Organic.
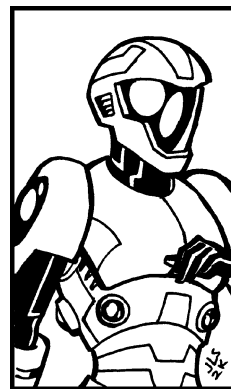
Osprey

Hook: Adrenaline Junkie
Effects: Electrical, Blunt
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (7/4/1/1)
Attacks: Taser (Super, Electrical, Medium, Narrow)
Punch (Super, Blunt, Medium, Medium)
Snares: Cables (Super, Blunt, Medium, Narrow)
Defenses: Sharp, Electrical
Notes: Rich heiress who designed this armor so she could be a hero for the thrill of it. Needs to learn this isn't a game. As a PC, she's Empowered, Invulnerable, Fast and Tech with Effects Blunt and Electrical (Secondary Devices) and is a Tough Organic. The armor flies and fires cables that can zap foes or entangle them. Mainly grey with red accents, the armor has a distinct anime "hardsuit" look.

Psiberpunk

Hook: Unmotivated
Effects: Sharp, Sensory, Awareness
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (7/6/4/1)
Attacks: Wrist-Slashers (Super, Sharp, Medium, Narrow)
Pain Inducer (Super, Sensory, Strong, Medium)
Snares: Stunner Field (Super, Awareness, Medium, Broad)
Defenses: Sensory, Psychological

Notes: Arrived in the modern day as part of a time-traveling gang of cyborg bandits, but was left behind when he refused to kill a fallen foe. He was left in the custody of ASH, but hasn't really decided what to do with himself. As a PC he's Brawn, Fast, Invulnerable and Tech, and his cybernetics give him a Semi-organic Body Type. He has no Device Points but a few Speed Points. Sensory is his Primary Effect, Devices his Secondary (all his psibers are Devices). He dresses in whatever clothes he has on hand, seeing no point in protecting an identity that doesn't exist. His psibers are visible on his head and arms.

Weapons Master
Hook: Vengeance (on Devastator… tall order)
Effects: Blunt, Sharp
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (5/3/2/1)
Attacks: Martial Arts (Super, Blunt, Medium, Medium)
Various Blades (Super, Sharp, Medium, Narrow)
Grabs: Martial Arts Holds (Super, Blunt, Medium, Medium)
Defenses: None (aside from a good Dodge and some Speed Points)

Notes: His brother was turned into a howling abomination by Dr. Pue's experimentation, and he was forced to kill his brother to save his brother's soul. He now has two spirits in one body, having the ghost of his brother bound to him, and both spirits cry for revenge. They joined ASH to gain allies in this hopeless quest. As a PC, he has Brawn, Fast, Mind and Tech, with device points to simulate the more bizarre oriental weapons he sometimes uses. Tough Organic Body Type. Wears a brown bodysuit with a red plume on the hood, plus various weapons.

OTHER TEAMS

Here's some other teams the players might run into or replace. Feel free to boot them into another city if it helps the campaign.

St. Louis Cavaliers

The "Cavs" are a group that all decided to leave ASH together and form their own team in another city. They're a fairly low power group, but St. Louis isn't the stomping grounds for any major villains, so they're still in business. The leader is Farrenheit (misspelling intentional), but sometimes Rook stops by to help out and they defer to him out of old habits.

Farrenheit
Hook: Guilt (accidentally killed someone the first time out)
Effects: Heat
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (4/4/3/2)
Attacks: Heat Blast (Super, Heat, Medium, Broad)
Flaming Punch (Super, Heat, Medium, Narrow)
Defenses: Heat, Cold
Notes: Wears a special red, yellow and orange containment suit to keep himself from accidentally flaring up and hurting people. He's learned enough self-control to no longer need the suit, but he still wears it because he's afraid he doesn't have enough self-control. No other special powers.

Freeflight ("The Gateway Archer")
Hook: Adrenaline Junkie
Effects: Various Magic
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (5/3/3/1)
Attacks: Illwind (Super, Abrasive, Medium, Broad) - all foes
Steelrain (Super, Sharp, Medium, Broad) - all foes
Firedance (Super, Heat, Medium, Narrow)
Soulneedle (Super, Lifeforce, Weak, Narrow)
Earsplitter (Super, Sensory, Strong, Broad)
Iceshard (Super, Cold, Medium, Medium)
Skythunder (Super, Electrical, Medium, Medium)
Venomtongue (Super, Chemical, Weak, Narrow)
Defenses: None (but can Dodge)
Notes: Freeflight is attuned to eight magical, self-aware arrows which he fires without the need for a bow. However, each arrow has a personality, and doesn't always want to be fired, or may want to fire at a different target. If the Referee wants, a d10 roll of 1 before an attack means something goes wrong. Wears a blue bodysuit with a gold F and reversed F back to back on the chest.
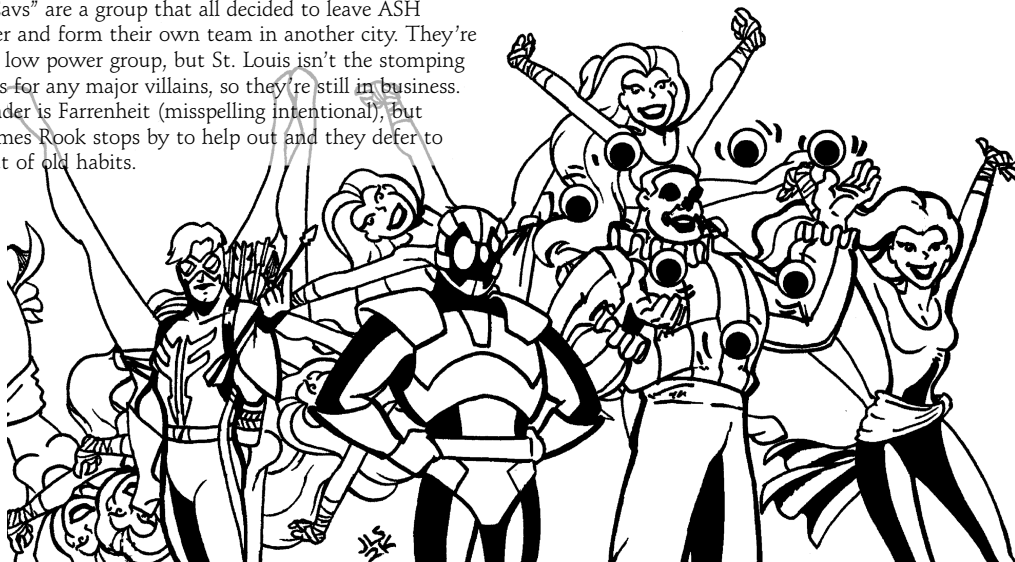
Juggler
Hook: Misplaced Aggression (but well-hidden)
Effects: Blunt
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (7/6/4/2)

Attacks: Punch (Super, Blunt, Medium, Medium)
Thrown Ball (Super, Blunt, Medium, Narrow)
Grabs: Iron Grip (Super, Blunt, Strong, Broad)
Defenses: Physical, Electromagnetic
Notes: His body has turned into living steel, something which he is more than a little bitter about. However, he hides his feelings behind a facade of cheerfulness, dressing the part of a carnival juggler in a rainbow-colored tunic and baggy blue pants. He juggles multicolored shot puts, and can hurl them hard enough to dent tank armor. He usually keeps 8 balls in the air during combat, even if punching a foe, and only resorts to grabbing opponents if he's used up all his ammo.

