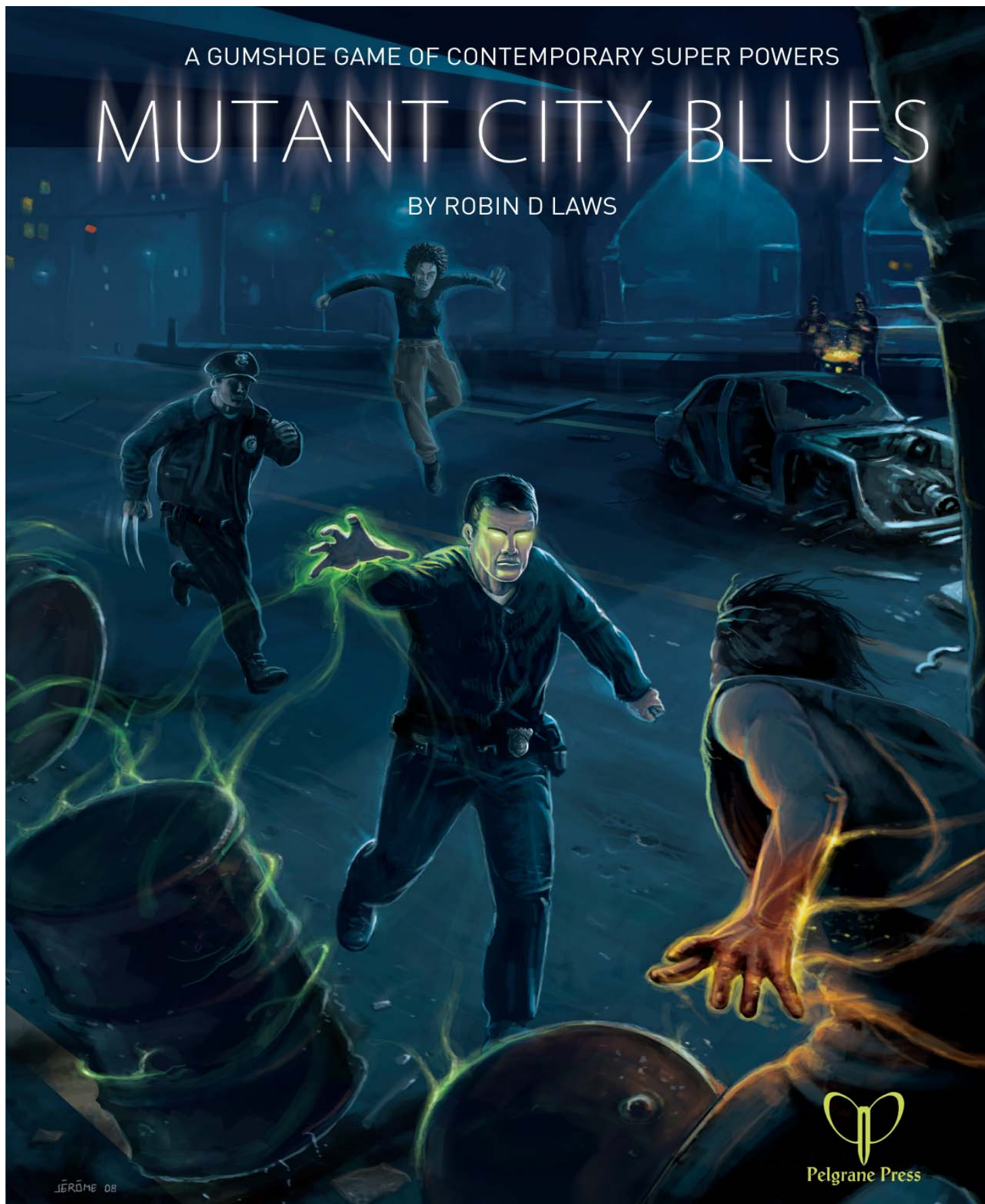


A GUMSHOE GAME OF CONTEMPORARY SUPER POWERS

MUTANT CITY BLUES

BY ROBIN D LAWS



JÉRÔME 08



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THE FISH

Lomax lifted the white plastic top on his coffee cup to take a sip. That perforated tab you were supposed to peel up and stick to the other tab—he could never get that stupid thing to work. So here he was exposing his whole cup of bodega coffee, three creams, three packets of sweetener, to the cold air of early spring. Steam swirled from the hot liquid and wafted in the general direction of his partner, Cecilia Chu. Cece was already kneeling over the body.

This morning's customer was laid out on the gray concrete of Pier 86. A dark puddle surrounded the body, and his clothes were soaked through; he'd been in the water. No signs of decomp, but given the near-freezing temperature of the river at this time of year, that didn't mean he hadn't been deceased for a good long while.

Chu nodded to him. "What? No coffee for me?"

"Hey, I didn't have time to wait in line for a double-double soy latte orange fantasia cream whatever," he replied.

Lomax inspected the vic. Caucasian, late twenties or early thirties. Five feet eleven inches and slightly pudgy around the edges. Thinning dark hair, close-cropped goatee. Fully dressed, in a beige nylon shell jacket, dark jeans... forest green T-shirt (no logo), most likely from the GAP or some other purveyor of moderately expensive casual wear. White jogging sneakers, white tube socks. No watch, no rings—nor any tan lines or skin depressions indicating the recent presence of same.

Cece waited for the thumbs up from Davison, the photog from crime scene. Then Lomax helped her flip him. She found a wallet in his back pocket, revealing a billfold containing at least a hundred and twenty bucks.

It was part of Lomax's job to state the obvious. "Not a robbery, then."

Cecilia handed him the vic's driver's license. Name: Andy Stagg. Address: the outer boroughs.



"Tell me this was accidental," Lomax said. Wet stiffs were a bitch. All the trace evidence washed off when they hit the drink.

"No can do." She pointed to a purple mark on the periphery of Stagg's bald spot.

"Looks modest for a death blow."

She nodded. "We'll have to slab him first, but I figure this for pre-mortem. He's got airway froth and sediment."

"A drowner, then."

A uniform hailed them. They'd found something washed up on the shore half a mile down: a vinyl sports bag. Lomax trotted over to grab it, and he and Cece pawed through its contents. He found a cell phone, a suit jacket, tie, dress shoes, and dark socks. She sorted through a soaked copy of that morning's free subway paper, an unopened bag of potato chips, and a clear plastic shell housing a serving of California rolls from Krober's Market. Underneath them was a colorful publication taped into a mylar bag, backed with a sheet of white cardboard. The bag had provided little protection against submersion; the comic book inside was thoroughly waterlogged.

Cece pulled off the tape and leafed as best she could through its soggy pages. She stopped on one image, kept reading for a bit, then flipped back to it. "Hey," she said, holding the comic page next to the stiff's face. It was a large panel showing a guy in a hero costume, with the mask pulled down to provide a good look at his face. The drawing in the comic book was a dead ringer for the guy laid out on the pier.

"He was a goob," Lomax intoned.

"And a pretty high-profile one, if he had his own comic book." She checked out the trade dress on the cover.

"Big Time Comics. That's one of the major publishers."

Lomax rolled his eyes. He had no time for goobs. "Whatever you say, Captain Moonbeam."

Cece clucked in mock annoyance. "My kid brother collects them."

"So did this guy have himself a handle?"

She showed him the comic's title: The Fish.

"The Fish?" Lomax snorted. "Why not just call yourself Lame-Ass?"

"The good names are all trademarked." Cece walked back over to the corpse, pulling his soaked windbreaker back from his neck. She ran her latex-clad fingers along its sides, finding two flaps of skin, each about six centimeters long. Tugging them loose, she exposed the pink filaments inside. "But how he picked his stupid name doesn't interest me. What I want to know is: how do you drown a man with gills?"

THE WORLD OF THE ENHANCED

Ten years ago, the world changed. Or, rather, one per cent of people changed, and the world was forced to keep up with them.



THE PRESENT DAY

The game occurs in a fictionalized near future, 10 years from now. To keep the game current no matter when you start to play it, we've avoided stating a definite date for the game's present. If it's 2007 when you start your series, the game occurs in 2017. If you're reading this in 2010, the game is set in 2020, and so on.

The game world may occasionally refer to real-life public figures, but supporting characters appearing in heavily spotlighted roles are fictionalized. For example, the President of the United States is a fictional character, rather than a contemporary politician aged by ten years.

The first symptoms appeared on January 12th. Around the world, people from all walks of life experienced flu-like symptoms: nausea, headaches, muscle aches, and fever. Many people still remember these early days of what would later be termed the Sudden Mutation Event (SME) with anxiety and dread.

Patients flooded emergency rooms and walk-in clinics. Panicked news correspondents rushed to the assumption that a global, drug-resistant influenza pandemic had begun, even though the illness proved fatal to no one. It struck all age and demographic groups. Scientists found previously unknown genetic material in the bloodstreams of affected patients.

At the height of the pre-SME hysteria, roughly 1 in 200 people in the industrialized world displayed

symptoms. In the developing world, infection rates were anywhere from thirty to forty-five per cent lower, with the lowest rates occurring in sparsely populated rural areas.

Eleven days after their onset, on January 23rd, all symptoms went away, nearly at once. This merely fueled the speculation of a terrified world populace. Was it a biological attack of some kind? The result of some undeclared industrial accident? Did angels of death herald the coming end times?

The mystery illness became known as the 'ghost flu', named for its sudden disappearance and lack of lasting effects.

It wasn't until months later that the first mutant powers manifested. Tammy Graves, a 13-year-old from the tiny community of Slocum, Texas, took literal flight while attempting to catch a pop fly during a softball game. Over the next few weeks, hundreds, then thousands of people around the globe displayed a sudden command of superhuman powers, from bizarre adaptations of eyesight to the ability to enter others' dreams. These individuals included nonagenarians, young teens, and every age group in between. Only pre-pubescents were unaffected. The eldest early mutant was 103-year-old resident Eula Skinner, of Griderville, Kentucky who gained the ability to move objects with her mind.

All manifesters, as they were at first known, shared one commonality: they'd been struck by ghost flu.

With the 24-hour cable news channels hungrily following each revelation of a pensioner who could walk through walls, or a firefighter who proved immune to flame, pundits predicted a wave of political hysteria even before the full sweep of the event had become apparent. Fearful liberals conjured



MUTANTS AND GEOPOLITICS

Throughout the world, nations weathered the social upheavals that followed the SME according to their prior political stability. Democratic, highly industrialized nations absorbed the new realities with surprising resilience.

Effective authoritarian regimes experienced brief spasms of doubt and disorder, then reasserted pre-existing levels of social control. Their governments dragooned mutants into the apparatus of the state, especially as members of their security forces. The unwilling or incapable were either institutionalized or carefully monitored. Failure to report the possession of mutant powers was, and is, treated as an act of sedition.

For example, in China, during the first year of the SME, mutants associated with both the Falun Gong spiritual protest movement and various regional independence organizations launched a number of uncoordinated actions in defiance of Communist party authority. Though these were chiefly peaceful demonstrations, the Politburo used their control over the media to label them as terrorist activities. Dispatching their new People's Army squadron of enhanced anti-terror soldiers, they destroyed not only the mutant protesters, but the broader movements they fought for. Anti-mutant fears were used as a pretext for a wider crackdown. This triggered a diplomatic crisis and a temporary cooling of relations with the West, which reversed itself only in the face of a mini-recession.

At present the Chinese government has returned to its previous status quo, in which an arbitrarily-enforced authoritarianism paradoxically coexists with unfettered capitalism. The mutant uprisings have receded into memory, as did the Tiananmen Square massacre before them. Mutants who serve the state apparatus or enjoy connections to the wealthy and powerful prosper. Those who do not skulk in the shadows, or lie in state-sponsored hospital beds in perpetual induced comas. Unstable or failed states fared worst of all. Throughout central Africa, mutants formed or took over rebel movements, toppling tottering governments and then devolving into smaller gangs to scrap for the spoils. The middle of the continent is now a hellish wasteland run by mutant warlords. Continued internecine conflict ensures that few of them live to see their twenty-eighth birthdays. This completely lawless region has become a hyper-violent haven for terrorists, mercenaries, and fugitives from all around the world.

Mutant-fueled chaos also reigns, albeit to a lesser extent, in the breakaway or ungovernable territories of Chechnya, Palestine, southern Lebanon, and Peshawar.

up images of emergency police forces rounding up ghost flu sufferers and imprisoning them in brutal internment camps. Conservatives whipped up fears of super-powered terrorists launching devastating attacks against the centers of government and national monuments.

Both impending disasters fizzled. Displays of initial hysteria proved surprisingly muted, confined to a few isolated incidents of vandalism and harassment directed against known ghost flu sufferers. With one in two hundred people exposed to the virus—or whatever it was—everybody could name multiple friends and acquaintances, if not loved ones, who would be subject to the whims of the state were any kind of quarantine program instituted. A number of popular celebrities, sports figures and politicians were among the affected. Even the most reactionary politicians discovered that their own sons, daughters,

mothers and brothers were among the mutants—or heightened, as they soon became to be known. Persecution of a minority becomes difficult when you identify with it.

Other early predictions were also proven wrong. First of all, less than half of ghost flu sufferers manifested extraordinary powers during the first year of the SME. In the nine years since then, some sufferers have subsequently manifested. Others, unaffected by the ghost flu, have since demonstrated mutant powers. Today roughly one in one hundred people in the industrialized world possesses one or more heightened abilities, with the US displaying the highest rate (at 1 in 97) and Belgium, Holland and Germany the lowest (at 1 in 103.)

Also proven wrong was the initially common idea that people with incredible powers would feel compelled

to emulate comic book heroes. A small handful of people adopted colorful costumes, secret identities, and thematically appropriate nicknames, declaring themselves crime fighters. An even smaller number obliged them by using their powers to commit high-profile crimes, giving them someone to fight. Most people, however, carried on with their ordinary lives, trying to forget that they could shoot bolts of lightning from their fingertips or freeze a glass of water just by looking at it. Many mutants, especially those living outside cosmopolitan cities, either downplay their powers or pretend not to have them at all.

After ten years, the existence of mutant powers has been thoroughly assimilated into the public consciousness. Mutant characters appear not only in action movies and adventure TV series, but as token characters in sitcoms and dramas. Heightened movie stars, pop singers, and heiresses rub shoulders across the tabloid pages. Professional sports leagues now allow heightened athletes on their teams, using complicated point systems to decide how many mutants, with which particular powers, any given team can field. When a superbeing is seen rocketing over the skyscrapers of the city, passersby may stop and point, but they don't ask themselves, in slack-jawed wonder, if they're seeing a bird, a

plane, or an ubermensch. Instead, they think, "Oh, hey, that guy has Flight powers. I wonder if he also has Heat Blast or Strength, or maybe both..."

Aiding acceptance of mutant rights were the undeniable economic and social benefits afforded by many of the strange new powers. Individuals capable of curing inoperable cancer with a laying on of hands became highly-paid fixtures of hospital oncology departments. The ranks of the psychiatric profession flushed with new entrants who could observe their patients' dreams, or literally share their feelings. People who could turn lead into industrial-grade gold found lucrative jobs in the manufacturing sector. Mutants who could withstand fire or toxic gases and inhaled smoke were sought after as firefighters.

Police work, too, was changed by the possibilities of the post-mutant world. Detectives with heightened senses were able to act as walking crime labs, analyzing evidence on the spot with microscopic vision or a preternatural sense of touch. Riot squads came to appreciate the presence of officers who could calm angry crowds. Bomb squads happily turned over the most dangerous disposal work to officers who could disable explosive devices simply by projecting an energy field.