Opal
Hook: Hidden Agenda (Stay near Farrenheit, hidden behind Good Citizen)
Effects: Light, Blunt
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (5/3/2/1)
Attacks: Energy Cascade (Super, Light, Medium, Narrow)
Kicks (Super, Blunt, Weak, Medium)
Defenses: None, but -2 to be hit due to constant gymnastics moves
Notes: Emits an almost liquid stream of glittering light which explodes against anything it splashes onto. Double-jointed, Opal is always moving in combat, sometimes in ways that look impossible for someone not a shapeshifter. Usually keeps her hair dyed blue-green and wears a shimmering blue-green leotard with a red sash.

The Capitol Patrol

This is the group that helped end the Kuwait invasion, composed of various superhumans who found they could not actively serve in the US Military due to various treaties banning supernormals from combat zones. Reservists now, they patrol Washington D.C. and occasionally go on unofficial missions for the military. Membership tends to fluctuate as members die or decide to go totally civilian and join other groups, but two members are constant: The Colonel and Strafe IV.

The Colonel
Hook: Good Soldier
Effects: Blunt, Electrical
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (7/7/5/3)
Attacks: Right Cross (Super, Blunt, Strong, Medium)
Lightning Bolt (Super, Electrical, Strong, Narrow)
Defenses: Sharp, Electrical, Magnetic
Notes: The only successful product of Project: Electric Warrior, the Colonel (real name classified, cover ID Carroll Smith) has extensive cybernetic reworking of his body and can hurl electrical blasts with pinpoint accuracy over 50 meters. He rides a one-man "flying motorcycle" and wears a khaki costume reminiscent of combat fatigues, plus an upper-face halfmask.

Strafe IV
Hook: Good Soldier
Effects: Electrical, Heat
Scale: Supernormal
Wounds: (5/5/4/2)
Attacks: Flaming Touch (Super, Heat, Strong, Medium)
Lightning Bolt (Super, Electrical, Medium, Narrow)
**Defenses:** Heat, Cold, Sharp

Notes: When Strafe, the world's unluckiest hero, died his third time, he finally failed to cheat death. From armored hero to paraplegic in a robotic harness to cyborg, Strafe had a painful career (although not as painful as that of the CSV version's!). The Air Force decided to take data from Strafe's original armor and from the Army's Project: Electric Warrior and created a new powersuit for one of their Paranormal pilots to wear as part of the newly forming Capitol Patrol. So far, this Strafe has fared much better than his predecessor, mainly because his main weapon systems aren't so self-destructive. His suit is golden yellow with red accents and the Air Force's insignia on the chest. While the suit is active, however, the heat shimmer makes it impossible to make out details. The suit also lets Strafe fly at 300 mph.

Solo Operators

These are notable superheroes who don't operate as part of a team, either because they are retired or just given to wandering. PCs may try to get ahold of one of them for help against an old foe of the hero's or for information of other sorts.

Delta Rose
Concept: A member of the Galactic Warrior Corps (see Section 3) assigned to the fairly unimportant world called "Earth" by the inhabitants, Delta Rose was not originally humanoid at all. But her energy-generation powers made her useful to the
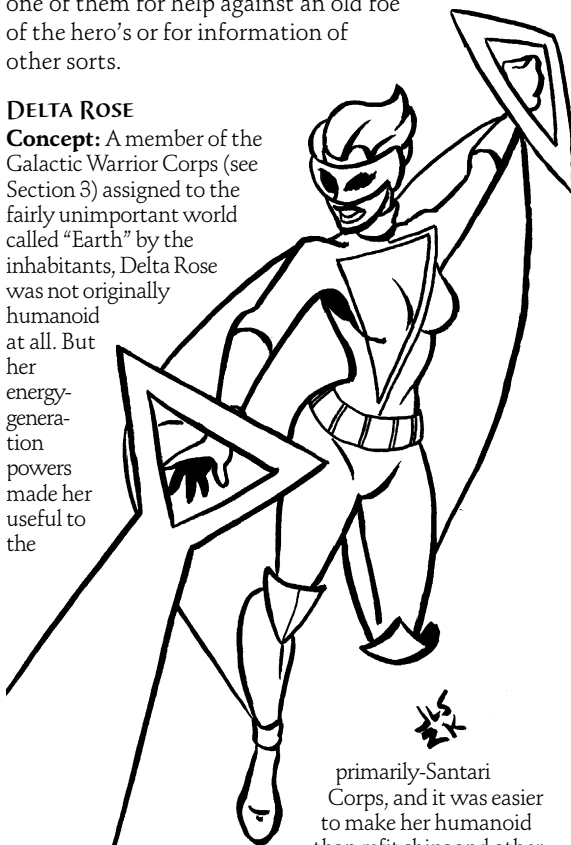
primarily-Santari Corps, and it was easier to make her humanoid than refit ships and other equipment for one of her race. She arrived during the Second Heroic Age and inadvertently became one of the Age's heroes. When Earth's importance started to become apparent to her superiors, she was promoted and made the official Planetary Confederation representative to Earth.

While she's mostly bound to desk duty at the UN Building these days, she's still as young as she was 20 years ago (thanks to the majority of her body now being artificial) and sometimes goes out for a taste of action. Mainly, however, she manipulates events behind the scenes.
Traits: Empowered, Fast +2, Mind, Tech
Scale: Supernormal

Hook: Hidden Agenda (Hidden behind another Hidden Agenda, repeat as necessary... she's Enigmatic)
Primary Effects: Light, Sensory
Secondary Group: Electromagnetic
Body Type: Semi-organic
Wounds: (5/2/3/1) Level 1 = Bone
Attack Abilities:

Attack: Electromagnetic +2 - Her race has the ability to generate electromagnetic energy as defense and as a means of clinging to surfaces in the planet's high winds. Delta has abnormally strong powers in this regard, and is most powerful in the red region of the visible spectrum.

Snare: Sensory - Delta can blind opponents with her light blasts

Attack Ability Modifiers:

Barrage: She can rapid-fire her electromagnetic pulses.

Burst: Long practice enables her to fire either of her attacks at more than one target.

Group Attack: Electromagnetic

Defense Abilities:

Dodge +4: With no real defenses to stop attacks that hit her, she's gotten VERY good at not being hit.

Defense Ability Modifiers:

Draw Fire: Being at the low-power end of superheroes, she's taken to getting her opponents to shoot each other.

Tactical Abilities:

Confuse: Strobing lights to disorient foes.

Device Points: 2 - Tends to have one or two pieces of Santari tech on her person at any given time.

Range: Her race has natural flight powers, but they're not enough to get around in Earth's higher gravity and lower winds. To compensate, Delta wears a triangular glider cape and a small thruster pack.

Speed Points: 5 - She's very fast.

Noncombat Abilities:

Position of Importance: As the representative to Earth of the Planetary Confederation, she throws a lot of weight around. She's the one to petition if contact is desired with the rest of the galaxy, and does what she can to crack down on illegal Pranir traders.

Flight: More like gliding in Earth's gravity, she gets around with some technological assists.

Spacecraft: She has a small hyperspace-capable shuttle parked at the bottom of the river next to the UN Building, which she gets to by donning her space suit and swimming down to the airlock.

Extended Lifespan: Her species doesn't age (they would be effectively immortal if not for the lethal environment) and the artificial parts which made her humanoid don't either.

Disadvantages:

Inhuman: She may look 99% human (the hot pink hair being a little suspicious), but she's not human. Her emotional responses are sometimes very strange, and she may seem to ruthlessly manipulate people to her own inscrutable ends. She doesn't mean to hurt anyone's feelings, but neither does she really understand the importance humans place on their emotions.

Description: 6'1" statuesque woman, she looks like a Roman sculpture. This is because she was engineered into her shape, and given an appearance that fit Santari aesthetics (which are suspiciously Roman). Her hair is bright pink, the standard marker color for altered members of her race so that Santari citizens can recognize them (racial purity is a major movement on Santar these days, many people are afraid of being "tricked" into miscegenation). Her eyebrows, eyelashes and so forth are also bright

pink. Her eyes are a green not quite human, and she usually wears brown-tinted contact lenses to avoid putting people at unease (strange eyes are much more disturbing than strange hair to most people).

Tymythy Twystyd (aka Timothy Bose)

Created by Mark Friedman

Concept: A student of metaphysics in Canada, Tim managed to transform himself from a totally normal (in terms of Tesla Index, anyway) person into a fairly powerful mage by use of illegal drugs and esoteric meditation practices. He never wanted to be a superhero, but when he freed Lord Ebon during a hiking tour of Europe, he was dragged into the lifestyle and reluctantly joined the Raiders. After several months of adventures and saving the world a few times, the Raiders disbanded and Tym went back to his private life, only sometimes getting sucked into weird adventures even he can't really describe.

Traits: Invulnerable, Mind +2, Fast +1
Scale: Supernatural
Hook: Victim of Circumstances
Primary Effect: Sensory
Secondary Group: Magic
Body Type: Tough Organic
Wounds: (5/3/4/4) Level 1 = Bone
Attack Abilities:

Attack: Sensory +2 - A mindwarping attack which twists the victim's very perception of reality in such a way as to cause pain or other extreme trauma.

Attack: Magic - He's not very good at anything but Second and Fourth Clastic attacks, specializing mainly in spacetime and so forth. Assume he won't go beyond Level 1 in other areas.

Attack: Sharp - The Magic 9mm. It never runs out of bullets as long as he holds it. He usually uses this first when attacked, preferring not to tip his hand magically unless necessary. When he attacks at Level 2, the bullets glow faintly and leave faintly glowing trails in the air.

Snare: Sensory +1 - Set his target adrift in his own little world of illusion, usually a very psychedelic place. Victim can still move and try to attack, but won't be able to see

Tym or his friends regardless of anything else in the "trip."

Attack Ability Modifiers:

Group Attack: Magic

Defense Abilities:

Parry: All Effects, Linked - Tym can create spacewarps that send any incoming attack away, or back at the attacker (although his aim isn't that great). These warps also shield him against magical and mental assaults.

Hide +2: Can step into a pocket of bent space and be visible only as a faint ripple.

Dodge: A quick teleport out of the way.

Defense Ability Modifiers:

Linked: on Parries

Deflect: on Parries

Defend: on Parries

Tactical Abilities:

Confuse: Can teleport others around at random, spoiling their shots.

Range with Carry: Can teleport long or short distances, with as many willing subjects as can touch him directly.

Magic Points: 4 - As mentioned above, his mastery of the First, Third and Fifth Clastics is weak at best, and he'll avoid them if possible. Failure in scrying attempts tends to give him a bad hallucination.

Speed Point: 1

Noncombat Abilities:

Magic: Various spells he's learned from Wanderer, he's not yet that good at designing his own spells and tends to wing it. Music: A talented alternative musician, he sometimes plays sets in two or more cities on the same night thanks to his teleportation. "Warples": Tym's name for his spacefolds. Tym can teleport anywhere on Earth that he's been before or can see. He also has numerous combat applications for this warples (warp + ripple).

Disadvantages:

Flashbacklash: Due to the chemicals still floating around in his body (he no longer uses drugs, his life is weird enough as it is, but there's some LSD residuals), he can suffer flashback-like effects when his power gets out of control. Any time he generates a Mixed result, he starts to hallucinate slightly for d10 rounds. Mishaps usually send him into another world in his head. He's gotten good at reflexively fleeing a dangerous situation when this happens, teleporting to a safe location in, say, Dayton.

Description: Looks like your basic alternative rocker on a college campus most of the time. When expecting trouble, he shrugs into a tie-dyed flak vest (he used his powers to twist it for dyeing) and aviator goggles, giving him -2 to be hit by SNPC Sharp attacks. His hair is streaked various shades of brown and blonde, the result of him "borrowing" strands here and there from alternate reality versions of himself to heal burn damage to his head once.

The Wanderer (Nicholas Smith)

Created by Damon Buckwalter

Concept: Born in Hungary during WWII, the man who would become the Wanderer was taken to America with his parents near the end of the war. He was raised as a normal American child, as his parents were determined to forget the Old Country and the horrors they'd seen there. But he always felt a nagging sense of incompleteness, and this led him to travel to his native country after graduating from school. His home village was no longer there, having been razed during the war. But while he didn't find his home, he found his purpose, when he met an ancient Romany sorceror and learned a little magic from the man. He now knew his true heritage was not some plot of land, but the vast unknown territory of magic.

He traveled the world in search of knowledge during the 1960s and 1970s, gaining his nickname among magicians as "The Wanderer." He picked up an odd melange of Western and Eastern magic and started his hunt for true immortality. Drinking a dragon's blood extended his life at the cost of his voice, and other magics made him very hard to truly kill, but true immortality eluded him.

His secondary quest, to eliminate Blood Magic, brought him into contact with the Raiders in 1992, and he remained with the team until a few months before they were disbanded. Frequently out of commission from injuries, he determined upon retiring that being a superhero was not a good career move. He still keeps in contact with Tymythy, who he considers an apprentice who has moved on to journeyman status. He also maintains ties to the old Captains of Mystery, a brief-lived group of mystic adventurers from the Second Heroic Age.

Traits: Mind +3, Fast +1, Empowered

Scale: Supernormal

Hook: Open Agenda (Destroy Blood Magic, Attain Immortality)

Primary Effects: Heat, Blunt

Secondary Group: Magic

Body Type: Semi-organic

Wounds: (4/3/6/4) Level 1 = Bone

Attack Abilities:

Attack: Magic +2 - Various offensive spells, he's best with Elemental effects (Heat and Blunt). For any tricky stuff, he uses Favors.

Snare: Lifeforce +2 - His target is bound up in chains of his own soul, making it very tricky to escape... since how do you escape your own being?

Attack Ability Modifiers:

Group Attack: Magic

Defense Abilities:

Armor: Blunt, Sharp - Air Elementals tied to him snatch projectiles out of the air and push aside attacks.

Dodge +2: His time with the Raiders taught him to duck.

Tactical Abilities:

Focus: Channeling his spirit allows him to more effectively cast his spells.

Heal: Mainly uses minor healing spells to repair damage to himself in combat... but because of the cosmetic effects of such spells, he prefers not to rely on them (see Disadvantages).

Magic Favors: 16 - He's one of the better-connected mages in the world.

Speed Points: 2 - Sometimes he can catch his mistakes before he has to burn a Magic Favor to keep them in check.

Noncombat Abilities:

Magic: He knows many obscure mystic arts, almost as many as Doctor Eschaton does. He's mastered all five Clastics.

Extended Life: He's fifty-something, but looks like a man in his early twenties. He's aged one year out of every twenty since he drank the blood of the dragon.

Unkillable: He isolated his soul in the end joint of his left little finger, then removed that joint and hid it somewhere that no one will find it. So long as that bone remains intact, he cannot be killed. However, his body can be so badly damaged that he can no longer act or even heal himself, so he's careful not to get too badly hurt.

Disadvantages:

The Price Of Power: The best magic has a price, and Wanderer has paid a few such prices. His voice is a hoarse whisper thanks to the searing dragon blood he drank. And his many magically healed wounds look slightly pale and unnatural. And, of course, he's missing the last joint of his left little finger.

Pyrophobia: Not an overwhelming fear, but having been burned severely over 100% of his body several times while with the Raiders, he's VERY cautious around flames, and will try to avoid combat with someone using fire.

Allergies: Wanderer is allergic to insect stings and several commonly- used knockout gases. These cause him to break out in hives, which can spread to his lungs and send him into seizures. The hives in his lungs can't kill him, thanks to his spells, but they are very unpleasant.