NEW GENES, NEW SCIENCE

The ultimate origin of the SME remains a hotly debated topic. Scientific theories abound, and piles of grant money await anyone who can float a solid research plan to prove any of them.

That central mystery aside, understanding of mutant powers has advanced rapidly in the decade since their initial onset. Leading the scientific charge is the mediagenic, indefatigable Dr. Lucius Quade. He coined the term for the scientific study of mutant genes and abilities, *anamorphology*, and is routinely called on to weigh in on any social or political controversy surrounding mutant rights.

At first affiliated with the top technical university in the area where you choose to set your series, Quade struck out on his own to found the Quade Institute, a cutting-edge research facility located in the series' home city. QI, as it is abbreviated, attracts the world's top bioscience experts and is an occasional target of anti-mutant activists. It is funded by a constellation of private and public institutions, most notably the research foundation of noted venture capitalist and mutant Galen Birch.

Although Quade maintains that the QI's primary focus is always pure research, rumors persist of the imminent announcement of various practical applications of his work. Sources claim that he's working on a vaccine to prevent the development of mutant powers, and/or genetic therapies to counter the effects of defects associated with them. Others accuse the QI of working on means to induce latent mutant powers in those who have yet to manifest them.

A more detailed profile of Quade appears on p. 141.

As police departments began to confront super-powered criminals, they found it necessary to fight fire with fire, recruiting tactical officers with the outlandish abilities necessary to apprehend them.

Criminal law has undergone its own changes in response to the SME. The verifiable existence of mind-altering powers has introduced the new legal defense of acting under outside mental influence. Revised privacy statutes make it a crime to read someone's mind without their consent—though they also grant psychic police officers the right to eavesdrop on thoughts, provided they secure a warrant by establishing probable cause. A tiny number of powers, particularly radiation projection, are considered so inherently dangerous that their possessors are required to register with the government. Although public fears of the heightened have prompted drives to increase penalties for crimes committed with the use of mutant powers, these remain controversial and in most jurisdictions have yet to pass into law.

Although the specter of the internment camp has largely been dispelled, mutants continue to suffer subtler prejudice. This phenomenon is especially prevalent in inherently conservative or authoritarian institutions, including the police force. For years, a glass ceiling separated the low-ranking but heavily-

worked heightened police officers from the upper echelons of career advancement. In the department in which the player characters serve, various bureaucratic maneuvers kept mutants from reaching the rank of detective until five years ago when, in response to judicial and legislative pressure, a new squad was formed.

The **Heightened Crimes Investigation Unit** symbolized a new acceptance of mutant police officers. Given the mandate to investigate all crimes involving mutants, either as suspects or victims, it is comprised of a few dozen mutant detectives. The HCIU has become something of a show pony. Citizens demand its intervention whenever a terrifying crime with apparent mutant overtones shakes their sense of security. Reporters subject it to white-hot scrutiny, knowing that stories featuring the city's mutant cops reliably score big ratings. They celebrate its successes with only slightly less fervor than they devote to publicizing its failures. The fault-lines in the relationship between man and superman are often reflected in the cases the HCIU are called upon to investigate. Though they often find themselves at the center of the social and political whirlwind, they do what good cops do—they keep their heads down, follow the evidence, slap the cuffs on the bad guys, and then grumble about the paperwork.



YOUR CHARACTER

This section is addressed to players and shows them how to create their characters. GMs should read it, too.

Your character is a member of the **Heightened Crimes Investigation Unit (HCIU)**, an elite police squad set up to deal with crimes which involve mutant perpetrators. Your character has already accumulated years of positive performance evaluations while serving in other detachments, such as robbery-homicide, special victims, gang units, organized crime control, vice, or narcotics. Your character is most likely a heightened individual, although he might be one of the a few non-heightened individuals with sufficient expertise to be accepted without these abilities.

The GUMSHOE rules define your character by what he or she can accomplish in an investigative scenario. The component elements of each ability don't matter in rules terms. The rules don't care if your Forensic Accounting ability is one part native mental acuity to two parts training or vice versa, although you can mention them when describing your character to others. All that matters is how you solve cases, and overcome other obstacles arising from them.

BUYING ABILITIES

Each player may spend 60 points on standard general abilities (see p. 25), 40 points to buy mutant powers (see p. 28) and a number of points to spend on investigative abilities (see p. 18) that varies according to the number of regularly-attending players in your group.

Mutant powers are explained in the next chapter. A few mutant powers are investigative, although none will ever be essential to the plot; most are used as general abilities.

If you want, you can play a non-enhanced (DNA Standard) liaison officer to the HCIU, forgoing mutant powers altogether. You may conceive of your character as possessing extraordinary expertise which justifies

his presence on a squad normally reserved for the enhanced. Should you require them to realize your character concept, you get an extra 9 build points to spend on general abilities.

Number Of Players	Investigative Build Points
2	36
3	28
4	24
5+	21

When choosing general abilities, you'll want to concentrate your points among a few abilities. You'll find that you'll want ratings of around 8 in core abilities, like Health, Stability and Shooting or Scuffling.

Players who can only attend every now and then get the same number of investigative build points as everyone else, but are not counted toward the total when deciding how many points to allocate.

When choosing investigative abilities it is better to get a large number of abilities with fairly low ratings. Even a 1-point rating is worth having. You'll rarely want to spend more than 3 or 4 points on any one investigative ability.

General abilities use different rules than investigative ones, which allow for possible failure. When choosing general abilities, you'll want to concentrate your points among a few abilities, giving you comparatively

You start the game with 1 point of Health. As police officers, all PCs get a rating of 2 in the investigative ability Cop Talk at no cost.

higher ratings than you want in the investigative category. You'll find that you'll want ratings of around 8 in core abilities, like Health, Stability and Shooting or Scuffling.

Although there is no set cap on abilities, the second highest rating must be at least half that of the highest rating.

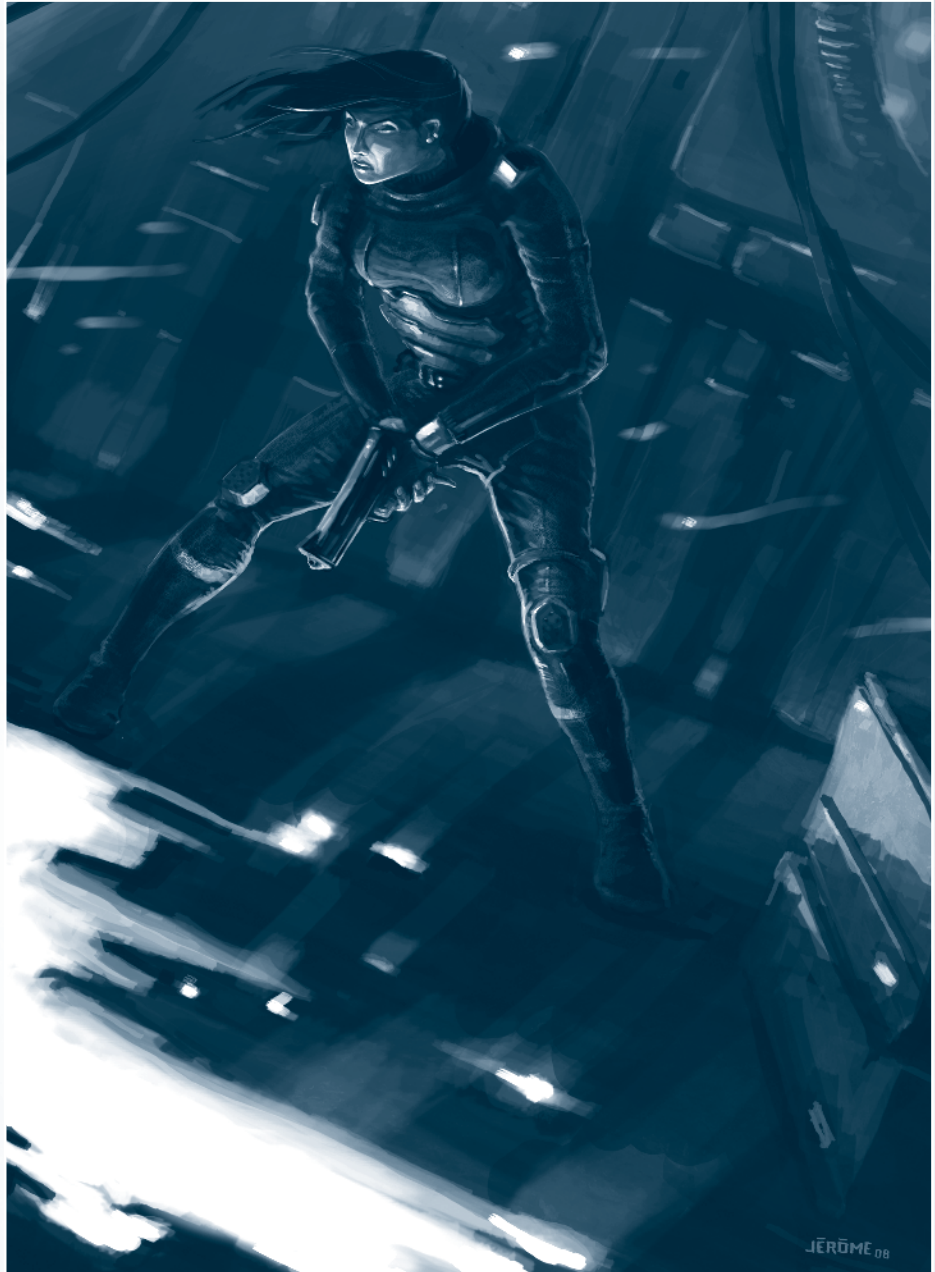
Justin wants to have a Health rating of 30. This requires him to take at least one other ability at 15. This would leave him only 15 points to spend on all of the other general abilities. Justin reconsiders, opting for a lower Health rating so he can spend his other points more freely.

If you want, you can save build points from character creation to spend later. If your GM is running an ongoing series of *Mutant City Blues* games, you will accumulate additional build points during play.

When creating characters, it is essential that you coordinate with your fellow players to make sure that at least one member of the group possesses each of the investigative abilities. Successful groups also ensure that the various general abilities are all accounted for. When in doubt, perform a roll-call of abilities to make sure you've covered all the abilities.

You must have an ability to get useful information from it, or to perform tests and contests. You might be able to perform unremarkable tasks without having the related ability.

You can still drive a car without the Driving ability; you just can't do anything difficult behind the wheel. You don't need Preparedness to own a bag full of stuff, but that stuff will never come in handy during an investigation.



WHAT GOOD ARE RATINGS?

Players used to the bumbling half-competence of their characters in other investigative game systems may be surprised to learn how effective even a single rating point is.

Any rating in an investigative ability indicates a high degree of professional accomplishment or impressive natural talent. If you have an ability relevant to the task at hand, you automatically succeed in discovering any information or overcoming any obstacles necessary to propel you from the current scene further into the story.

Each rating gives you a pool of points to spend in situations related to its base ability. You may ask to spend points to gain special benefits. Sometimes the GM will offer you the chance to spend points. In other circumstances she may accept your suggestions of ways to gain special benefits. Use them wisely; spent points do not return until the next investigation begins.

General abilities use a different set of rules and are measured on a different scale from investigative abilities. The two ability sets are handled in different way because they fulfill distinct narrative functions. The rules governing general abilities introduce the possibility of failure into the game, creating suspense and uncertainty. Uncertain outcomes make scenes of physical action more exciting, but can stop a mystery story dead if applied to the collection of information. This division may seem aesthetically weird when you first encounter it, but as you grow used to the GUMSHOE system you'll see that it works.

An average person off the street has no investigative abilities at all, and Health and Stability ratings of 4 or so. This is all they need to get through life. You need to be much better than average, because you're going up against the heightened criminals. GUMSHOE focuses not on your character's innate traits, but on what they can actually do in the course of a storyline. Why they can do it is up to each player. Your characters are as strong, fast, and good-looking as you want them to be.

CHOOSING YOUR MUTANT POWERS

Although little progress has been made in identifying the specific altered genetic material giving rise to the various mutant powers, the various powers tend to appear in clusters. A mutant who manifests night vision is highly likely to also exhibit thermal and/or micro vision and somewhat likely to possess enhanced olfactory abilities or spatial awareness. He will almost never have flight capabilities, and will never display fangs or memory alteration capabilities. Certain genetic defects are also linked to certain powers. Mutants with both natural weaponry and limb extension are highly likely to suffer from arthritis. Individuals capable of erecting force fields and moving objects via telekinesis are prone to a previously unknown adult-onset autism.

By compiling statistical data on known mutants, statisticians have assembled a map of mutant traits, showing their relationships to one another. This is known as the Quade Diagram, after the project's supervising researcher, Professor Lucius Quade.

Abilities which often appear in combination with their neighbors are called **connected powers**. The Quade Diagram marks connections between powers with solid lines. Abilities which sometimes appear in combination are called **correlated powers**. These are indicated with dotted lines. (Investigative abilities are marked with a magnifying glass; abilities not bearing this symbol are general. The distinction between investigative and general abilities, unlike the rest of the diagram, is a rules abstraction not found in the game world. The version of the Quade Diagram the *characters*, as opposed to the players, know omits the magnifying glass icons. Otherwise, it's the same chart.)

HCIU officers use Quade Diagrams in their investigations. They know that if a crime scene turns up trace evidence of both lightning damage and prehensile hair, that at least two mutants were present, as the Lightning and Entangling Hair traits are too widely separated on the diagram to belong to the same individual. The connection between mutant traits and certain personality disorders similarly makes the Quade Diagram a useful tool in criminal profiling.

To ensure that the statistical linkage between your mutant powers is reflected in your choice of enhanced abilities, players use the Quade Diagram during character creation. Game Moderators must also follow the Quade Diagram when creating supporting characters. (A GM could conceivably create a scenario in which a mutant's apparent divergence from the Quade Diagram is a major plot point, but this would be both an exception and a huge deal in the game world.)

You start out with 40 build points with which to purchase mutant powers for your character. These points must be allocated between the purchase of the powers themselves, and then in rating points for each power.

QUADE DIAGRAM

Start by choosing any one ability anywhere on the Quade Diagram. A general power costs 4 build points. An investigative power costs 1 point.

You may then, if you wish, choose additional powers. These must be adjacent to powers you already have, or nearly so. As you follow the Quade Diagram to assemble your list of powers, you can branch in multiple directions; you don't have to follow a single path from point A to point B.

Crossing an unbroken line, denoting that the two powers are connected, costs you nothing. Every time you cross a dotted line, denoting that the two powers are correlated, you pay an additional 4 points. You may leapfrog abilities by paying 2 build points for each ability skipped. If you cross a dotted line while leapfrogging an ability, you must also pay the 4 points for that, in addition to the 2 points for skipping the ability. You never pay more than once to leapfrog the same ability.

Buying an ability gets you a rating of 1. To increase any rating, pay one build point per rating point.

Where ordinary general abilities require that your second-highest rating be at least half that of your highest rating, mutant powers face no such restriction. You can, if you want, spend all of your points on a single general mutant power, starting with, say, a Force Field rating of 37.