Description: A striking young Hungarian man, trim and fit, but with the flaws mentioned above. He tends to wear fine tailored suits when in one place and keeps his hair slicked back and beard in a nicely pointed vandyke. However, when on his travels, he dresses for the conditions he expects to meet.

SUPPORTING CAST

There's a lot of important people in the Knightsworld that the players will not end up in a fight with. Mainly normal humans who would last about .13 seconds in a superhero fight but have important skills or resources, but also supernormals who simply don't do the whole silly capes-n-tights gig. No stats will be given for these people aside from Scale, although the non-Normal types may have a few notes for Referees whose players are determined to pick a fight.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE

This section will cover people who have enough influence or range to run into the players no matter where the campaign is set. They may be placed in the campaign city by the Referee, but even if they aren't, they may come through on business.

AMBASSADOR HEINRICH BRAUN

The U.S. currently has a "Keep your friends close and your enemies closer" policy as relates to Khadam. Hence, Khadam has been permitted to open an embassy in Washington and minor consulates in a few other cities. Mr. Braun is Khadam's primary ambassador, but he's an utter figurehead. Knowing that the embassy would be the subject of the most intense surveillance effort in history, the Technomancers filled it with people so out of the loop they hardly knew which way to the exit. Ambassador Braun typifies this. He's blustery and self-important, and doesn't know how little his nation thinks of him. He is aware he's not as important as the U.S. thinks he is, but he still thinks he has some say in things. He occasionally gets messages from home to dictate policy, but otherwise his only standing instruction is, "Stay out of trouble and leave the spying to experts."

However, he'd really like to do something for his country, and to show those snickering fools back home that he's really got what it takes. This could very rapidly lead to the end of his career, if not his life.

HOWARD HENDERSON

Head of the local DSHA branch in the campaign city if the Referee thinks there's enough activity there to warrant a major office. Otherwise he's stationed with ASH. He was Bennett Rush's protege and has only recently undone most of the damage his former boss did to DSHA's prestige and security. Just a Normal guy, he usually carries around a Paranormal Scale weapon of some sort just in case, but his field agent days are behind him. 5'11" and a slightly paunch 180 lbs with thinning black hair and light grey eyes. He hates being called "Howie."

PROFESSOR PERCEVAL HAPPERSEN (AKA PROFESSOR PERHAP)

Member of the Captains of Mystery (see Wanderer's writeup) and your basic occult detective. Very little power, he knows a few ritual spells and some abjurations (mainly for dispelling things he finds), but he has a lot of knowledge and experience. Blind as the result of an incident with an arcane wolf, he can see through the eyes of his assistant, John West (see below). If your play group has no mages, he's a good choice to bring in to help out on a magical case without having to make excuses to keep him out of combat (which is what you'd have to do with the other mages in the Superheroes section)... he'd be no use there.

Greying hair is the only real sign of his age, he's taken advantage of a few life-extension potions himself and ages only half as quickly as normal. He usually wears a three-piece suit and dark glasses, with a trenchcoat if the weather calls for it, and a standard blind-person's cane. Faint scars are visible on

his forehead from the wolfbites that removed his eyes. While rated as a Paranormal on the Tesla Index, treat him as Normal Scale.

Sammy Mendoza

At the time you start the campaign, he's a virtual nobody. He pops up at 3AM on TV doing infomercials for this, that and the other thing, but he's eminently forgettable.

All that will start to change soon. Sammy thinks he has the next big marketing opportunity worked out, and he's going to blow the market wide open. He's gotten in touch with the mythical Greek Titans (Chronos, Rhea, Phaeton, et al) and has made a deal with them.

He'll use his marketing clout to get them worshippers, while they use their strengthening powers to give him what he's always wanted: respect. And money. But mostly respect.

Players may wish to try to torpedo his operation, reasoning that if he's successful and spawns imitators, it could lead to a sort of commodities market for worshippers... which it not likely to be that good of a thing in the long run.

On the other hand, they might decide to dial the number on the screen and get new powers and abilities from their new objects of worship... but gently remind them that power usually comes with a price.

Sammy is a moderately good-looking (in a smarmy sort of way) Latino man in his late 20s, short and slim at first. As time passes and he gets more worshippers for his "business partners," he'll get taller, more muscular and more handsome. He's still Normal Scale and a one-punch knockout, though... the changes are all an illusion.

John West

Originally he was just Professor Perhap's assistant. He drove the car, he punched out the zombie cultists, he booked the flights, etc. But at the conclusion of the Case Of The Moor Wolf, he was slain by the wolf in question while trying to pull it off Professor Perhap. The Professor managed to use a powerful artifact he had been carrying to capture the wolf's lifeforce, and as a side effect John's spirit was drawn into the body of the wolf. Attempts to restore him to a human body have been unsuccessful, but as a stopgap measure West has managed to get himself infected with lycanthropy... turning into a human again when the moon is full. He can also become semi-human with a great exercise of will, but can rarely maintain this for more than a few minutes at a time. He stays at Professor Perhap's side when possible, acting as Perceval's eyes. As a wolf, he stands over four feet tall at the shoulder (he's a BIG wolf) and has slightly metallic silver-grey fur and

glowing red eyes. In human form, he has silver-grey hair and a slightly lupine appearance, and slightly resembles his old self. In either form he's Paranormal Scale.

Gerry Zane

Gerry Zane ALWAYS gets his story. Unfortunately, sometimes he IS the story, which is why no reputable newspaper will have him on staff. Still, he makes a good living as a freelance reporter, digging up the stories that no other newshound can get.

There's a very good reason for this. Gerry's a Supernormal. He has two main abilities: teleportation and luck. The luck helps him pop in at just the right place to not be seen by security (not to mention avoiding those inconvenient solid barriers that are so painful to teleport into). It also helps him get the leads and find the guys who will talk. Unfortunately, by twisting the threads of fate in his favor on the short term, he suffers payback in the long term (hence the career problems) and also makes unpredictable things happen around him. He gets the stories no one else can get because without him around, the story wouldn't have happened. He tries to keep this a secret, but people already think he's paranormally lucky... and are starting to suspect the rest. Gerry's about 5'9" and 130lbs. His face is an interesting mix of innocent and weasely, although he tries to make sure his blond hair is styled in such a way as to emphasize the innocent part. He has no real combat powers, but the odds are strongly against him getting hit by a crossfire... and he'll always teleport out before someone can take a deliberate shot at him.

LOCAL LEGENDS

These characters are interesting, colorful or influential people the players may have to deal with, but they're pretty much confined to a single location. If you want the players to run into one of these people, add enough detail to make them fit into the campaign city. If not, put them in another city.

Sheila Abrams

There's nothing remarkable about Sheila, she's a middle-aged stocky black woman who drives a bus for the city.

However, her son was a superhero.

For about three days, until he got a bullet in the brain. Now Sheila spends her free time leading Parents Against Vigilantism, an organization she founded to try and keep young supernormals from entering the dangerous world of superheroing. She rails against the media's glamorous portrayal of superheroes, claiming that it just gets more under-powered children interested in becoming heroes themselves, only to get in way over their heads and die.

She's not completely against superheroes... she's not stupid. She knows that if all the superheroes quit today, the villains would divide the world up tomorrow. But if any hero behaves in a manner that she thinks will lure an unprepared youth into the lifestyle, she and her organization can come down like a ton of bricks... or direct mail, at least. Showboaters are especially targeted by her group. PAV has even gotten a few well-known superheroes to do Public Service Announcements on the dangers of becoming a superhero if you don't have the powers for it.

Kathleen Duchess

Anchor for one of the city's network affiliates, Kathleen really does NOT want to be behind the anchor desk, even if it's the path to prestige and higher pay. She's a crack investigative reporter, almost as successful as Gerry Zane (but without the powers) on her local beat. Rumor has it she was put behind the desk not as a promotion, but to get her off the trail of a story that would really embarrass the mayor. It didn't stop her, she secretly followed up and leaked the information to Jeremy Solomon (see below), but since then she's been on a very short leash. And she hates it. Players engaged in a covert investigation may be surprised to see the locally-famous anchorwoman in a black outfit trying to break into the same building they're trying to get into.

Attractive enough that the move to the anchor chair wasn't too suspicious, she's the sort who "cleans up well." Which is to say, when she takes off all the makeup and wears drab clothing, most people wouldn't give her a second look, presuming they even gave her the first look. She has a clear, "neutral accent" voice of the type news anchors are supposed to have, but sometimes under stress a Texan accent slips in.

Another reporter, Tina Davis, really wants Kathleen's job, but knows that Kathleen has the anchor chair as punishment. It won't be enough to just make her rival look bad, Tina will have to practically frame Kathleen with a crime to get her out of the anchor chair... and maybe into another, more deadly, kind of chair.

Chief Leonard Johnson

If your campaign city's real police chief isn't interesting enough, just use Johnson instead.

Some people are certain Johnson has to be a paranormal... no human could possibly stay in the police chief's chair after the long string of scandals Johnson has been involved in. Soliciting prostitutes. Being caught by a drug sting. Charges of domestic abuse. Feel free to make up more. Every single time, inquiries have found insufficient evidence to charge him with anything, and due to the byzantine nature of the city charter, he's really hard to fire (as the

Safety Director Len O'Reilly knows all too well... he's tried to fire Johnson five times). An overweight man with haphazard grooming habits and short-trimmed hair, he even LOOKS like a crooked cop. The scary thing is, he really is innocent of all the charges. He has had phenomenally bad luck, being in the wrong place at the wrong time, having lookalikes get caught on film committing heinous crimes (one was a shapeshifter deliberately trying to implicate the chief, another was just a guy who looked a lot like Johnson), etc. He's a good cop with a rotten reputation.

Mayor Greg LaRossa

As with Johnson, if your campaign city has a boring mayor, use LaRossa instead.

An imposing figure, LaRossa is 6'2" and 260 lbs of former college football star. At 45, his muscle's turning to flab, but he's still no one you want to start a fistfight with (if you're a normal, that is). All wind and bluster, he pushes his pet projects through on sheer force of force. He is most definitely not a consensus-builder, at least in public. Behind the scenes, he's swung so many deals that even he doesn't always remember who he owes what to and who owes what to him. He's not above skirting the law to get something working if he thinks it'll get him votes. He won't outright break the law, and is more or less honest in most things. He's just very determined to get things done once he puts his mind to it. One of LaRossa's current pet projects is to attract a municipally-sponsored superhero team that would be answerable to the city's Public Safety Director. If the players are really desperate for funding, they could go this route. However, it will lead to a lot of paperwork and demands on their time for publicity shoots... LaRossa wants a trophy team more than an effective crimefighting unit. Alternately, this could lead to a rival team blowing into town to make the PCs look bad.

Lenny the Hack

In 1944 Lenny was late. He'd stopped in for a coffee and a danish, and came back to this cab to find a dispatch had come in for him to pick up a very important person... and they'd been trying to get ahold of him for a bit longer than was healthy for his career. So he rushed off, intent on picking up the fare.

He never saw the other car.

Fastforward to the late 1960s. Occasional sightings of a ghostly cab had been reported for the last twenty years, and it was enough to intrigue a local occult-investigation group (long since disbanded or dead in 1999). They found that Lenny was tied to the mortal plane by his need to get to the fare, and tried to send him on his way. Unfortunately, they were not skilled exorcists, and ended up binding him more fully to the city. Since then, Lenny picks up fares daily. Most of the time people don't know he's

anything but an eccentric cabbie with a classic old cab. Once in a while, though, he takes a route that no longer exists, driving safely through a building or over a river, much to the shock of his fare. He also has some sense of when the city's in danger, and will help out if he can. Players with a strong mystic attunement or actual magical skill will often attract Lenny's attention when they need to go somewhere. Lenny can't leave the city, but he can get just about anywhere in the city at an affordable (1944 prices!) rate. If it's really urgent, he can break his "blindness" to his ghostly condition and transport his cab, passengers and all, to any location in the city instantly… even indoors. Lenny has an appropriate accent for 1944 of the campaign city (if you can't think of one, give him a Brooklyn accent and say he moved to the new city in 1941 because the town needed cabbies), a checkered cap pushed to one side of his head, and five o'clock shadow. He's also always got a half-finished coffee and danish on the seat next to him.

Chien "Mark" Li

Even in a world full of supernatural stuff, the stereotype of the "Chinese Restaurant Owner Who Can Really Kick Butt" almost never holds true. But it does in Mark's case. A former world Tae Kwon Do champion (Normal Division), he invested his winnings in a chain of restaurants in the campaign city. They've spread to most of that part of the country, but he still cooks regularly at the original downtown branch (which is now a lot bigger than it started off as). He's created a showy, if somewhat impractical, martial arts style that mixes in elements of cooking. He uses this style to wow the customers, and it brings in a lot of them. Players wanting to learn martial arts could try to convince Mark to teach them, especially if they (for some odd reason) want to learn his cooking style martial arts. In a lighter campaign, he might be called upon to help defeat a giant, man-eating noodle or something.

Mark is in his late 30s, but still has the muscles of a young man thanks to his regimen of exercise. While a Normal on the Tesla Index, he ranks as Paranormal Scale, with Traits Brawn and Fast and appropriate fighting/dodging Abilities. He usually keeps his head shaved bald so he won't have to wear a hair net while performing.

Dana Mellinger

With heroes in town, that means MuniCOE is in town. Dana heads up the local branch of MuniCOE, her stern demeanor and potent organizational skills a surprise to anyone who judges by appearances. At 4'11" and 90 lbs, Dana has a distinctly elfin appearance (she's not an elf, she's a normal… unless the Referee decides it would work better otherwise). She has the sort of figure men would die for (and some women do die trying to get). But when she tells you

to do something, you don't see the pretty little lady anymore… you see the taskmaster with the whip.

In social settings, Dana is quite charming and witty. But in most of the situations the players are likely to encounter her in, she's a tiny little demon with blond hair who seems to be everywhere at once. And if a player who caused needless destruction is still around when she arrives, that sharp tongue is going to be aimed right at him. Superheroes who have faced Dana tend to be either a LOT more careful when fighting around property after that, or VERY good at leaving the scene before MuniCOE gets there.

Jeremy Solomon

Every major town worth its salt has at least one alternative newspaper, usually given away free at convenience stores and restaurants (they pay for themselves with ad revenue). They range from scandal rags to the only real source of news in a town dominated by a biased major news service. Jeremy runs one of the better free papers, the <Campaign City> Demagogue. He covers stories that the major news outlets won't touch because they're either embarrassing to the Powers That Be, or because the major papers have cut back on actual reporters and rely too heavily on wire services to get the real scoops.

A short, stocky Indonesian man, Jeremy gets into enough trouble from the subjects of his scathing exposes that he makes it a policy to get on the good side of any superheroes he thinks can be trusted. Especially since he'll blow any shady superhero out of the water with is paper and ink broadsides… you don't do that unless you're pretty sure Captain Honest will keep Shady Guy from ripping your head off. Journalistic integrity is a nice thing, but it won't stop a power beam.