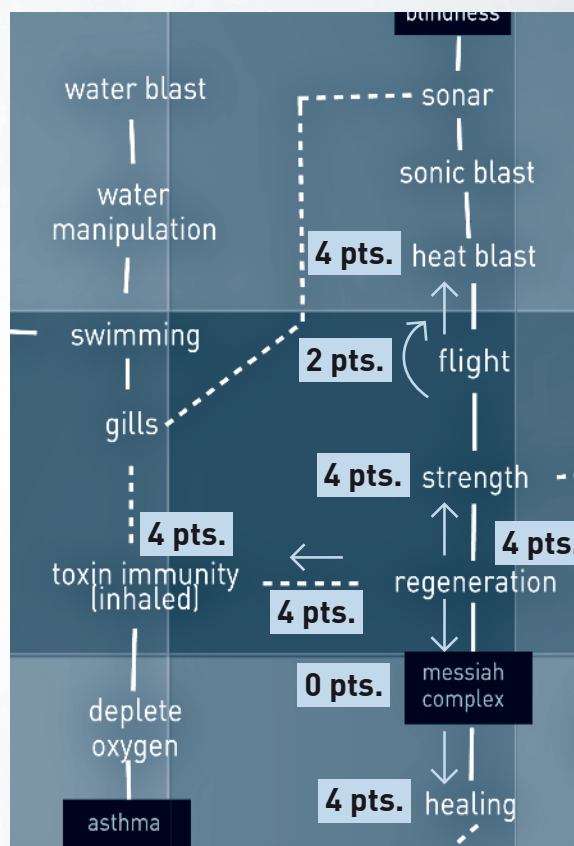
Entries on a black background are not powers, but defects. In order to connect certain powers on the Quade Diagram, you must also acquire the defects between them. A defect connected by an solid line to any ability you already have costs you nothing. If connected by a dotted line, you must pay 4 points. You may not pay points to leapfrog a defect. A defect represents a latent propensity for the problem in question. If, for example, you start play with the Blindness defect, you are not currently sightless, merely at risk of it.

You decide to start with the Regeneration ability. As a general ability, this costs you 4 points, reducing your total to 36 build points. You then take Strength, which is connected to Regeneration by a single solid line. Crossing the line costs you nothing; Strength is also a general ability, costing you 4 build points, reducing your total to 32.

Then you acquire Toxin Immunity (Inhaled), which

is connected to Regeneration by a dotted line. Crossing the line costs you 4 points. The ability is general, and so costs you 4 build points. You pay a total of 8 points, reducing your total to 24.

Next, you want the Healing ability. The Messiah Complex defect lies between it and Regeneration, connected by a solid line. To get Healing, you must also acquire Messiah Complex. It costs you nothing. Crossing a solid line to get to it costs you nothing.



Crossing the solid line to Healing costs you nothing. Healing is a general ability and costs you 4 points. You now have 20 build points left.

You decide that you want the Heat Blast ability. The Flight ability lies between it and Regeneration on the Quade Diagram. You pay nothing to cross the solid line to Flight, and 2 points to leapfrog the Flight ability. You now have 18 build points. It costs you nothing to cross the solid line to Heat Blast. You then buy Heat Blast for 4 points, leaving you with 14.



DESIGN NOTES : THE QUADE DIAGRAM

The Quade Diagram, and its role in character generation, exists primarily to evoke the particular setting of Mutant City Blues. It conveys the idea that the setting's mutant powers conform to unvarying, if not yet fully understood, laws of science. The diagram reinforces the concept that all powers share the same origin. It has some game balance effects, making it difficult for a single player to cherry-pick all of the most dramatic abilities, but these are not its primary point. GMs may wish to warn players ahead of time that Mutant City Blues discards the standard super-powered RPG design goal of allowing you to replicate any hero you find in comic books. You'll find that you can create knock-offs of certain iconic characters (sort of) but that others are impossible to reproduce.

The driving convention in a default comic book universe is that every character embodies a unique theme and distinctive set of powers. In the Mutant City Blues world, enhanced characters conform to a number of recognizable types, with slight variations in detail.

Players may find it frustrating to start with a character concept and then attempt to use the Quade Diagram to realize it. It's much more fun to start with the diagram and see where it leads you. Some classic character types familiar from years of superhero roleplaying are unavailable here. For example, you can't quite create the very strong and invulnerable "tank" archetype. (If you or one of your players considers a super setting without tanks a complete deal-breaker, swap regeneration and armor on the diagram.)

Game Moderators who wish to ignore the Mutant City setting and play games of super-powered GUMSHOE investigation in more typical comic-book worlds should discard the Quade Diagram. Abandon the unified theory of super power origin, allowing PCs to acquire them through various unrelated origin stories, from alien parentage to super-tech, magic, and beyond. You may also want to add additional powers, including more outré comic book abilities like duplication, time travel, and near-omnipotent magic rings. Power costs remain the same, but characters start play with only 30 build points to spend on superhuman abilities. Players may increase this to 36 by voluntarily acquiring a single defect.

With build points running low, you figure it's time to stop buying new powers and start investing in rating points. Your powers are: Regeneration, Strength, Toxin Immunity (Inhaled), Healing, and Heat Blast. You also acquired the Messiah Complex defect.

You allocate your remaining 14 points between your five powers as follows: Regeneration 3, Strength 1, Toxin Immunity (Inhaled) 1, Healing 5, and Heat Blast 4. You are adding these values to your starting rating of 1 in each ability, for final ratings of: Regeneration 4, Strength 2, Toxin Immunity (Inhaled) 2, Healing 6, and Heat Blast 5.

(In practice, most players will choose fewer powers, and also be more parsimonious in skipping powers and crossing dotted lines. We present this somewhat sub-optimal character to illustrate more of the possible costs incurred during power selection.)

AND FINALLY...

You are nearly ready to go. Read the short Tips for Players section on p. 169. Think of some sub-plots for your character, look at the interview techniques, and with the other players consider which watch commander you'd prefer.

The Quade Diagram

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A

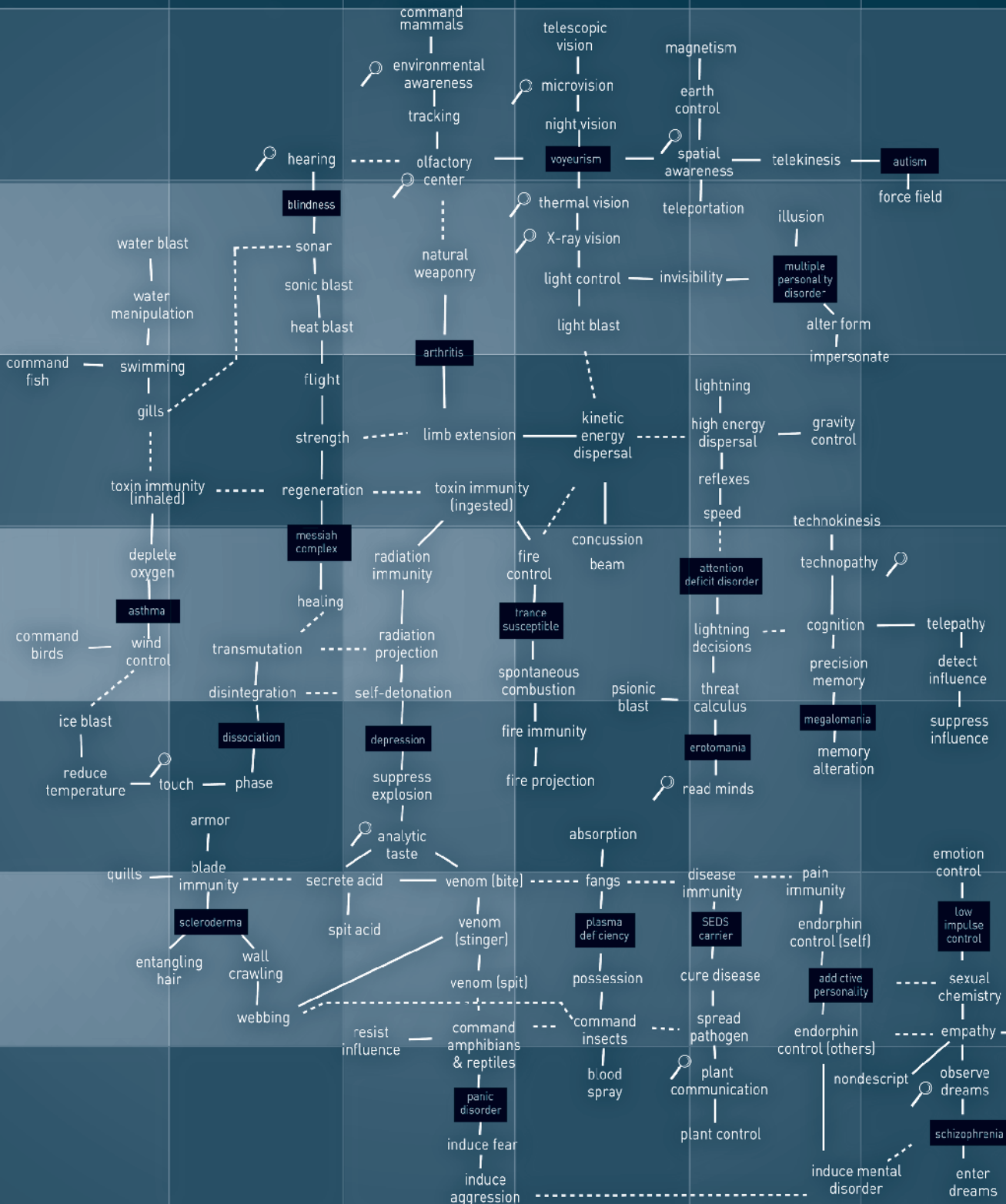
B

C

D

E

F



healing

general power

asthma

defect

correlated power

hearing

investigative power

connected power

STANDARD ABILITIES

This chapter covers all investigative and general abilities which aren't mutant powers.



INVESTIGATIVE ABILITIES

Academic

Anthropology
Archaeology
Architecture
Art History
Forensic
Accounting
Forensic
Psychology
History
Languages
Law
Natural
History
Occult Studies
Research
Textual
Analysis
Trivia

Interpersonal

Bullshit
Detector
Bureaucracy
Cop Talk
Flattery
Flirting
Impersonate
Interrogation
Intimidation
Negotiation
Reassurance
Streetwise

Technical

Ballistics
Chemistry
Cryptography
Data Retrieval
Document
Analysis
Electronic
Surveillance
Forensic
Entomology
Evidence
Collection
Explosive
Devices
Forensic
Anthropology
Fingerprinting
Photography

INVESTIGATIVE ABILITIES

The following abilities are the bread and butter of GUMSHOE characters.

Ability descriptions consist of a brief general description, followed by examples of their use in an investigation. Creative players should be able to propose additional uses for their abilities as unexpected situations confront their characters.

Certain specific actions may overlap between a couple of abilities. For example, you can enhance image resolution with either Data Retrieval or Photography.

Some abilities, like Research, are broadly useful, and will crop up constantly. Others may be called for many times in the course of one scenario, and not at all in others. When building your character, strike a balance between the reliable workhouse abilities and their exotic, specialized counterparts.

Investigative abilities are divided into the following sub-groups: Academic, Interpersonal, and Technical. The purpose of the sub-groups is to allow you to find the best ability for the task quickly during play, by scanning the most likely portion of the overall list.

Many standard technical abilities have new applications in the world of *Mutant City Blues*. For more on this subject, see FORENSIC ANAMORPHOLOGY on p. 115.



NEW ABILITIES

These investigative abilities are new to *Mutant City Blues*:

Anamorphology (p. 18) (Technical)
Energy Residue Analysis (p. 21) (Technical)
Influence Detection (p. 22) (Interpersonal)
Astronomy is not especially useful in a non-occult game like *Mutant City Blues*; fold it into Trivia.

ANAMORPHOLOGY (TECHNICAL)

Anamorphology ("the science of change") is the study of mutant powers, their genetics, and the origins of the SME. Although any untrained investigator can read a Quade Diagram, you can also:

- Identify an individual's mutant powers from a DNA sample

- Conduct a medical examination to identify the presence of defects (p. 74), and to pinpoint their present stage of development
- On a brief but close-up visual inspection (in person or via photographic or video image) spot the telltale signs of retracted mutant organs and appendages, including gills, fangs, stingers, and natural weaponry
- Tell when a subject is using a non-obvious mutant power, and make a solid educated guess as to what power is in use. (Any layman can see what's going on when a mutant flies through the air or doubles the length of his forearm.)

ANTHROPOLOGY (ACADEMIC)

You are an expert in the study of human cultures, from the stone age to the Internet age. You can:

- identify artifacts and rituals of living cultures
- describe the customs of a foreign group or local subculture
- extrapolate the practices of an unknown culture from similar examples

ARCHAEOLOGY (ACADEMIC)

You excavate and study the structures and artifacts of historical cultures and civilizations. You can:

- tell how long something has been buried
- identify artifacts by culture and usage
- distinguish real artifacts from fakes
- navigate inside ruins and catacombs
- describe the customs of ancient or historical cultures
- spot well-disguised graves and underground hiding places

ARCHITECTURE (ACADEMIC)

You know how buildings are planned and constructed. You can:

- guess what lies around the corner while exploring an unknown structure
- judge the relative strength of building materials
- identify a building's age, architectural style, original use, and history of modifications
- construct stable makeshift structures
- identify elements vital to a building's structural integrity

ART HISTORY (ACADEMIC)

You're an expert on works of art from an aesthetic and technical point of view. You can:

- distinguish real works from fakes
- tell when something has been retouched or altered



- identify the age of an object by style and materials
- call to mind historical details on artists and those around them

BALLISTICS (TECHNICAL)

You process evidence relating to the use of firearms. You can:

- identify the caliber and type of a bullet or casing found at a crime scene
- determine if a particular gun fired a given bullet

BULLSHIT DETECTOR (INTERPERSONAL)

You can tell when people are lying. You must usually be interacting with them or observing them from a close distance, but sometimes you can spot liars on television, too. Unfortunately, nearly everyone lies, especially when facing possible trouble from the authorities. Sometimes you can infer why they're lying, but it's hard to discern motive reliably or get at the facts they're working to obscure.

Not all lies are verbal. You can tell when a person is attempting to project a false impression through body language.

Certain individuals may be so adept at lying that they never set off your bullshit detector. Some people believe their own falsehoods. Psychopathic personality types lie reflexively and without shame, depriving you of the telltale tics and gestures you use to sense when a person is deceiving you.

BUREAUCRACY (INTERPERSONAL)

You know how to navigate a bureaucratic organization, whether it's a governmental office or a large business concern. You know how to get what you want from it in an expeditious manner, and with a minimum of ruffled feathers. You can:

- convince officials to provide sensitive information
- gain credentials on false pretenses
- find the person who really knows what's going on
- locate offices and files
- borrow equipment or supplies

Bureaucracy is not a catch-all information gathering ability. Bureaucrats wish to convey the impression that they are busy and harried, whether or not they actually are. Most take a profound, secret joy in directing inquiries elsewhere. When players attempt to use Bureaucracy to gain information more easily accessible via other abilities (such as Research), their contacts snidely advise them to do their own damn legwork.

CHEMISTRY (TECHNICAL)

You're trained in the analysis of chemical substances. You can:

- among a wide variety of other materials, identify drugs, pharmaceuticals, toxins, and viruses
- match samples of dirt or vegetation from a piece of evidence to a scene

COP TALK (INTERPERSONAL)

You know how to speak the lingo of police officers, and to make them feel confident and relaxed in your presence. In *Mutant City Blues*, you are most likely a current cop. You can:

- coolly ply cops for confidential information
- get excused for minor infractions
- demonstrate you are a colleague, authorized to participate in their cases



WHY NO LYING ABILITY

Unlike many other RPG rules sets, GUMSHOE does not treat lying as an ability unto itself. Instead characters employ it as a tactic while using any of the various interpersonal abilities. With Bureaucracy, you tell functionaries what they want to hear. Using Interrogation, you convince suspects that you're their kind of guy, and so on. There's a little bit of deception in nearly every successful interpersonal interaction—at least when you're on the job for the HCU.