Professor James Stinson

Dr. Stinson is a historian, mature enough in his career that he's very well-rounded. His original thesis area was Medieval History, but he knows enough about all areas of history to be useful to players in a pinch. A somewhat frail old man, he works at the main university in town and is a year or two from retirement. His hair is white and thinning, his blue eyes hidden behind bifocals, and his tweed suits hang loosely off his thin body. However, don't be fooled by his age. Dr. Stinson was one of the mysterymen of the First Heroic Age, Road King. He drove around the country in his armored sedan, fighting bundists and racketeers with his fists, his courage and his twin Colt 1911's. While he's not much in a fist fight anymore despite regular exercise (at 75 he's not the man he used to be), his accuracy with a gun has hardly diminished at all. Now Normal in Scale, with a pistol he attacks as (Paranormal, Sharp, Normal, Narrow) with an effective "Unstoppable" modifier as he shoots through gaps in armor. Mind you, he'll

drop at the first punch, but if a villain kidnaps him for some reason, there'll probably be some of that villain's blood left behind as a clue.

Judge Deborah Turner

One of the city's many criminal court judges, the players may run into her when testifying in the trial of one of the villains they bring in (although the DSHA provides for positive identification of superheroes without them needing to remove their masks, they are only called to testify if there's no other way to get a conviction, because juries tend to be prejudiced against masked witnesses). Turner has been accused of a number of indiscretions and been cleared, much like Chief Johnson. However, unlike him, she's guilty on all counts, and a few dozen they didn't find. She's slept with lawyers involved in cases she was judging, she's blown convinctions because of procedural mistakes on her part, she's been late to court and rude to witnesses. She's not particularly biased on purpose against either side of a case, but she has a nasty habit of getting too involved and acquiring a bias. Players should shudder when they hear they have to appear in her courtroom.

Judge Turner is a tall, thin half-asiatic half-caucasian woman with long black hair tied back in a bun and a slightly beaklike nose.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

Here's a few frameworks for short adventures to help the Referee get used to running games in the Knightsworld. None of them are fully laid out, because it's been the author's experience that when you have too much detail you just have to change it all around to fit the players anyway. Mind you, that's not to say that later Modern Knights products won't have a lot of adventure material, but rather most of the material will be background and characters… spelling out the plot down to the combat round won't happen.

ELEVATOR GOING UP!

Introduction:

"Hey, Yul, why so glum?" Jack asked while he grabbed his beer from the minibar.

Yul sighed, but didn't answer.

"I bet I know what'd cheer him up… let's go blow up an oil refinery!" Harry said, leaning over the back of the couch to face Jack. Yul shook his head. "Every since they installed that fancy new supertech fire suppression system on every refinery operation that could afford it, they just don't blow up the way they used to."

Alan cleared his throat, a synthesized sound which resembled a burst of static. "Have you considered grain elevators?"

"Huh?" Jack said to the android. "Why? I mean, grain burns, but not that much… ."

Harry's eyes lit up, "No, Jack, he's right! My cousin used to work at a grain elevator… all the fine grain dust in them can explode real good if there's a spark!"

Yul looked up. "Would you guys really do that for me?" Jack smiled. "Sure, that's what the Guys are about, right Guys?" There was a chorus of "Yeah!" "Sure!" "Whatever," and so forth. "Alan, check the arson for hire files, see if we can find someone who'll pay us t' blow up a grain elevator or two… rent's coming due, and last time we were late Challenger fused our VCR into a one inch cube… ."

Setup:

This one-session adventure is meant to give players and the Referee an idea of the kind of missions The Guys go on. They're like a college fraternity with superpowers and longer police records, and while they do sometimes engage in planned out missions, they usually just throw something together to help out one of their own.

The Guys have selected a grain elevator reasonably near the campaign city for their "cheering up" party. Since they aren't total scum (well, some of them are, but they're not getting paid to kill on this job),

they'll first drive everyone out of the area of the elevator. One of the people to flee will have a cellular phone (The Guys still haven't gotten used to the fact that almost everyone has one now, so they don't check for the things) and will call the authorities. If the PCs have any sort of police contacts or monitoring system, they'll pick up on this.

However, unless they've got an incredibly fast way to get to the grain elevator, they won't be able to prevent its destruction. At best, they'll arrive just after Harry has blown the top off and Yul has tried to set it off. Since Harry's winds blew most of the grain dust away, though, it didn't work too well, and the Guys are kind of bummer out and looking for a fight. If the players are really slow, or very hard to get motivated, The Guys will decide they've been paid already, so they're just going to keep trying until they get a nice big explosion. After the third or fourth try they'll get it right, and the boom should be audible from where the characters are. Players encountering them at this point will find them all hyped up and overconfident… and looking for a fight.

There will be Jack Zap, Harry Kane, Yul Byrne and enough other Guys to present a challenge for the player characters.

This scenario won't be good for passing too many Checkpoints, so it's best used early in the campaign when players are getting used to the system.

MAX AND DEX RETURN

This is something of a murder-mystery scenario, so it's best that there not be too many details here in the rulebook where the players can get their hands on them.

Max and Dex are a pair of free spirits, if you will. Purely by accident and many strange experiences, they duplicated Lord Ebon's path to immortality. However, they have no powers, nor can they grant their hosts any powers, so they tend to take over bodies that already have some supernormal talents.

Originally, Max and Dex were bigoted anti-superhero cops who gained extreme powers from Dr. Pue's genetic experimentations in order to go hunting heroes. Unfortunately for them, these powers destroyed their bodies from within, but somehow their minds got transferred into the heads of a pair of android marauders from the future. For a few years they worked with the androids, until ASH prevented that future from happening. Since then, Max and Dex have been roaming about, taking over minds weak enough to hold, and hunting heroes when they could.

In this scenario, pick a few minor superheroes the players have heard of. Someone has tried to kill them, and has succeeded in putting both into comas. By various means of investigation, it should be possible to tell that either they attacked each other or were

attacked by teammates. Max and Dex will be nearby in various bodies, trying to finish off their victims, as well as pick up any new new kills they can manage. People who act as hosts for Max and Dex do not remember anything from the period they were dominated. If Max and Dex had the heroes attack each other, they jumped out just in time for the heroes to have a glimpse of the other attack them for the final blow. If Max and Dex think the players are getting too close to the truth, or are making themselves good targets, they'll take over one or two of the player characters for the Big Fight Scene. Players should be asked if they are willing to be pawns. If more than two are willing, Max will choose the dumbest/weakest-willed one and Dex will take the most powerful that is left. If less than two are willing, go by random roll. If they object to this, any deficit will be made up for by Max having stashed a couple of really powerful robot bodies nearby (each tough enough to take on two players).

ONE OF OUR ANNIHILATORS IS MISSING!

Introduction:

"I don't understand, I've performed the procedure dozens of times before, none of the units has ever broken free of the conditioning!" Devastator frowned, a sight few men ever saw. Not because he rarely frowned, but because he rarely showed his face to anyone. His colleague Dr. Pue was one of the few exceptions. "Perhaps it is because you have done it so many times... when a task starts to become rote, mistakes can be made more easily."

Dr. Pue nodded somberly. He knew Derek well enough to know he wasn't about to face his death over this error. But he also knew that a mistake was a mistake. "The recall code isn't working. Should I initiate the self-destruct?"

Devastator shook his head. "No, let's see how this plays out. The neural tap still functions, correct? Well, then, let's just let our pawn move ahead a few squares and see what it runs into, eh?"

Setup:

An Annihilator unit has broken its programming, but not before most of its old memories were wiped. It is uncertain what to do next, and is trying to find some connection to the life it had before it became an "it." If any of the characters are the type who patrols alone, have one encounter the Annihilator on his own. If attacked, the Annihilator's automatic battle programming (which still holds) will initiate appropriate response, but given a chance it will flee.

Later, the Annihilator will be spotted lurking around a residence in the bad part of town, or perhaps a homeless shelter or bar. It is trying to jar some memories loose by seeking out the few places it can still remember. Unfortunately, it may have already killed someone who tried to attack it. Unless you have a very weak group of PCs, the single Annihilator should be no match for the team once they track it down. However, it will plead with them for help, even as it fires back (presuming they attack it). Will they try to help? Technological means will not work unless the characters have access to alien or other-dimensional technology far in advance of Devastator's. However, magic might be able to restore the missing pieces of the Annihilator's soul.