CRYPTOGRAPHY (TECHNICAL)

You're an expert in the making and breaking of codes, from the simple ciphers of old-school espionage tradecraft to the supercomputer algorithms of the present day.

DATA RETRIEVAL (TECHNICAL)

You use computer and electronic technology to retrieve and enhance information on hard drives and other media. You can:

- recover hidden, erased or corrupted computer files
- increase the clarity of audio recordings, zeroing in on desired elements
- miraculously find detailed, high-resolution images within a blurry video image or blurry JPEG

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS (TECHNICAL)

You're an expert in the study of physical documents. You can:

- determine a document's approximate age
- identify the manufacturer of paper used in a document
- tell forged documents from the real thing
- identify distinctive handwriting
- match typed documents to the typewriters that produced them
- find fingerprints on paper

ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE (TECHNICAL)

You're adept at the use of sound recording equipment to gather evidence. You can:

- trace phone calls
- plant secret listening devices
- locate secret listening devices planted by others

- make high-quality audio recordings
- enhance the quality of audio recordings, isolating chosen sounds

ENERGY RESIDUE ANALYSIS (TECHNICAL)

By studying debris and damaged objects found at a scene, you can tell what blast powers (or other mutant abilities) were used to damage it. You can also distinguish items damaged by mutant powers from those destroyed by naturally-occurring incidents of similar sources. For example, you can examine a rooftop and determine firstly that it was struck by lightning, and secondly that the lightning was generated by a mutant and was not a storm effect.

EVIDENCE COLLECTION (TECHNICAL)

You're adept at finding, bagging and tagging important clues. You can:

- spot objects of interest at a crime scene or other investigation site
- note relationships between objects at a crime scene, reconstructing sequences of events
- store objects for forensic analysis without contaminating your samples

EXPLOSIVE DEVICES (TECHNICAL)

You're an expert in bombs and booby-traps. You can:

- defuse bombs and traps
- reconstruct exploded bombs, determining their materials, manufacture, and the sophistication of the bomb-maker
- safely construct and detonate explosive devices of your own

FINGERPRINTING (TECHNICAL)

You're an expert in finding, transferring and matching fingerprints. This includes expertise in the computer software used to compare sample fingerprints against large databases of criminal defendants and government personnel.

FLATTERY (INTERPERSONAL)

You're good at getting people to help you by complimenting them, as subtly or blatantly as they prefer. You can get them to:

- reveal information
- perform minor favors
- regard you as trustworthy.

FLIRTING (INTERPERSONAL)

You're adept at winning cooperation from people who find you sexually attractive. You can get them to:

- reveal information
- help you in small ways
- date you

It's up to you whether a high rating in Flirting means that you are physically alluring, or simply exude a sexual magnetism unrelated to your looks.

FORENSIC ACCOUNTING (ACADEMIC)

You comb through financial data looking for irregularities. In the words made famous during Woodward and Bernstein's investigation of the Watergate scandal, you know how to "follow the money." You can:

- tell legitimate businesses from criminal enterprises
- spot the telltale signs of embezzlement
- track payments to their source



FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGY (TECHNICAL)

You perform autopsies on deceased subjects to determine their cause of death. In the case of death by

foul play, your examination can identify:

- the nature of the weapon or weapons used
- the presence of intoxicants or other foreign substances in the bloodstream
- the contents of the victim's last meal

In many cases, you can reconstruct the sequence of events leading to the victim's death from the arrangement of wounds on the body.

You also perform DNA analysis on samples found at crime scenes, matching them to samples provided by suspects.

FORENSIC ENTOMOLOGY (TECHNICAL)

You specialize in the relationship between corpses and the legions of insects who dine on them. By studying eggs and larvae in a decomposing corpse you can:

- determine approximate time of death
- identify a crime scene, in the case of a dumped body

FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY (ACADEMIC)

You apply psychological insight to the solving of criminal cases. From the details of a crime scene, you can, based on past case studies of similar offenses, assemble a profile detailing the perpetrator's likely personal history, age, habits and attitudes.

You can also glean useful information from simple observation of certain individual, especially as they react to pressure.

HISTORY (ACADEMIC)

You're an expert in recorded human history, with an emphasis on its political, military, and economic and technological developments. You can:

- recognize obscure historical allusions
- recall capsule biographies of famous historical figures
- tell where and when an object made during historical times was fashioned
- identify the period of an article of dress or costume

IMPERSONATE (INTERPERSONAL)

You're good at posing as another person, whether briefly misrepresenting yourself during a phone call or spending long periods undercover in a fictional identity.

Successfully disguising yourself as an actual person known to those you're interacting with is extraordinarily difficult. Brief voice-only mimicry requires a spend of at least 1.

Face-to-face impersonation requires a spend of at least 2 to 3 points for every five minutes of sustained contact between you and the object of your impersonation. Especially wary or intelligent subjects cost more to hoodwink than dull-witted walk-on characters.

INFLUENCE DETECTION (INTERPERSONAL)

You've been trained in the EMAT Protocol, a series of observational techniques used to identify signs of mind control or mental influence. To use them, you must speak to the subject, making intense eye contact. The apparent subject matter of the conversation means little to the outcome: it can be an impassioned exchange on a serious subject, or can consist entirely of innocuous small talk.

While speaking, you introduce a series of keywords more important for their rhythmic effect than their meaning. By observing subtle unconscious responses in the subject, especially eye movements and changes in breathing pattern, you can tell whether he is currently under mutant mental influence, or has been in the recent past. If you're especially fortunate, you can also identify the particular power used on the subject. (When it is convenient to the mystery to know the type of power, you can name it specifically. When it would blow a plot point best revealed later, you learn of the influence but can't pinpoint the particular ability used. When the power used is of no great relevance to the mystery, it's available as a 1-point spend.)

Any power which allows or requires the subject to defend with a Stability test can be detected with this ability. These include: Emotion Control, Illusion, Induce Aggression, Induce Fear, Induce Mental Disorder, Observe Dreams, Memory Alteration, Nondescript, Possession, Read Minds, Sexual Chemistry, and Telepathy.

Unfortunately, the EMAT techniques are of no great help in breaking a subject of mental influence.

You can also identify at a glance people who are Trance Susceptible.

A subject can prevent you from attempting the EMAT protocol by avoiding eye contact and refusing to engage you in conversation. This is a telling refusal, as the protocol is usually exculpatory. It is much more common for suspects to insist on a protocol, even when they have not been influenced, than to refuse one.

INTERROGATION (INTERPERSONAL)

You're trained in extracting information from suspects and witnesses in the context of a formal police-style interview. This must take place in an official setting, where the subject is confined or feels under threat of confinement, and recognizes your authority (whether real or feigned.)

INTIMIDATION (INTERPERSONAL)

You elicit cooperation from suspects by seeming physically imposing, invading their personal space, and adopting a psychologically commanding manner. Intimidation may involve implied or direct threats of physical violence but is just as often an act of mental dominance. You can:

- gain information
- inspire the subject to leave the area
- quell a subject's desire to attempt violence against you or others

LANGUAGES (ACADEMIC)

For each rating point in Languages, you are verbally fluent and literate in one language other than your native tongue. You may specify these when you create your character, or choose opportunistically in the course of play, revealing that you just happen to speak Japanese when circumstances require it. You are not learning the language spontaneously but revealing a hitherto unmentioned fact about your character. You may elect to be literate in an ancient language which is no longer spoken.

LAW (ACADEMIC)

You are familiar with the criminal and civil laws of your home jurisdiction, and broadly acquainted with foreign legal systems. At a rating of 2 or more, you are a bar-certified attorney. You can:

- assess the legal risks attendant on any course of action
- understand lawyerly jargon
- argue with police and prosecutors

LINGUISTICS (ACADEMIC)

You are an expert in the principles and structures underlying languages. You can probably speak other Languages, but that is a separate ability that must be purchased separately. You can:

- given a large enough sample of text, decipher the basic meaning of an unknown language
- identify the languages most similar to an unknown language
- identify artificial, alien and made-up languages

NATURAL HISTORY (ACADEMIC)

You study the evolution, behavior, and biology of plants and animals. You can:

- tell when an animal is behaving strangely
- tell whether an animal or plant is natural to a given area
- identify an animal from samples of its hair, blood, bones or other tissue
- identify a plant from a small sample

NEGOTIATION (INTERPERSONAL)

You are an expert in making deals with others, convincing them that the best arrangement for you is also the best for them. You can:

- haggle for goods and services
- mediate hostage situations
- swap favors or information with others

OCCULT STUDIES (ACADEMIC)

You're an expert in the historical study of magic, superstition, and hermetic practice from the stone age to the present. From Satanists to the Golden Dawn, you know the dates, the places, the controversies, and the telling anecdotes. You can:

- identify the cultural traditions informing a ritual from examining its physical aftermath
- supply historical facts concerning various occult traditions
- guess the intended effect of a ritual from its physical aftermath
- identify occult activities as the work of informed practitioners, teenage posers, or where your campaign allows it, bona fide occultists

PHOTOGRAPHY (TECHNICAL)

You're proficient in the use of cameras, including still and video photography. You can:

- take useful visual records of crime scenes
- spot manual retouching or digital manipulation in a photographic or video image
- realistically retouch and manipulate images

REASSURANCE (INTERPERSONAL)

You get people to do what you want by putting them at ease. You can:

- elicit information and minor favors
- allay fear or panic in others
- instill a sense of calm during a crisis

RESEARCH (ACADEMIC)

You know how to find factual information from books, records, and official sources. You're as comfortable

with a card catalog and fiche reader as with an Internet search engine. The contacts file on your personal digital assistant brims with phone numbers of exotic and useful contacts.

STREETWISE (INTERPERSONAL)

You know how to behave among crooks, gang-bangers, druggies, hookers and other habitués of the criminal underworld. You can:

- deploy criminal etiquette to avoid fights and conflicts
- identify unsafe locations and dangerous people
- gather underworld rumors

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS (ACADEMIC)

By studying the content of texts (as opposed to their physical characteristics of documents) you can draw reliable inferences about their authorship. You can:

- determine if an anonymous text is the work of a known author, based on samples of his work
- determine the era in which a text was written

- identify the writer's region, and level of education
- tell a real work by an author from a false one

TRIVIA (ACADEMIC)

You're a font of apparently useless information that would stand you in good stead as a contestant on a quiz show. You're especially good in the following spheres of interest:

- celebrities and entertainment
- sports records and statistics
- geography
- arts and letters
- names in the news

This catch-all ability also allows you to know any obscure fact not covered by another GUMSHOE ability. (In moments of improvisatory desperation, your GM may allow you to overlap with abilities which none of the players at the current session possess, or which no one is thinking to use.



GENERAL ABILITIES

The rules governing general abilities introduce the possibility of failure into the game, creating suspense and uncertainty. Uncertain outcomes make scenes of physical action more exciting. See p. 88 for how general abilities are used in Tests and Contest to resolve these uncertain outcomes.



GENERAL ABILITIES

Athletics	Mechanics	Trouble
Driving	Medic	Shooting
Filch	Preparedness	Stability
Health	Scuffling	Surveillance
Infiltration	Sense	



UNLISTED ABILITIES

Players may propose abilities not listed here. To get the cost benefit of investigative abilities, they must persuasively argue for the field's direct application to investigations. If no obvious family exists for an ability, it is treated as a standalone. GMs should reject abilities which overlap substantially with current ones. The most likely sort of ability to pass muster is an academic pursuit not included here.

ATHLETICS

Athletics allows you to perform general acts of physical derring-do, from running to jumping to dodging falling or oncoming objects. Any physical action not covered by another ability, probably falls under the rubric of Athletics.

If your Athletics rating is 8 or more, your Hit Threshold, the Target Number your opponents use when attempting to hit you in combat, is 4. Otherwise, your Hit Threshold is 3.

You can use Athletics to dodge blast powers (see p. 43)



DRIVING

You're a skilled defensive driver, capable of wringing high performance from even the most recalcitrant automobile, pick-up truck, or van. You can:

- evade or conduct pursuit
- avoid collisions, or minimize damage from

collisions

- spot tampering with a vehicle
- conduct emergency repairs

For every additional rating point in Driving, you may add an additional vehicle type to your repertoire. These include: motorcycle, transport truck, helicopter, or airplane. You may choose exotic types, like hovercraft and tanks, although these are unlikely to see regular use in an investigation-based game.

FILCH

Your nimble fingers allow you to unobtrusively manipulate small objects. You can:

- pilfer clues from a crime scene under the very noses of unsuspecting authorities
- pick pockets
- plant objects on unsuspecting subjects

HEALTH

Health measures your ability to sustain injuries, resist infection, and survive the effects of toxins. When you get hit in the course of a fight, your Health pool is diminished. A higher Health pool therefore allows you to stay in a fight longer before succumbing to your injuries.

When your Health pool is depleted, you may be dazed, wounded, or pushing up the daisies. For more on this, see Exhaustion, Injury and Gruesome Death, p. 95.

INFILTRATION

You're good at placing yourself inside places you have no right to be. You can:

- pick locks
- deactivate or evade security systems
- sneak up on suspects and their hideouts, to take them by surprise
- find suitable places for forced entry, and use them

Despite its name, Infiltration is as useful for getting out of places undetected as it is for getting into them.

MECHANICS

You're good at building, repairing, and disabling devices, from classic pit-and-pendulum traps to DVD players. Given the right components, you can create jury-rigged devices from odd bits of scrap. Mechanics doubles as an investigative ability when used to:

- evaluate the quality of workmanship used to create an item
- determine the identity of a handmade item's

maker by comparing to known work by that individual

MEDIC

You can perform first aid on sick or injured individuals. For more on the use of this ability, see p. 95.

PREPAREDNESS

You expertly anticipate the needs of any mission by packing a kit efficiently arranged with necessary gear. Assuming you have immediate access to your kit, you can produce whatever object the team needs to overcome an obstacle. You make a simple test (p. 89); if you succeed, you have the item you want. You needn't do this in advance of the adventure, but can dig into your kit bag (provided you're able to get to it) as the need arises.

Items of obvious utility to a superpowered investigation do not require a test. These include but are not limited to: police credentials, handcuffs, note paper, writing implements, laptop computer, a PDA with wireless Internet access, mini USB drive, cell phone, various types of tape, common tools and hardware, light weapons, flashlights of various sizes, chem lights, batteries, magnifying glasses, thermometer, and a no-frills audio recording device.

Other abilities imply the possession of basic gear suitable to their core tasks. Characters with Medic have their own first aid kits; Photographers come with cameras and accessories. If you have Shooting, you have a gun, and so on. Preparedness does not intrude into their territory. It covers general-purpose investigative equipment, plus oddball items that suddenly come in handy in the course of the story.

The sorts of items you can produce at a moment's notice depend not on your rating or pool, but on narrative credibility. If the GM determines that your possession of an item would seem ludicrous or and/or out of genre, you don't get to roll for it. You simply don't have it. Any item which elicits a laugh from the group when suggested is probably out of bounds.

Inappropriate use of the Preparedness ability is like pornography. Your GM will know it when she sees it.

SCUFFLING

You can hold your own in a hand-to-hand fight, whether you wish to kill, knock out, restrain, or evade your opponent.



SENSE TROUBLE (GENERAL)

This ability allows you to perceive (either with sight or other senses) potential hazards to yourself or others. For example, you can:

- hear the tread of a psycho killer as he sneaks up behind your cabin
- see a skulking figure hiding in the high weeds
- smell the singed, shredded clothing of the recently-blasted mutant who lies in wait behind the stairs
- spot the metal trap door hidden beneath that artfully-scattered skiff of dead leaves
- have a bad feeling about that noise the car engine has been making since you left the rest stop

Players never know the Difficulty Numbers for Sense Trouble before deciding how many points to spend, even in games where GMs generously inform the players of other Difficulty Numbers (see p. 89).

SHOOTING

You are adept with firearms.



FIREARMS IN MUTANT CITY BLUES

In most jurisdictions police officers are armed, a notable exception being Great Britain. If you don't want HCU officers to be armed, introduce a protocol banning firearms – after all –aren't superpowers enough?

STABILITY

The ability is used to resist various mutant powers which affect the mind, and to stave off the effects of neurological and personality disorders (see p. 74). As mind control powers can be powerful, you may wish to invest in a high Stability (8 or more) to keep perps from twisting your melon.

SURVEILLANCE

You're good at following suspects without revealing your presence. You can:

- guide a team to follow a suspect for short periods, handing off to the next in sequence, so the subject doesn't realize he's being trailed
- use telescopic viewing equipment to keep watch on a target from a distance
- find undetectable vantage points
- hide in plain sight

8 or more points in Surveillance grants you 1 free point of the investigative ability Electronic Surveillance.

MUTANT POWERS

This chapter provides a complete list of documented enhanced powers. They are organized by category, with investigative abilities appearing first, followed by general abilities. Finally we detail the genetic defects to which the enhanced are prone. The relationship between the powers is shown on the Quade Diagram (see p. 17)

POWER QUICK REFERENCE

Here are all of the powers, listed in alphabetical order, categorized into investigative (I) or general (G) with page references. Grid references show you where the power appears on the Quade Diagram.

POWER	Type	Grid Location	Page
Absorption	G	D2	38
Alter form	G	E5	39
Analytic taste	I	C2	30
Armor	G	B2	39
Blade immunity	G	B1	39
Blood spray	G	D0	39
Cognition	G	E3	40
Command amphibians & reptiles	G	C1	40
Command birds	G	A3	40
Command fish	G	A4	41
Command insects	G	D1	41
Command mammals	G	C6	42
Concussion beam	G	D3	42
Cure disease	G	E1	42

Deplete oxygen	G	A3	44
Detect Influence	G/I	F3	44
Disease immunity	G	E1	45
Disintegration	G	B2	45
Earth control	G	E6	46
Emotion control	G	F2	46
Empathy	G	F1	47
Endorphin control (others)	G	E1	47
Endorphin control (self)	G	E1	48
Entangling hair	G	A1	48
Enter dreams	G	F0	48
Environmental awareness	I	C6	30
Fangs	G	D1	49
Fire control	G	D3	49
Fire immunity	G	D2	49
Fire projection	G	D2	50
Flight	G	B4	50
Force field	G	F5	50
Gills	G	A4	51
Gravity control	G	E4	51
Healing	G	B3	51
Hearing	I	B6	31
Heat blast	G	B5	52
High energy dispersal	G	E4	52
Ice blast	G	A2	52
Illusion	G	E5	52

Impersonate	G	E5	53
Induce aggression	G	C0	53
Induce fear	G	C0	54
Induce mental disorder	G	E0	54
Invisibility	G	D5	55
Kinetic energy dispersal	G	D4	55
Light blast	G	D4	55
Light control	G	D5	56
Lightning	G	E4	56
Lightning decisions	G	E3	56
Limb extension	G	C4	56
Magnetism	G	E6	56
Memory alteration	G	E2	57
Microvision	I	D6	31
Natural weaponry	G	C5	57
Night vision	G	D6	58
Nondescript	G	F0	57
Observe dreams	I	F0	31
Olfactory center	I	C6	32
Pain immunity	G	E1	58
Phase	G	B2	58
Plant communication	I	E0	32
Plant control	G	E0	59
Possession	G	D1	59
Precision memory	G	E3	60
Psionic blast	G	D3	60
Quills	G	A1	60
Radiation immunity	G	C3	60
Radiation projection	G	C3	61
Read minds	I	E2	33
Reduce temperature	G	A2	61
Reflexes	G	E4	61
Regeneration	G	B4	61
Resist Influence	G	C0	61
Secrete acid	G	C1	62
Self-detonation	G	C2	62

Sexual chemistry	G	F1	63
Sonar	G	B5	63
Sonic blast	G	B5	64
Spatial awareness	I	E6	33
Speed	G	E4	64
Spit acid	G	C1	64
Spontaneous combustion	G	D3	64
Spread pathogen	G	E1	65
Strength	G	B4	65
Suppress explosion	G	C2	66
Suppress influence	G	C0	66
Swimming	G	A4	66
Technokinesis	G	E4	66
Technopathy	I	E3	33
Telekinesis	G	E6	67
Telepathy	G	F3	68
Teleportation	G	E5	68
Telescopic vision	I	D6	69
Thermal vision	I	D5	34
Threat calculus	G	E3	69
Touch	I	B2	34
Toxin immunity (Ingested)	G	C4	69
Toxin immunity (Inhaled)	G	A4	69
Tracking	G	C6	69
Translation	I	F1	34
Transmutation	G	B3	70
Venom (bite)	G	C1	70
Venom (spit)	G	C1	71
Venom (stinger)	G	C1	71
Wall crawling	G	B1	72
Water blast	G	A5	72
Water manipulation	G	A5	72
Webbing	G	B1	72
Wind control	G	A3	73
X-ray vision	I	D5	35



POWER DESCRIPTION

In addition to a description of what the power can do and how it works in rules terms, each mutant power description includes the following entries:

Connected: names of powers directly (that is, with a solid line) connected to the ability on the Quade Diagram.

Correlated: names those traits connected to the ability by dotted lines.

Defects appear in the above two entries in *italicized text*.

If an individual with this ability exhibits obvious anatomical adaptations which have not already been described in the body of the entry, these are described under the entry labeled **visual cues**.

Slang terms: indicates popular street names for the power, or its use. As is the case with slang, etymologies are sometimes obscure. Some abilities include discussions of **legal ramifications** surrounding their use.

INVESTIGATIVE POWERS

Mutant investigative powers form their own category, standing alongside the core GUMSHOE categories: Academic, Technical and Interpersonal.

ANALYTIC TASTE

Your sense of taste is superhuman, and you have, by trial and error, trained yourself to use it as a precision instrument. You function as a walking, talking chemical analysis lab, able to instantly detect the composition of nearly any object you can touch your tongue to. By distinguishing fine gradations of taste, you can, for example, match a sample of heroin to the precise batch it came from, or conduct a comparative analysis of soil samples. Although you may for good reason be reluctant to do so, you can even identify blood types from small samples, or derive similar identifying or typing information from other bodily fluids.

Some individuals with analytic taste suffer from high revulsion thresholds and can only enjoy the

purest, most perfect foods. Others become inured to traditional pleasures associated with the sense of taste, or become passionate connoisseurs of substances ordinary people consider inedible.

When using this sense, you consume, at most, only trace quantities of the substances you test. Analytic taste grants no ability to digest inedible matter.

Although this power grants no poison immunity, only the most toxic of substances will harm you in the tiny trace quantities required for analysis.

Grid: C2

Connected: Suppress Explosion, Secrete acid, Venom (bite).

Slang terms: "The Bud", Slurping, Tastee

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Like an animal, your sensory apparatus constantly monitors dozens of barely perceptible cues from the natural environment. When a natural disaster such as an earthquake or tsunami is in the offing, your instinctive senses automatically detect it, long before any ordinary human.

You can spot disturbances in the natural order, sense the distress of an area's wildlife population, and instinctively assess its environmental health.

Some people with this mutation come to regard urban environments as unbearably disturbing. The overwhelming sounds and smells of mechanized life oppress them terribly, prompting them to seek out a hermit-like existence in an isolated wilderness.

Environmental Awareness points can in some instances be spent on Sense Trouble tests, provided that the hidden danger in question is somehow distressing to its flora and fauna.

Positive example: *An invisible, odorless nerve agent sweeps through a forest, killing wildlife. Animals on the periphery of the gas experience distress as they die horribly. You can spend any number of Environmental Awareness points to increase the result of your Sense Trouble roll.*

Negative example: *A sniper draws a bead on you as you relax on the shore of an unspoiled lake. Various birds and woodland creatures are vaguely aware of him, but don't perceive him as a threat. Environmental Awareness points can't*

be spent on Sense Trouble tests to notice his presence.

Grid: C6

Connected: Command mammals, Tracking.

Slang terms: Wolf sense, green sense, algorey



HEARING

Your sense of hearing exceeds that of an ordinary human. You can hear sounds from a long distance. The auditory processing centers in your brain can act as on-the-fly sound editors and enhancers, cutting out background noise, zeroing in on a particular frequency, or maximizing sound from a single source (such as a pair of people conversing in the middle of a large crowd.) You can even mentally replay a garbled noise, for example a misheard word or phrase, in order to make it out properly. Once you've identified a sound you can mentally compare it to another sound, to see if it derives from a similar or identical source.

You can pick up most clues available to a user of the Electronic Surveillance ability, though, for obvious reasons, you are unable to create recordings for later study or use as evidence.

Grid: B6

Connected: *Blindness*

Correlated: Olfactory Center

Slang terms: eavesdrop, earwig, gondo

MICROVISION

You can selectively alter your visual perceptions to examine items at a high level of magnification, from that of an ordinary light microscope (around 1500x) to that of an electron microscope (up to 50 million times.) In tandem with certain technical investigative abilities, microvision may allow you to perform complicated lab studies instantaneously, right at the crime scene. It can be used to enhance or speed up the use of Ballistics, Chemistry, and Fingerprinting.

Grid: D6

Connected: Night Vision

Slang terms: Scoping, sliding, m-peeping

OBSERVE DREAMS

When within direct visual perception range of a sleeping individual undergoing REM sleep, you are able to enter a trance state, close your eyes, and see the subject's dreams. You see what the subject is dreaming from his point of view. You are unable to control the circumstances of the dream, or control the dreamer's actions within it. (The general mutant ability Enter Dreams allows you to do this under certain circumstances.)

You may share the dreamer's emotions, experiencing fear, sorrow, or sexual arousal. To shut down these feelings, make a Stability test (Difficulty 4.) Emotionally raw subjects, with Stability pools of 3 or less, add 2 to your Difficulty.

The dreamer remains unaware of your intrusion, unless he becomes lucid during the dream. Individuals whose dreams are being observed, and who possess any of the following abilities, may become lucid on a Stability test (Difficulty 5): Empathy, Enter Dreams, Observe Dreams, Possession, Psionic Blast, Read Minds, and Telepathy.

Upon awakening, subjects with any of these abilities may, on a Difficulty 4 Stability test, retroactively sense that their dreams were observed.



POWER DESCRIPTION

In most settings where characters possess extraordinary abilities, like magic spells, psionic abilities or mystical fu powers, it is never quite clear to what degree the inhabitants of the world are aware of the game's rules artifacts. When a sorcerer casts a magic missile spell, does he call it a magic missile? Does an abomination know he uses a feat called Absorptive Tentacles?

In *Mutant City Blues*, not only the characters, but everyday inhabitants of the world, are well aware of the existence of mutant powers. They refer to them by the names given here. These were defined by Dr. Lucius Quade and his team of anamorphologists, first in a series of scientific papers and finally in his popular book, *The New Helix*.

Few people have the Quade Diagram memorized, just as few people know the Periodic Table by heart¹. But even kids understand that it exists, and can easily access it with a quick Internet search. The idea that the various powers appear in an immutable pattern of genetic relationships has seeped down into popular culture, the same way that people in our world know that DNA can be used to conclusively identify people.

Mutants who are out of the closet about their parahuman powers may discuss them openly. They may list their mutant abilities in their profiles on social networking sites. At social gatherings, mutants tend to cluster together. In some circles, that stock question of awkward small talk, "What do you do?", refers not to your occupation, but your super powers.

In everyday conversation, people sometimes alter the names of powers. You say Observe Dreams, I say Dream Observation. Nicknames for the powers are also common: you might here "dreampeeping" more often than either formal term.

¹ Yes, we realize that a disproportionately high number of people reading book this have committed the periodic table to memory. Still, you get our point, right?

Legal ramifications: Observing an individual's dreams without a legal warrant is a felony punishable by a prison term of up to five years. HCU officers must, working through prosecutors, demonstrate probable cause before obtaining a dream observation warrant. Witnessed dreams are admissible in court but, as unfiltered material from the subject's unconscious mind, can be easily reinterpreted by any halfway competent defense lawyer.

Grid: F0

Connected: Enter Dreams, Empathy, *Schizophrenia*

Slang terms: sandmanning, nodding, dreampeeping

OLFACTORY CENTER

You can detect and process smells to a degree far superior to a normal human. By practicing comparative smell-testing, you have become adept at identifying and distinguishing various smells.

If you have the Tracking ability, you can spend Olfactory Center points on Tracking tests, provided that the target's smell is somehow a factor in your attempt to follow him.

Grid: C6

Connected: Tracking

Correlated: Hearing, Night Vision

Slang terms: Stinkread, sniffing, inhale-o-vision

PLANT COMMUNICATION

You can attune yourself to the electromagnetic, non-sentient consciousness of plants, glean information on the following and similar subjects:

- Has the area been disturbed recently?
- Have any traumatic events happened here lately?
- Have there been any storms lately?
- Is a storm coming?
- Is the soil moist?
- Is the soil well fertilized?
- What is eating the plants here, and to what extent?

You are not literally talking to the plants, but sensing the answers based on their general health and the state of their electromagnetic auras.

Grid: E0

Connected: Plant Control, Spread Pathogen

Slang terms: greenspeak, mulch-mouth, Stevie Wondrous



READ MINDS

You can read the surface thoughts of any individual within your direct, unaided line of sight. Subjects' sub-vocal thoughts register in your central auditory system, as if they are whispering in your ear. At your default level of concentration, you can't direct subjects' thoughts, but merely eavesdrop on what they are already thinking. Sub-vocal thoughts tend to be much more fragmentary and loopingly repetitive than spoken speech. You gain 1 point of information for each Read Minds point you spend.

Subjects with the abilities Empathy, Read Minds, and Telepathy automatically detect your attempt to read their thoughts. They can block it by paying more points from any one of those abilities than you are willing to pay to overwhelm their mental defenses. Both you and the subject lose any points put up for bid in this process.

By spending 5 Read Minds points, you can drill down into a subject's memory, finding the answer to a single question. This process is noticeably invasive, even to victims without the above-named

powers. They must make Stability tests with your Read Minds pool as the Difficulty, or suffer a mental crisis (see p. 102.) You may reduce the Difficulty of victims' Stability tests by 1 for each Read Mind point you spend for this purpose. Whether or not they suffer mental crises, subjects experience hangover-like symptoms which persist for about forty-eight hours. Also, they become obsessed with matters related to your question for a period of a week or so. Victims without the above-mentioned powers probably know they've been mind-raped but, without additional information, can't identify you as the perp. With those powers, they are able to identify you.

Information gleaned by mind reading is accurate but subjective. If the subject is self-deceptive, delusional or simply misinformed, the facts you extract will be incorrect. Bullshit Detector can't help you sort out true from false belief.

Legal ramifications: Mind reading without either the subject's consent or a legal warrant is a felony punishable by up to twenty years in prison. HCU officers must work with prosecutors to secure warrants, supplying a judge with probable cause. They may testify in court to information gathered via mind reading, but, given the known propensity of mind readers to become obsessed with, and stalk, their subjects (see Erotomania, p. 78), they are easily discredited in court. Information gained from mind reading is thus more likely to be used to develop a case, or to gather intelligence on an exigent basis, than as trial evidence.

In addition to the above restrictions, Read Minds is an Article 18 power; see p. 124.