In any case, whether the Annihilator is beaten into the ground or almost helped back into a semblance of individual life, Devastator will activate the self-destruct system once he's learned enough about the way the PCs behave. If they helped the Annihilator or at least tried, it will sense the blast coming and fly out of range before exploding. If they did not help, or if they rendered it unconscious, it will explode when the maximum number of characters are in the blast radius, doing a Level 4 by Heat to all targets. This may help teach the players mercy if they have a habit of shooting first and not asking questions.

This adventure is useful for introducing the players to Devastator and his methods without actually feeding them into the meatgrinder that is a full-scale Devastator Plan. Do try to dissuade them from attacking the Devastar, though.

THE REALLY BAD DAY

Introduction:

"Well, that's the last of the Droids. What say we head back to the base and open some cold ones?"

"Sure, as long as... ."

Suddenly an explosion bloomed on the horizon, down by the industrial park area.

"Here we go again... ."

Setup:

Every group needs to have something like this happen at least once. The bad guys just don't seem to ever stop coming! None of them are all that tough to beat alone, but it's getting to be a pain in the behind. Will the day ever end so they can just go home?

Of course, in this case what's really happening is that Haven needs more supplies/funds/whatever than Khadam can funnel to them this fiscal quarter. So Challenger decided that the best way to get the most stuff with the highest chance of success would be to send all the small fry villains out on a raid in different places all at the same time. This is not really an orchestrated attack, just a wave of Havenites who are deemed expendable by Challenger.

Mainly they're newer or weaker villains who have to earn a place in the pecking order.

Generate a fairly large number of weak to middling SNPCs and get ready for a long session of combat. This scenario is best when you have a whole day to kill and no one really feels like an epic plot. Those interested in solving mysteries will have plenty of fodder... Challenger told each small group a different story before sending them out. Some will think this is part of a grand plan to take over the world, others will think they're getting important parts for such a plan, a few will know it's just a grocery run, and so forth.

Of course, if players seem to know ahead of time that it's just a supply run (naughty players reading the scenarios), change what the real reason is. But don't change that no two groups of villains the players beat will think it's the same thing.

Appendix A Tables

Sample Mixed:

Attack Abilities

Roll	Result
1-2	Attack hits, but does one Level less effect.
3-4	Attack hits, but you overextend and are now +2 to be hit.
5-6	Attack doesn t hit intended target, but hits an ally of the target or something the target finds important.
7-8	Attack goes totally wild and misses target, but hits something else that starts a chain reaction that ends with the next successful attack on the character being reduced by one level in damage.
9-10	Attack hits, but Ability can only be used d10/2 more times before the character has to rest/reload/repair/etc.

Defense Abilities

Roll	Result
1-2	Defense works for less duration (1 round if d10 rounds, d10 rounds if it's supposed to last until turned off). Reroll if defense normally only lasts one round.
3-4	Attack hits ally instead (bounces off Armor or Parry, whizzes past Dodge or Hide). Attack must roll again against ally.
5-6	Defense works, but character is unbalanced by the attack and is at -2 for his next roll.
7-8	Expose minor weakness in defense. Every time it is used against current attacker for the rest of combat, roll d10: on a 1 or 2 the defense does not work.
9-10	Defense works, but can only be used d10/2 more times before the character has to rest/recharge/repair/etc.

Sample Overkill:

Attack Abilities

Roll	Result
< 3	Target suffers Overflow Effect of one Level higher than the Level attempted by the attacker.
4-6	Target takes an additional Wound of the same type as attempted by the attacker, ignoring any defenses.
7-9	Target takes a Wound of one Level higher than attempted by attacker. 10: Target knocked down, +1 Difficulty to all rolls by target on his next Phase.
11	Target knocked back a great distance, is now at Not Close range. 12-14: Attacker may make another attack this round at no MAP.
15-17	Target accidentally sets off his own biggest attack, aimed at one of his allies. Rolls to hit normally.
>18	Attack hits everyone at Close Range for intended damage, defenses may be applied by those who haven t acted yet. Attacker is not affected.

Defense Abilities

Roll	Result
<3	For the remainder of combat, character may not be harmed by the Effects the defense used works against. In the case of Dodge or Hide, the most recent attacker being avoided can no longer hit the character.
4-6	Defense Ability now works normally for the rest of combat without the need to roll.
7-9	Defense Ability is at -1 Difficulty for the rest of combat.
10	Attacker suffers -1 against character for the rest of combat as character figures out how to defend against attacker better.
11	May use Ability to protect one other person for the next d10/2 rounds at no increase in Difficulty.
12-14	Defense Ability will work against one additional Effect for the rest of combat. If it has no Effect, then it provides an additional -3 to all attackers when used.
15-17	Defense Ability somehow protects everybody this round. Reroll if this result is too hard to make work.
>18	Character is immune to all harm for d10/2 rounds, but can still be hit by non-damaging attacks like Grabs.

Sample Mishap:

Attack Abilities

Roll	Result
<3	Strike ally for one Level more damage than intended. If no allies, strike background character or object that attacker doesn t wish harmed.
4-6	Suffer Pain Effect equal to Level attempted, either from shooting yourself or from overexertion.
7-9	Ability burns out/runs out of ammo and cannot be used for the remainder of combat.
10	Attacker overextends himself and is at +4 to be hit until his next Phase.
11	Attack hits something other than target, results in another combatant coming into play against the attacker. As a rule of thumb, the bigger the failed attack, the nastier the new foe.
12-14	Ability used may no longer be attempted above Level 1. If it was already at Level 1, it can no longer be used. This effect will last beyond the end of combat, Referee will determine what conditions need to be met to restore power.
15-17	Burn out. No Attack Abilities may be used for d10 rounds. If the Ability used was not inborn, assume it explodes in the user s face.
>18	Total burn out. Character suffers a Level 3 Overflow Effect.

Defense Abilities

Roll	Result
<3	Ability somehow works in reverse. Hide and Dodge make you easier to hit by the amount they normally make it harder, Armor increases damage from that Effect by one Level, Parry draws in attacks and gives them +4 to hit. This lasts until combat is over and is no longer voluntary: the effect continues regardless of whether the character wants it to.
4-6	Defense takes up so much of the character s concentration that no other actions are possible for d10/2 rounds, including use of other Defense Abilities.
7-9	Reveal serious flaw in defense. It no longer works against one attacker picked at random. Effect takes several hours to fade.
10	Character gets rattled and is at +1 Difficulty to use all Defense Abilities for the next d10/2 rounds.
11	Character gets sloppy. Next attack that gets past defenses will inflict two Wounds of the type indicated. Armor can still reduce this damage.
12-14	Particular Defense Ability used is lost until the end of combat.
15-17	Opponents sense weakness in character s failed defensive tactic. All opponents will focus on character on their next available Phase, and have +2 to their rolls.
>18	All Defense Abilities lost until end of combat as character manages to somehow cancel out his own defenses.

Appendix B

Ability - A power or skill that a character can have.

Ability Modifier - Something that can be purchased to expand the use of an Ability.

Abrasive - An Effect from the Physical Group, related to friction and abrasion. Often involves wind or water.

Attack Ability - An ability used to attack. There are four: Attack, Depower, Grab and Snare.

Awareness - An Effect from the Mental (Non-Damaging) group. Attacks of this type usually cause loss of consciousness with no other results.

Blunt - An Effect from the Physical group. Attacks more likely to do damage without breaking the skin.

Body Type - A description of a person's basic form, from normal "Organics" to "Inorganic" robots and the like. Determines base Wounds and healing rate.