Grid: E2

Connected: Erotomania

Slang terms: brain rape, grayreading, spooking

SPATIAL AWARENESS

Your brain manifests a superhuman command of three-dimensional information. You can perfectly measure distances by sight. You can calculate a complex set of bullet trajectories in your head, instantly garnering results that would take a mundane crime scene technician, working with a complicated set-up of threads or lasers, hours to complete. You can intuit the precise movements and actions undertaken at a crime scene merely by comparing the relationships between disturbed

objects and such other indicators of movement as blood spatters and footprints.

This ability also improves your Shooting. Spend 2 Spatial Awareness points to increase your Damage Modifier with missile weapons by 1 for the duration of a single combat. You may not increase your modifier by more than 1, or increase the damage modifier of a blast power.

Grid: E6

Connected: Earth Control, Telekinesis, Teleportation

Correlated: Night Vision

Slang terms: panoramix, laserbrain, vector detector

TECHNOPATHY

Technopathy allows you to extract information from any machine that stores digital data, such as a computer hard drive. It functions as a more impressive, faster version of Data Retrieval—you get clues without having to make a test or spend points. If Data Retrieval spends are available in a scene, and you touch the computers or other machines containing the information, you gain them automatically, without spending Data Retrieval points. You must touch the item where the data is stored; contact with a computer monitor in one room does not permit you to access information from a server in another part of a building. However, you can access a wi-fi network simply by touching the copper contact points of a laptop wireless card to your tongue.

Legal Ramifications: In many instances, Technopathy allows you to gather electronic information covertly and non-invasively. However, evidence gathered this way is not admissible in court.

Grid: E3

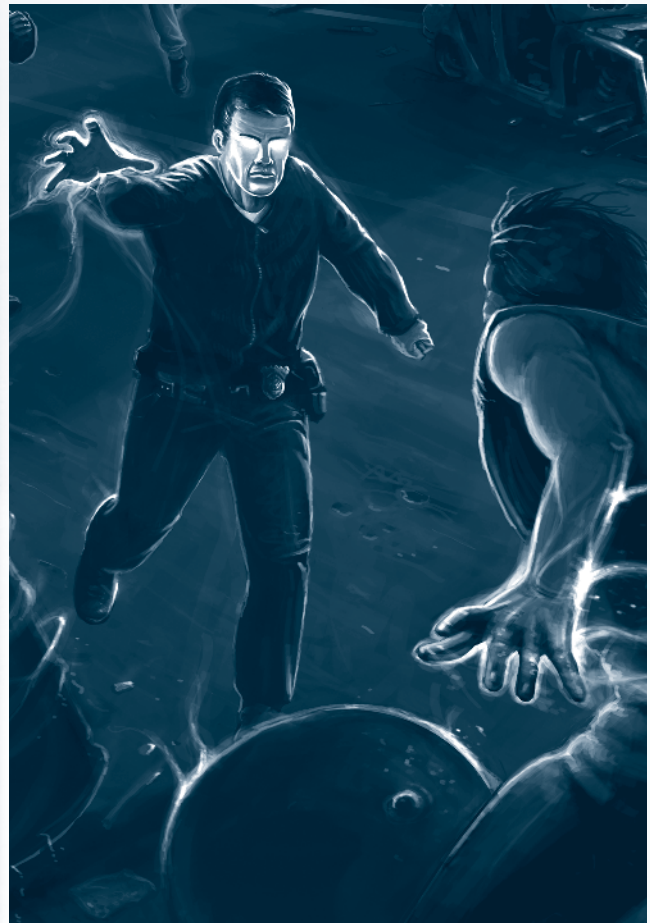
Connected: Cognition

Slang terms: carding, malpathy, fishing

THERMAL VISION

You can, at will, alter your perceptions so that you see the infrared spectrum instead of the normal visible spectrum. This allows you to see the heat signatures given off by creatures and objects, as if you are peering through a thermographic imager. Thermal vision grants you a limited ability to see through walls, provided that the walls are about as thin as those in a normal house. You see only heat

sources, and their rough shapes, on the other side of the wall.



Legal ramifications: In what many regard as a legal inconsistency, use of thermographic imagers is not regarded as an unreasonable search. Evidence procured through it is fully admissible without a search warrant. The ruling predates the SME, but has since been applied to mutant powers as well as to ordinary thermal technology.

Grid: D5

Connected: Voyeurism, X-Ray Vision

Slang terms: thermo, t-peeping, "the hots"

TOUCH

Your sense of touch is incredibly sensitive, even through a set of extra-thin latex gloves. You can find minute pieces of trace evidence with your fingertips, detect tiny flaws in objects, and differentiate between materials by the feel of their surfaces. In past cases, you have performed feats such as the following:

- Finding well hidden safes and compartments.
- Determining that a door knob at a crime scene had been recently replaced, leading to the discovery of a damaged knob in the suspect's possession.
- From the depth of microscopic indentations, determining that a document supposedly made by a particular antique typewriter was in fact produced by a different model.

Grid: B5

Connected: Phase, Reduce Temperature

Slang terms: feely, the rubs, Braille-o-vision

TRANSLATION

You comprehend all languages, written or spoken, living or dead. When confronted with an unfamiliar language, you must hear or read about a hundred words of it. Hieroglyphic or symbolic languages require a sample size of two hundred symbols, and a study time of ten to twenty minutes.

Grid: F1

Connected: Empathy

Slang terms: babelry, altavizio, hieroglyptics

X-RAY VISION

You can alter your normal vision to see through solid objects of a total thickness of up to 1 meter, at a maximum distance equal to your normal vision. You can adjust your vision to concentrate on the depth of field you're interested in, within this range. Thickness is treated cumulatively if you're seeing

through multiple objects space some distance apart: you can see through a six-inch wall if no other obstructions sit between you and your target, but will be thwarted if a truck packed tight with cargo pulls up in front of it. Any thickness of lead blocks the power completely.

When using this ability, you emit trace quantities of radiation, which is detectable with a sensitive Geiger counter.

Legal ramifications: Several mutants have been sued in cases where they are alleged to have used their X-Ray Vision to watch a particular subject for sustained periods, causing the subject to contract cancer. Although these cases have yet to wend their way through the courts, HCIU officers with X-Ray Vision must follow strict health guidelines to minimize the amount of time any living organism is exposed to their radiation.

Mutants with this power are sometimes hired as bodyguards by tabloid celebrities. They use their X-Ray Vision to fog film used by paparazzi. This has resulted in several lawsuits. Many paparazzi have abandoned film for digital cameras. (Privacy-conscious celebs reacted to this countermeasure by also hiring bodyguards with the Magnetism ability, used to wipe memory cards.)

Grid: D5

Connected: Light Control, Thermal Vision

Slang terms: bone-sight, the Ray, XRV, panty detector



THE FISH'S WIFE

“Ready?” Cece asked.

Lomax breathed in deep and lowered his squared shoulders, softening his stance for maximum reassurance. He didn't like this part of the job, but he was good at it. “Ready,” he said, gently ringing the doorbell.

A plump, pale woman, her dirty blond hair clinging to her shoulders in limp, unwashed curls, opened the door for them. She drew back, afraid, as if instinctively aware that the two drably clad people on the doorstep had come as bearers of bad news.

“Margaret Stagg?” Lomax asked.

She nodded. Margaret wore rose-colored sweats, the top and bottom from slightly different outfits.

Lomax badged her solemnly. “I'm Detective Lomax and this is Detective Chu. We're from the Heightened Crimes Investigation Unit. Can we come in?”

Margaret Stagg sobbed on a pastel floral print sofa. Lomax handed her a tissue. Cece held back, drifting discreetly through the room. In the guise of admiring Mrs. Stagg's figurine collection, she was scoping their modest bungalow for plain-sight clues.

Lomax patted the widow on the shoulder. “Don't be afraid to let it out,” he said. She wasn't bullshitting them; the shock and mourning were genuine.

“For all his faults, he was a good person.” The Fish's wife gasped in racking gulps of air. “Maybe he talked a little big. Said yes to everyone, when he should have said no. Let people take advantage of him. But he didn't deserve this.”

Lomax took her hand and held it, applying just the right pressure. “No one does. Mrs. Stagg, it's our job to see that the person who did this, pays.”

“I told him this would happen,” she said, blowing her nose. “But he wouldn't—couldn't—stop himself.”



"From what?"

"Gambling," she sniffled. "Michael owned hundreds of thousands of dollars in collectible comics. We were going to buy a bigger place out on the island. Then he got hooked, and it all went through his fingers."

"He owed people money?"

"Michael would never tell me who, but if you have his cell phone, it's number two on his speed dial."

The halls of Joe Leone's building might have been dotted with rat and cockroach droppings, but the interior was sure plush. Velvet upholstery. Oak furnishings. A wall of plasma screens displaying every ESPN channel, plus satellite feeds besides. Leone was thin, jumpy, in his late fifties, sporting a Platinum Rolex and thick loops of gold around his neck. He gestured at the detectives with nicotine-stained fingers.

"I let you in here as a courtesy, and also because you represented yourselves under somewhat false pretenses," he said. Microscopic spots of perspiration appeared along his upper lip. "I don't got to share no information with you, incriminating or otherwise."

Lomax deployed his best buddy-buddy smile. "Joe, Joe, we're HCIU. Since when is a little sports book among our concerns?"

His face grew paler still. "HCIU, huh?" Leone seemed to be unhappily contemplating the various unearthly powers these cops he'd let into his apartment might be able to throw at him. "Nonetheless. Me and my clients, I tell them it's like priest-penitent confidentiality."

"Nice TVs you got here," Cecilia said. "What they set you back, total? Fifty K? Sixty?"

Joe clearly did not like where this line of questioning was going.

Cecilia, having secured his attention, held her forefingers about six inches apart. A blue-white arc of electricity jumped between them. The air snapped and sizzled.

"You can't..." Joe trailed off, trembling.

"I wouldn't want to leave any burns on you, Mr. Leone," Cece said. "But you know the crazy thing about plasma screens? Once their charge gets screwed up, they're completely unrepairable."

"You couldn't!"

"Hard to prove," Lomax mused.

The bookie's eyes raked over his array of big screens. He sank into his burgundy couch, deflated. "What do you want to know?"

Lomax asked the questions. "Stagg was into you for how much?"

"Mid five figures."

"And how far is that from your whacking threshold, Joe?"

"Hey, I am a man of peace."

"But I bet your investors aren't. You think we didn't ask around about you before we came here, Joe?"

He tugged at his collar like a malnourished Rodney Dangerfield. "He was down a bunch, but he was still a good customer."

"How did you figure that?"

"He told me he had big money coming to him. Something to do with that nerd-bait he was involved with." Joe Leone laughed. "Mike Stagg, mutant hero. His biggest super power was missing the point spread every time."

"Nerd bait?"

"His comic book."

GENERAL POWERS

The following mutant powers are all treated as general abilities.

Range: Some powers are ranged, allowing you to produce an effect from a distance. If a power is described as ranged, but no specific range is given, that distance varies in accordance with your current pool value in the ability. If it is 3 or less, your range is twenty-five meters. When your pool is between 4 and 6, it is fifty meters. If your pool is 7 or more, your range is one hundred meters.

ABSORPTION

You can absorb the powers of other mutants, briefly wielding them yourself. To do so, you must be touching the subject, and succeed at an Absorption test. The base Difficulty equals the subject's pool in the ability you're attempting to absorb. If you, in the immediately previous combat round, damaged the subject with your bare hands, reduce the Difficulty by 25%, rounding up. If you have just damaged the subject with your Fangs (a connected power), reduce the Difficulty by 50%. (You qualify for only one of these reductions.)

If you succeed, you may now wield one of the victim's powers. You choose which power to absorb. You may spend 5 Absorption points to rob the victim of the power until you relinquish it; otherwise he may continue to access it, too.

If the absorbed power requires or allows you to spend points to use it, you spend Absorption points as if they are points in the borrowed ability.

You retain access to the power for an hour. Before it elapses, you may spend an additional Absorption point to extend the duration for another hour.

When you absorb another power, you must spend 7 Absorption points, or relinquish all other absorbed powers you're currently maintaining. You may



BELIEVABILITY VS. BALANCE

To reinforce the notion that the powers of the Quade diagram are genetic mutations existing in a believable world of cause-and-effect, the various general abilities have not been carefully balanced against one another. The real world is not game balanced: some abilities or items of technology are flat-out better than others. General powers in *Mutant City Blues* work the same way. Some grant their users a terrifying impact on their environment and others around them, while others are comparatively unimpressive. Neither are all abilities intended to be popular and useful choices for player characters working as police detectives. If players gravitate toward some abilities and not others, so be it. This too reflects the reality of the setting, indicating that enhanced individuals with certain power sets would be more likely to prosper in law enforcement than others.

This preference for reality simulation over game balance is specific to the feel of *Mutant City Blues*. Other GUMSHOE settings could equally easily favor balance over simulation, or another design priority over either element. For a more traditional supers game discarding the Quade Diagram and SME backstory, you may wish to dampen certain powers and boost others, or impose different acquisition costs for various general powers, based on their perceived efficacy.

relinquish a power regardless of how far you are from the person you absorbed it from, or what barriers lie between you.

If you are reduced to 0 or fewer Health points, all powers relinquish immediately.

Grid: D2

Connected: Fangs

Slang terms: spongeworthy, the squish, Nolte, suck-up

ALTER FORM

You can change your physical appearance, including your facial structure, build, weight, coloration, and even apparent gender. It costs 3 Alter Form points to adopt a new appearance, plus 1 point for every 15 kg of weight difference between your real form and the adopted one, and 1 point for every 15 cm of height difference.

If the new form is 30 or more kilograms lighter or heavier than you, or 30 cm or more shorter or taller, your sense of coordination suffers. The Difficulty of all Athletics, Scuffling and Shooting tests increases by 1.

You remain in the altered form for one hour, after which point you must spend 1 point per hour to remain in that form. Returning to your true form costs nothing.

You can't convincingly mimic the exact form of a known person; to do that requires the connected ability Impersonate.

When you alter your form to a member of the opposite sex, you acquire the outward characteristics, but not the internal organs to match. To cite an obvious example, you can't change into a woman and have satisfying sex, much less become pregnant.

Your new form must fall within the range of human possibilities: you can't give yourself a wolf head, grow wings, or replicate the anatomical changes brought on by other mutant powers.

Grid: E5

Connected: Impersonate

Slang terms: blobbing, morphing, switch-out, zeligging

ARMOR

At will, you can cause your skin to harden to the consistency of a rhino's hide. Like anyone's, your skin

cells contain a fibrous structural protein called keratin. This power causes your keratin to swell and harden on command.

Even more so than a real rhino's hide, armor protects you against kinetic impact, including bullets, blunt force, and unarmed blows in hand to hand combat, as well as injuries sustained when you fall or get crushed. For every 3 Armor points spent when activating your power, you reduce any instance of damage from any of those sources by 1 damage point.

It takes about a minute to activate your armor, and about ten to relax your keratin back to its normal state. The armor is extremely itchy; after you've had it activated for about ten minutes, the discomfort and distraction you suffer increases the Difficulty of all general ability tests by 1. The itch recedes five minutes after you've deactivated your armor.

Grid: B2

Connected: Blade Immunity

Slang terms: rhino, hairy, kevin

BLADE IMMUNITY

When struck with any cutting or stabbing weapon, including the natural weapons of animals and your fellow mutants, your skin cells arrange themselves to deflect the blade of your enemy's weapon. After you are struck with such a blow, you may spend 1 Blade Immunity point to reduce the damage dealt to 0.