Bone - An Objective Wound Level. Enough damage to break bone or similar materials.

Brawn - A Trait. Someone with Brawn is stronger than normal for their Scale.

Bruise - An Objective Wound Level. Enough damage to hurt, or to break fragile materials.

Checkpoint - Part of the advancement system. As characters fulfill the requirements of Checkpoints, they gain extra slots to spend on Abilities, and once all nine are checked off, a Trait may be improved.

Chemical - An Effect in the Reactive Energy Group. Acids, bases and drugs fall into this Effect.

Close - A range in combat. You can attack anyone at Close Range.

Cold - An Effect in the Reactive Energy Group.

Combat Ability - Any Ability that is useful in a fight. Combat Abilities must be purchased with Slots.

Concept - The basic idea for a character. This should always come first, and the mechanics worked out to fit the Concept, not vice versa.

Control - A general term for Grabs and Snares, two types of Attack Abilities. Controls somehow affect the actions the target can make.

Cosmic - A Scale, the highest likely to be encountered in Modern Knights, and above most or all characters.

Defense Ability - A Combat Ability used to protect.

Defense Bonus - An optional rule, giving those attacking characters with Fast or Mind a penalty to their rolls.

Device Point - These may be spent during a game to represent building or having on hand various gadgets and weapons.

Devices Group - One of the very broad Effect Groups. Any Effect may fit into the Devices Group, but it is possible to buy defenses against the entire Devices Group.

Difficulty - A rating of how hard a task is. There are four Difficulties: Easy, Hard, Tasking and Limit (of ability).

Direct Phase - Part of a combat round. Declarations on the Direct Phase represent going all out on attack.

Disadvantage - May be voluntarily assigned to a character to help fit into a Concept, but Disadvantages may also be used to decrease the Difficulty of Abilities.

Dispersion - A rating of a SNPC's attack.

Easy - The lowest level of Difficulty.

Effect - AKA Special Effect, a way of describing an attack or defense, such as a Blunt instrument or a Spiritual assault.

Effect Group - Thematic group of three or more Effects. The main ones are Physical, Reactive Energy, Electromagnetic Energy, Mental (Damaging) and Mental (Non-Damaging). Devices and Magic are also common Groups.

Electricity - An Effect within the Electromagnetic Energy Group.

Emotional - An Effect within the Mental (Non-Damaging) Group.

Empowered - A Trait, signifying that someone has more superhuman attack power than most.

Fast - A Trait. Allows the purchase of Speed Points.

Flesh - An Objective Wound Level, an amount of damage sufficient to rend flesh or damage softer materials.

Free Actions - An optional rule, allowing Fast and Tech characters to ignore Multiple Action Penalty to some extent.

Gimme-A-Roll - A type of roll, just 2d10 rolled against a Difficulty to generate a random result.

Hard - A Difficulty.

Heat - An Effect within the Reactive Energy Group.

Hook - A character's reason for doing the superhero or supervillain thing. A dramatic hook.

Invulnerable - A Trait, signifying extreme toughness.

Lifeforce - An Effect within the Mental (Damaging) group. Can also be used to represent the effects of hard radiation or nerve toxins.

Light - An Effect within the Electromagnetic Energy Group.

Limit (of Ability) - The highest Difficulty. Success is very unlikely.

Magic Favor - A specific way of defining Magic Points. Represents asking supernatural powers for aid.

Magic Group - A broad Effects Group. Any Effect can be defined as Magic, but defenses against Magic will block all Magic Group attacks.

Magic Point - A way of representing a character's ability to use free-form magical powers. The specific style will depend on the campaign world.

Magnetism - An Effect within the Electromagnetic Energy Group.

Metal - An Objective Wound Level, enough damage to break metal or stone objects. Usually fatal to Normals.

Mind - A Trait, representing strength of will or serious mental discipline, but not intelligence. A prerequisite for using Magic Points.

Mishap - A result of a Task Resolution roll that indicates failure beyond normal bounds.

Mixed - A result of a Task Resolution roll that indicates partial success, or success with a cost.

Multiple Action Penalty - It is possible to to more than one thing per round, but it's harder.

Noncombat Ability - Any Ability that does not generally have a serious impact on a fight. Slots are not spent for these.

Normal - The lowest Scale, regular people without special powers or training.

Not Close - A combat range. Close enough to see, but hard to hit.

NPC - Non-Player Character. One controlled by the Referee.

NPC Phase - The second Phase of a combat round, when the NPCs take their actions.

Objective Wound - A way of describing damage as it affects the world in general, rather than its impact on a particular character.

Out Of Range - A combat range. As the name implies, you can't attack someone at this range.

Overflow - When a character has taken all his Subjective Wounds of a certain Level, any further Wounds may Overflow to the next Level higher.

Overflow Effect - Rather than Overflowing a Wound to a higher Level, a victim may choose to suffer some penalty.

Overkill - A success beyond the normal bounds of ability.

Pain Effect - In addition to simply losing Wounds, someone hit by an attack may suffer additional penalties, called Pain Effects.

Paranormal - A Scale, representing highly trained people without powers, or those with minor powers.

PC - Player Character, characters run by the players.

Phase - A part of a combat round. There are three Phases: Direct, NPC and Response.

Power - Another name for an Ability. Also, a rating for an SNPC's attacks.

Primary Effect - The Effect (or Effects) at which a character is most proficient. The character's most powerful attacks will use the Primary Effect.

Psi Points - A variant of Magic Points used to represent psychic powers.

Psychological - An Effect from the Mental (Non-Damaging) Group.

Rank - A means of roughly measuring the power level of a character.

Referee - The person who runs the game and controls all the villains and supporting cast.

Response Phase - A part of a combat round, during which those who waited to see what NPCs were going to do act.

Round - The main time division in combat. Split into three Phases.

Scale - A measure of raw power. Each Scale represents a significant increase in power over the one below it.

Sensory - An Effect in the Mental (Damaging) Group. Painful sounds, direct stimulation of pain, etc.

Sharp - An Effect in the Physical Group. Anything that is likely to penetrate skin, be it blade or bullet.

Slot - A bookkeeping unit for creating characters. Combat Abilities are bought using Slots, and additional Slots are gained via advancement.

SNPC - Simple NPC. Rather than write up a minor NPC as a full character, the Referee may generate a bare-bones writeup.

Speed Point - A method of letting Fast characters reroll the dice when they don't succeed the first time.

Spiritual - An Effect in the Mental (Non-Damaging) Group, representing attacks on the core of one's being and beliefs.

Structural - An Objective Wound Level. Enough damage to destroy small vehicles and buildings.

Subjective Wound - A measure of how much a character is affected by an attack. Higher Scale characters take less damage from an attack than lower Scale characters. Described simply as Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 and Level 4, but usually mapped onto appropriate Objective Wounds.

Supernormal - A Scale, the standard superheroic Scale.

Tactical Ability - A Combat Ability that is not directly an attack or defense.

Tasking - A Difficulty. Success if unlikely, but possible.

Tech - A Trait. Characters with Tech need not be scientifically trained, but they are always mentally agile and intelligent. May purchase Device Points.

Trait - A description of the fundamental ways in which a character differs from the norms for his Scale. Usually permanent for one's entire life.

Trait Bonus - When a character has a Trait more than once (usually by means of advancement), this is represented by a +1, +2, +3 or +4. The number is called the Trait Bonus, and is added to Trait Rolls and used for other things.

Trait Roll - A type of roll not related to any particular Ability, but made easier by the possession of a particular Trait. Trait Bonuses make Trait Rolls even easier.

Wound - A measure of damage. May be expressed in Subjective or Objective terms.

Wrecked - An Objective Wound Level. Anything smaller than a jumbo jet or office building is destroyed by this level of damage.