Grid: B1

Connected: Armor, Scleroderma, Quills, Wall Crawling

Correlated: Secrete Acid

Slang terms: turnaway, knifeslip, schmenkel

BLOOD SPRAY

You can perform a ranged attack in which you send a high-pressure spray of your own blood gushing from your mouth. You hit your target on a successful Blood Spray test. If you hit, the opponent must make an Athletics test, the Difficulty of which equals 4 plus any Blood Spray points you spent on the attack. If he fails the test, he is knocked over and must, in lieu of his next attack, make an Athletics test (against the same Difficulty) in order to regain his footing. If he fails, he continues to slip on the blood, losing further attacks until he finally succeeds.

A blood spray attack inspires instinctive revulsion. Anyone within direct visual range must make a

Stability test or suffer the urge to flee. Victims with the Olfactory Center power add your Blood Spray pool to the Difficulty of this test.

Characters who do not flee suffer ill effects while they remain able to see and smell your blood: their Hit Thresholds decrease by 1, and the Hit Thresholds of anyone they're attempting to attack effectively increases by 1.

In addition to any Blood Spray points you spend, each use of this power costs you 3 Health points. Health points lost to Blood Spray use can be refreshed with a large meal of red meat, washed down with large quantities of orange juice or a similarly sugary drink, followed by an hour's nap.

Clever mutants will also find non-combat uses for this outré power: for example, to cover the lenses of inconvenient security cameras.

Legal ramifications: Individuals using this power in the commission of crimes are easily convicted. To use this power is to cover a crime scene with one's DNA.

Grid: D0

Connected: Command Insects

Slang terms: toad-eye, go-gore, splashing

COGNITION

Your brain exhibits the raw calculating power of an advanced supercomputer. You are able to perform complex mathematical calculations off the top of your head.

This general ability allows you to identify moments when players, including yourself, arrive at an essentially correct interpretation of facts gathered using your investigative abilities. You may at any time spend 3 Cognition points to test the validity of a theory of the case at hand. The GM responds by telling you whether the theory is hot, warm, cold, or freezing. As per the traditional kid's game of hotter-colder, hot means that you're correct, or very close to it, and cold means that you're far from the mark.

The GM may also simply respond that you haven't got enough information to come up with a rationally grounded theory. To qualify for analysis by the Cognition power, the reconstruction of an event must be reasonably complete. Generally speaking, it must name a suspect, describe the method by which the crime was committed, and stipulate a motive. It must

also account for any puzzling anomalies surrounding the event you're investigating. Cognition doesn't help you to identify lucky guesses or tell you, without evidence, whether a particular likely-seeming suspect is indeed the perpetrator.

Sometimes a player will lay out a correct theory of the case and then immediately discard or forget it. After some time has passed, if the group continues to head off in a less productive direction, the GM may tell you that someone at some point already hit on the correct theory. She does not specify when this happened, who said it, or what the theory was. This use of Cognition costs no points.

Grid: E3

Connected: Telepathy, Technopathy, Precision Memory

Correlated: Lightning Decisions

Visual cues: Individuals possess slightly to dramatically convex foreheads, accommodating their enlarged frontal lobes.

Slang terms: bumhead, calc, lobey

COMMAND AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES

You can order amphibians and reptiles to perform simple tasks in accordance with their instincts and physical capabilities. You can prompt the creatures to swarm en masse on a chosen point. Venomous snakes and reptiles can be induced to bite specific targets. Alligators and crocodiles can be sent out to attack, or ordered to guard particular sites as if they contain the animals' own eggs.

With each use of the ability, you may affect any number of creatures of a given zoological order, within the range of your power. The orders are: crocodilia, squamata (lizards and snakes), and testudines (turtles and tortoises.)

Amphibians and reptiles aren't known for their long attention spans, so lengthy or sustained actions call for high Difficulty numbers.

Grid: C1

Connected: *Panic Disorder*, Venom (Spit)

Correlated: Command Insects

COMMAND BIRDS

You can command birds to perform simple tasks in accordance with their instincts and physical capabilities. Birds that can be trained, such as hawks and parrots, can be imprinted instantaneously with



ANIMAL COMMAND POWERS

All animal command abilities (Command Amphibians & Reptiles, Command Fish, Command Insects, and Command Mammals) work as follows:

Test your Command [Animal Type] against a Difficulty set by the GM. The Difficulty increases as the gulf between the desired action and the creature's normal range of behavior widens. If the task is an ongoing one, the GM increases the Difficulty accordingly. Animals with more complicated behavior patterns can perform longer-term tasks.

In all cases, the power operates by establishing a psychic connection with the creature's brain structures or nervous systems. The communication is one-way only, from you to the creatures. They cannot convey information to you. Animal command does not render them intelligent. It is possible that your character anthropomorphizes them, attributing to them personality and volition they don't in fact possess.

Animals exhibiting strong paternal or maternal instincts can be prompted to undergo long periods of hunger or sacrifice their own lives to protect something. In effect, you are hijacking these instincts to your own ends. Creatures lacking these instincts behave in a more self-protective manner. They'll follow commands until they become hungry, and will then resume their standard search for food.

The range of your power is 10m per point in your Command [Animal Type] pool. The subject creature(s) must be within this range when you first establish the link and issue the command. After that, the distance between you and the creatures is no longer relevant: you can leave the area, or command the animals to do so.

If a creature has already been commanded by another mutant wielding the same power, you can cancel the previous set of commands with a successful use of the power. Ending an existing command always carries a flat Difficulty of 4. You must do the same to cancel an ongoing behavior you've ordered yourself. To avoid having to do so, build an endpoint into your first command, so that the creatures go back to their normal behavior after a specified condition is fulfilled.

more complex behaviors. These behaviors must be in line with what a handler could, over time, train the birds to do. You can get a mynah to repeat a particular phrase, but he'll never defuse a bomb for you.

With a single use of this power, you can command any number of birds who normally flock together. In other words, you can command as many seagulls as can be found within the ability's range, or a mating pair of falcons.

Grid: A3

Connected: Wind Control

Slang terms: Lancaster, hawking, feathering

COMMAND FISH

You can command fish to perform simple tasks in accordance with their instincts and physical capabilities. Mostly this means that you can get them to swim en masse in a particular direction. Predatory fish can be induced to attack chosen targets.

With a single use of this power, you can command any number of fish who normally school together.

If your rating in Command Fish exceeds 8, you can also command octopuses, squid, lobsters and crayfish. The octopus exhibits surprising intelligence and can perform an array of complex underwater tasks.

Grid: A4

Connected: Swimming

Slang terms: minnowing, aqua, blubbing, Nemo

COMMAND INSECTS

You can command insects, worms, and spiders, within the highly restrictive limits of their ingrained behavior and physical capabilities. Mostly this means that you can get them to move en masse to a particular location. You can command fireflies to fly together in a lantern-like grouping, station poisonous spiders where they are likely to sting interlopers, or send plagues of locusts to strip the crops of farmers

who've aroused your godlike wrath.

With a single use of this power, you can command all insects within its range.

Grid: D1

Connected: Blood Spray, Possession

Correlated: Command Amphibians & Reptiles, Spread Pathogen

Slang terms: the buzz, roaching, chitinator



COMMAND MAMMALS

You can command mammals, within the limits of their instinctual behavior and physical capabilities. If an animal is trainable to perform a given task, you can instantly get it to reproduce this learned behavior, even if this particular specimen is wild and has never performed it.

You can command as many specimens of a given species as are found within your ability's range.

Grid: C6

Connected: Environmental Awareness

Slang terms: furring, Rover, zigroy

CONCUSSION BEAM

You emit a beam of pure kinetic energy, which hits your opponents with a wave of blunt force trauma, visible as a rippling distortion in the air. Concussion Beam is a blast power; see sidebar for details.

Decide during character generation whether the beam is emitted from your hands or eyes.

Unlike most other blast powers, Concussion Beam is not countered by High Energy Dispersal, but instead by Kinetic Energy Dispersal.

Grid: D3

Connected: Kinetic Energy Dispersal

Slang terms: the slam, invisipunch, two-by-four



BLAST POWER OPTIONS

These powers have been balanced so that blast powers are more dangerous than heavy firearms, if you take a high rating. Most playtesters found them to be just right, but others wanted more spectacular effects. If you find blast powers to be too weak, you can do either or both of the following:

- Decrease the points per damage bonus point from three to two.
- Increase the maximum damage bonus to +8.
- If your players are willing, you can even do this retrospectively.

CURE DISEASE

By touching an ailing subject, you can cure any disease caused by infection or bodily degeneration. It cures mental disorders rooted in physical disorders of the brain, but not personality defects, such as sociopathy.

The Game Master chooses the Difficulty of your Cure Disease test according to the severity of the illness, with the following table as a guideline:



BLAST POWER

A number of mutant abilities are classified as blast powers; they all work in the same basic way, with minor variations listed in each ability description.

A blast power is a ranged attack generated from within your body, without aid of a weapon, and consists of a stream of energy or matter directed at an opponent.

Specify your damage bonus: To use a blast power, first specify any target within range. Your base damage is 0, the same as a light firearm. To increase your damage beyond its base modifier, spend 3 [Blast Power] points for each point of damage bonus. Your maximum possible damage bonus is +6, which costs you 18 [Blast Power] points. The points are spent as soon as you determine your bonus, before you make your test to see if you hit or not. When the target of a blast power is a player character, the attack's possible damage from the attack is kept secret from the targeted player. The only characters other than yourself who can tell how much damage a blast power stands to do if it hits are those with the Threat Calculus power (see p. 69) currently activated.

Assign points then make an attack roll: You then make an attack roll, to which you may, as with any other test, add any number of [Blast Power] points (not Shooting points) in your attempt to overcome the target's Hit Threshold. Remember the test result. This number is kept secret, unless you are using Optional Rule: Revealing Difficulty Numbers (p. 89)

Roll damage: If you succeed, you roll a die and add your damage modifier. This gives you the amount of damage your attack will dish out—unless your target avoids injury by **dodging** your blast.

Discover if your opponent dodges: The potential damage remains a secret from the target, unless he has Threat Calculus. To Dodge, he must pass an Athletics test, with the result of your [Blast Power] test as the Difficulty. If the Athletics test succeeds, the target takes no damage. All points you spend on hitting and on increasing your damage remain spent if the victim dodges. Dodging is a reactive action that opponents always get whenever they're targeted by a blast. It never costs them an action. They can Dodge as many times as they are targeted by blast powers in a round.

Dodge attempts may be variously described: the target may literally be leaping out of the way, but might just as likely be ducking behind an pillar, picking up an object to use as a shield, or using one of his own powers in a colorful way to avoid injury. GMs may rule that certain actions provide no defense against particular blast types. However, you don't get hit when you would otherwise succeed in dodging just because you described the wrong kind of action. Instead, the GM suggests an alternate, more credible description for your action. Any character or creature with an Athletics value can attempt a dodge. In your case, it might reflect long hours of martial arts training, whereas a dog might be instinctively leaping out of harm's way.

Carla directs a concussion beam at Grant. His Athletics rating is 10, giving him a Hit Threshold of 4. Carla makes a Concussion Beam test against that value. Her Concussion Beam pool is presently at 13 points. First, she decides whether to increase its damage beyond its base of 0. She spends 6 Concussion Beam points for a rating of +2 (that is, 3 Concussion Beam points for each point of damage modifier.) Carla's pool drops from 13 to 7.

Carla then makes her Concussion Beam test to see if she hits. She spends 1 point to increase her result by 1. Her pool goes down to 6. She rolls a 3, for a final result of 4, which is just enough to reach Grant's Hit Threshold. She hits him. For her damage die, she rolls a 6; with the +2 bonus, this means that Grant will suffer 8 damage if hit. Grant is not informed of this number; for all he knows, the modifier could be anything from 0 to +6.

Grant decides to attempt a dodge anyway, and makes an Athletics test. To succeed, he must beat Carla's result on her original Concussion Beam test, getting a final result of 4 or more. He has only 5 Athletics points left in his pool, but spends 3 of them in hopes of dodging the concussion beam. He rolls a 1, for a final test result of 4—just enough to avoid harm.

Later in the same combat, it's again Carla's turn to take a shot at Grant. Now that his Athletics is depleted, she figures she has a better chance with her concussion beam. Wanting to save her last few Concussion Beam points, she risks an unmodified roll, which pays off—she rolls a 6. She secretly decides to pour all of her 6 remaining concussion beam points into her damage modifier, getting a modifier of +2. She adds that to her die roll of 4, for a final damage value of 6.

Grant must get a 6 or more on his Athletics test, beating Carla's Concussion Beam test result, to dodge successfully. He spends his last 2 Athletics points on the test, but rolls a 2, for a final result of 4—not enough! He misses his Dodge, takes the 6 damage, and is now *seriously wounded*. (If Carla had instead shot him with a heavy firearm, he would only be *hurt*.)

In a typically gritty *Mutant City Blues* series, characters can't use Athletics to Dodge bullets or other Shooting attacks. However, it is appropriate to allow this when replicating a more traditionally over-the-top superhero universe. Routine bullet dodging may be a feature of other genres, too, pulp being a prime example.

Illness	Difficulty
Common cold	2
Influenza, mumps, chicken pox	3
Stinger venom (see p. 71)	4
Pneumonia	4
Diabetes	5
Alzheimer's	6
Ebola	6
Cancer, early stage	5
Cancer, advanced	6
Cancer, inoperable	8

The one infectious disease which remains consistently impervious to this ability is SEDS; see p. 82.

Defects arising from mutant powers can't be cured outright, but you can spend Cure Disease points to assist in a patient's recovery. You can't heal congenital defects, nor does this ability heal wounds or reverse damage already visited on a patient by the effects of illness, such as cardiac arrest or stroke. It can't change a patient's body morphology, and so can't be used to cure conditions like chronic obesity. Certain toxins are cured by Cure Disease; others, by Healing.

The difficulty of your attempt is also the number of hours before you can use the ability again.

Grid: E1

Connected: *SEDS Carrier*, Spread Pathogen

Slang terms: quinner, faithing, bac-smack

DEplete OXYGEN

Some people are said to suck the air out of a room. You are literally capable of this. You can deplete the oxygen from any area, centered on any point within range. The approximate size of the area you can deplete determines the Difficulty of your test, as follows:

Enclosed Space	Difficulty
Coffin	4
Compact car	5
Family car	6
SUV or van	7
Small room	8
Large room	9
Airplane	11
Cathedral	13
Entire skyscraper	15

If you're outdoors, surrounding air will immediately

move in, countering the effect. In an enclosed and relatively airtight space, people and creatures experience suffer near-immediate breathing trouble. Those in the area of effect lose 1 point from each of their general abilities (except Preparedness) per minute. These are refreshed after spending as many minutes as they spend in a state of oxygen deprivation breathing normally.

Victims in a fully airtight space suffer hypoxia. After 8 minutes, they must make Difficulty 8 Health tests, or suffer immediate and fatal heart attacks. Survivors must make additional Health tests every minute thereafter, with the Difficulty increasing by 2 each time.

Deplete Oxygen confers no immunity to oxygen deprivation, so if you're in the affected area, you suffer along with everyone else.

Deplete Oxygen immediately quenches all fires within its area of effect, whether enclosed or not. Neither the abilities Fire Projection or Spontaneous Combustion can be used within an affected area in an enclosed or airtight space.

Grid: A3

Connected: *Asthma*, Toxin Immunity (Inhaled)

Slang terms: asphyx, reteek, vaderize

DETECT INFLUENCE

When any individual within your direct line of sight is targeted, successfully or otherwise, by a mutant power that can be resisted with a Stability test, you perceive an aura of faintly glowing colorless energy around them. A trail leads from the aura in the direction of the mutant using the influence ability; if you can see the power-user, the trail clearly connects him to his victim.

You must consciously activate this power in order to use it.

Where the discovery of mental influence is not a core clue that advances the current investigation, make a Detect Influence test (base Difficulty 4) to see the telltale aura. If the influencer's rating (not pool) in the power equals 8 or more, the Difficulty is 5.

If the discovery is a core clue, treat Detect Influence as an investigative ability. If you activate the power, you succeed.



Grid: F3

Connected: Suppress Influence, Telepathy

Slang terms: early bird, moonglow, wormer

DISEASE IMMUNITY

When making Health test to resist infectious diseases or their effects, you may spend 1 Disease Immunity point to add 3 points to any roll. This immunity is effective against SEDS.

Disease Immunity does not protect you from diseases caused by environmental factors. When your power first manifested, it cured any congenital or genetic diseases you might have had. However, it did not protect you from any defects correlative with your mutant powers.

Grid: B1

Connected: SEDS Carrier

Correlated: Fangs, Pain Immunity

Slang terms: breather, smocker, Typhoid Stan

DISINTEGRATION

This blast power (see sidebar, p. 43) damages objects by breaking them down at the molecular level.

In addition to the normal combat damage you can do with any blast power, you can use it to destroy unliving matter. To do so, make a Disintegration test, with a Difficulty of 1 for every 5 kg of matter you wish to destroy. You may select any object within range.

Disintegrated matter crumbles into a fine dust.

Even a rookie criminalist can spot the telltale signs of a disintegration wound: they look as if large portions of tissue have been excised with surgical precision, albeit in an irregular pattern no surgeon would ever duplicate.

All blood vessels exposed by a disintegration wound immediately self-cauterize, making it impossible to bleed out from such an injury.

Grid: B2

Connected: Transmutation

Correlated: Healing, Radiation Projection

Slang terms: dusting, cancel, dissing

EARTH CONTROL

You can animate quantities of sand or soil, producing the following effects:

Earthquake: On a successful Earth Control test (Difficulty 4), you can cause a small, localized earth tremor to radiate outwards from any point within range. The tremor strikes a roughly circular area centered on your chosen point. The default diameter of the circle is 3m. You may attempt to affect a larger area by testing against a higher Difficulty, at +1 Difficulty for each additional meter of diameter. The affected area must be composed primarily of sand or soil; you can't cause a tremor on an expanse of barren rock.

The tremor is strong enough to damage architectural supports, cause unsecured objects to fall and possibly shatter, and to throw people to the ground. Anyone in the tremor zone (including yourself) must make an Athletics test against the same Difficulty as the Earth Control test. Those who fail are knocked off their feet and take damage, with a damage modifier of -2.

Sandstorm: You cause loose sand and grit to rise into the air, filling a roughly globe-shaped area of disturbance with a diameter of 1m for every Earth Control point you spend. You can move the center of the sandstorm to any spot within range. The sandstorm forces all creatures within the effect (except for you, who are immune to it) to hunker down and protect their eyes. Characters can make Stability tests (Difficulty 6) to fight this impulse and remain standing with eyes open, but Shooting and the use of ranged powers becomes impossible due to low visibility, and the Difficulties of all other physical abilities are increased by 3.

Grid: E6

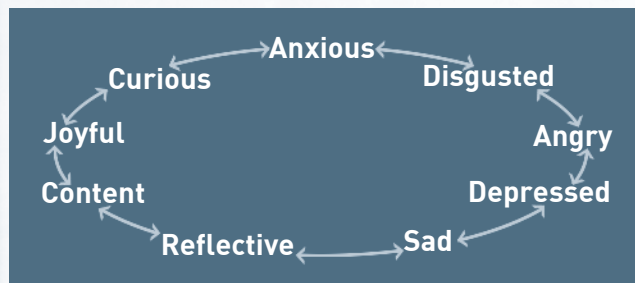
Connected: Magnetism, Spatial Awareness

Slang terms: dirt, shovel, moving

EMOTION CONTROL

You can alter the mood of any subject within range. The subject will feel all of the physical signs associated with the chosen emotion, in addition to its

psychological components. The default difficulty is 2, plus the number of steps it takes to get from the subject's current emotional state to the desired state on the following diagram:



Reese wants to use his Emotion Control to make Samira angry. She is currently content. The least number of steps on the chart between content and angry is four: content to reflective, reflective to sad, sad to depressed, and depressed to angry. The Difficulty of Reese's Emotion Control test will be 6: 4 steps, plus the default value of 2.

Players may describe their character's present moods, when necessary. The GM may rule that the character's described behavior better fits another mood—if the PC has been raging and cursing at an enemy for the past ten minutes, he's clearly angry, no matter how much the player claims he's simply reflective. GMs determine supporting characters' starting moods.

The subject's mood remains as directed for ten minutes. You can extend this period by spending 1 Emotion Control point for each additional ten minutes.

Victims questioning their sudden mood swings may make Stability tests (Difficulty 4); if successful, they realize that their emotions have been altered by an outside force. They still feel the emotion, but can restrain themselves from taking actions based on it.

Grid: F2

Connected: Low Impulse Control

Slang terms: shrinky-dink, stirring, brainbong

Legal implications: Attempts to criminalize non-consensual use of Emotion Control have been thrown into disarray by a Supreme Court ruling. Five out of nine justices accepted the proposition that the effects of the power are on a par with those achievable through normal human interaction. Fearing that this might set a precedent allowing the laying of charges for any behavior causing a shift in another's mood, the justices struck down the law. Civil suits involving

the use of this power have been thrown into doubt but continue to grind their way through the courts.

EMPATHY

Empathy is a general ability which supplements the use of your investigative abilities, particularly your interpersonal abilities, most notably by gauging, in real time, the success of your various interpersonal gambits during interrogations and other interviews.

Your brain's ability to perceive and process emotional cues from the people around you has been heightened to superhuman levels. To a naïve observer, you may seem like a mind reader, but really you're processing, at nearly instantaneous speed, a wide variety of overt and subtle signals as to the moods of the people you're observing.

At any time, you may spend 1 Empathy point to determine a subject's current prevalent emotional state. GMs may describe these however they prefer. Those who prefer a systematic approach can name any of the emotions from the diagram given above, under the Emotion Control power.

Also, you can monitor a subject for subtle increases and decreases in amusement, anxiety, arousal, anger, or sympathy. Keying in on a subject in this way costs 3 Empathy points. You must specify a single one of the aforementioned emotional states. You can then, over the course of a single scene or conversation, sense everytime that emotional state intensifies or decreases. This is especially useful during interrogation scenes, when you or another team member is trying to get a suspect to crack and sign a confession. By tracking ups and downs in anxiety level in response to specific comments and questions, you can tell when your verbal gambits hit home, and when they backfire, allowing the suspect to recover his composure.

Individuals suffering from certain mental conditions are difficult or impossible to track using empathy. Psychopaths do not exhibit identifiable anxiety or sympathy. Persons with the Dissociation defect (or a similar, non-congenital emotional disorder) may not register at all. When a subject suffering from Multiple Personality Disorder shifts personae, you lose your read on him, and must start over again, paying 3 Empathy points, as if you were keying in on an entirely different person.

Although you will never encounter a situation where you need Empathy to gather a core clue, a forgiving

GM may allow you to use it in place of an interpersonal ability, provided you describe your attempt in a suitably believable manner. She may, when similarly justified, also permit you to make interpersonal spends using Empathy points.

Finally, you can also heal Stability damage caused by traumatic events, and from sources such as Psionic Blast (p. 60.) Spend X Empathy points to restore X Stability points to any living subject. Recipients' final Stability pools may not exceed their Stability ratings.

Empathy can cure victims slain by psionic blasts. The Difficulty depends on the time that has elapsed since the patient died:

Time	Difficulty
0-5 minutes	6
6-15 minutes	8
16-59 minutes	10
1-2 hours	12
3-6 hours	16

Grid: F1

Connected: Nondescript, Observe Dreams, Sexual Chemistry, Translation,

Correlated: Endorphin Control (Others)

Visual cues: Individuals tend to have enlarged irises of unusual bright and uniform color, lending them a striking or mesmerizing quality. Several top movie stars exhibit the telltale signs of enhanced empathy, though all deny any mutant genes.

Slang terms: hug-out, furrow, the mopes

ENDORPHIN CONTROL (OTHERS)

You can stimulate endorphin production in the brain of another person within range. The subject experiences an exhilarating rush of physical pleasure which masks pain and increases tolerance for risk and danger.

To use the ability, make a Endorphin Control test against a Difficulty of 3. If the subject's Health pool equals 8 or more, the Difficulty is 4.

If successful, you may spend X Endorphin Control (Others) points. The subject gains X Health points and X Stability points. The effect expires after five minutes, after which the subject loses X Health and X Stability points. You can extend this period by spending

1 Endorphin Control (Others) point for each additional three minutes.

Legal ramifications: Authorities have, with limited success, attempted to subject willing recipients of Endorphin Control (Others) to the same legal penalties faced by heroin users; for more, see *Dorphing*, p. 127.

Use of this power without consent can lead to charges of administering a noxious substance, a crime punishable by up to one year in prison. Courts have applied this offense to Endorphin Control (Others) on the grounds that the power induces the production of a quantifiable substance within the subject's brain.

Grid: E1

Connected: *Addictive Personality*, Induce Mental Disorder

Correlated: Empathy

Slang terms: bingo, hammer, love monkey

ENDORPHIN CONTROL (SELF)

You can stimulate your own brain to produce endorphins at will, supplying a heady rush of pleasure that blots out both physical pain and emotional trauma. To activate the power, spend X Endorphin Control (Self) points. You gain X Health points and X Stability points for five minutes, after which you lose X Health and X Stability points. You can extend this period by spending 1 Endorphin Control (Self) point for each additional three minutes.

Grid: E1

Connected: *Addictive Personality*, Pain Immunity

Slang terms: benny, the benediction, Colonel Zodd, 5-20

ENTANGLING HAIR

Your hair is long, luxurious, and prehensile. You can use it to reach out and immobilize a single foe within range. Use it in lieu of an attack, testing Entangling Hair against your opponent's Hit Threshold. If successful, you have entangled your target, who is then unable to launch attacks or take other actions. Instead, assuming he doesn't just give in, he must struggle to free himself from your hair's constricting grip. Your target can escape by succeeding on an Athletics test, with your Entangling Hair pool as the Difficulty.

When you have a target entangled, you must devote all of your attention and energy to maintaining your grip and can't take any but the most trivial of physical actions.

This power's range is nonstandard, at 1m per rating point.

Grid: A1

Connected: *Scleroderma*

Slang terms: hopper, folf, leashing

ENTER DREAMS

By putting yourself in a trance state, you are able to enter the dreams of a sleeping person currently engaged in REM sleep. To do so, you must succeed at an Enter Dreams test, against a difficulty determined by the distance between you and the subject:

Distance	Difficulty
Touch	4
Unaided visual range	5
Within 500 m	6
Within 2 km	7
Within 200 km	8
Within 2000 km	9
Anywhere on planet	10

Where subjects possess any of the following mutant abilities, add their current pool in the relevant ability to your difficulty: Threat Calculus, Enter Dreams, Observe Dreams, Possession, Read Minds, or Telepathy. If they have more than one of these abilities, add the highest pool only.

You may remain within the subject's dream for one minute. After that, you must spend 1 Enter Dreams point per minute to remain in the dream. Note that, contrary to popular conception, dreams do not occur in a hyper-accelerated time scale; rather, they use film-like editing techniques to jump around from one scene to the next, giving the impression of a compressed chronology.

While in the dream, you may interact with the subject's dream persona. You may take control of his dream environment, shaping it to your will, introducing new characters, changing the setting, or altering the fundamentals of its illusion of reality.

If the changes you make to the dream seem too strange or diverge too sharply from the subject's usual dreams, he may achieve a state of lucidity. The subject's persona realizes that he is dreaming, and gains an

ability to manipulate the dream environment equal to your own. If he tries to alter your dream persona, he automatically fails—and identifies you as an intruder. A lucid dreamer will always remember what happened in a dream.

If the changes you make to the dream render it too terrifying, the dreamer will immediately awaken, in a state of extreme agitation. He will remember the dream, but, unless he was lucid, will not automatically know you were responsible for it. (This does not prevent him from figuring it out later, especially if he is aware of you and your ability.)

Legal ramifications: As per *Observe Dreams*, p. 31.

Grid: F0

Connected: schizophrenia

Slang terms: fuselation, sandscooping, remixing

FANGS

Your upper canine teeth are two to three inches long, sharp, and hollow. They can be used as weapons in Scuffling tests, with a +0 damage modifier.

If you also have the *Venom (Bite)* power, you can use this bite to deliver venom.

If you also have the *Plasma Deficiency* defect, you can use a bite from your fangs to extract plasma from a victim.

A successful fang strike counts as touching the victim, a requirement for use of the *Absorption* power.

You do not need to succeed at a Scuffling test to bite a willing or possessed subject.

You can spend 1 Fangs point to retract your fangs, so that they appear like normal teeth. It costs 1 Fangs point to extend them again.

Grid: D1

Connected: Absorption, Plasma Deficiency

Correlated: Disease Immunity, *Venom (Bite)*

Slang terms: stickers, pokers, vamps

FIRE CONTROL

You can manipulate any existing flame within range, performing the following stunts:

Extinguish flame (Difficulty 1 per cubic meter of flames)

Cancel a *Fire Projection* blast before it reaches its target. The character generating the blast calculates what the damage will be if it hits; you test *Fire Control* against it, using the potential damage as the Difficulty. If you succeed, blast has no effect.

Increase size of flame (Difficulty 1 per cubic meter added to flames)

Cause flame to leap from one fuel source to another (Difficulty 1 per m of movement)

Sculpt flame into cohesive shapes (Difficulty varies by complexity of shape, at GM's discretion, where 2 is a simple cube or pyramid, and 8 is an animated anthropomorphic figure)

After animating a manlike shape for flame, you can direct it like a puppet, to fight your enemies. Use your *Fire Control* ability as its Scuffling; its flaming fists carry a Damage Modifier of +2. It cannot be damaged by ordinary weapons, but is destroyed on contact with flame retardant substances or by another character's use of *Fire Control* against you. You must remain in direct visual contact with it, and can do nothing but direct its movements. If you are hit, entangled or forced to take other significant action, the flame loses its animation and cohesiveness.

Grid: D3

Connected: Toxin Immunity (Ingested), *Trance Susceptible*

Correlated: Kinetic Energy Dispersal

Slang terms: flameshape, fifth level wizard, Dalmatian bait

FIRE IMMUNITY

You can render your body impervious to fire damage. Spend 3 *Fire Immunity* points to reduce all damage from a single source of flame to 0. This includes all damage from multiple exposures to the same flame source, like a particular enemy's *Fire Projection* blasts, or blows from an animated *Fire Control* puppet (see above.)

When a single source of flame would otherwise do 3 or fewer points of damage to you, it is reduced to 0 without any *Fire Immunity* expenditure on your part.

Grid: D2

Connected: *Fire Projection*

Slang terms: no-scorch, coal walking, flameshrugger



FIRE PROJECTION

This blast power (see sidebar, p. 43) allows you to direct a jet of flame from your hands to a chosen target. Your hands are not damaged by your flame, but, unless you also have the Fire Immunity ability, any other part of you can be injured by your own blast.

Fire Projection may also be used to ignite flammable substances. The Fire Control ability can be used to cancel your blasts.

Grid: D2

Connected: Fire Immunity

Slang terms: bugging, arson powder, cinder

FLIGHT

You can fly unaided through the air. When executing aerial stunts or maneuvers, test your Flight ability against a Difficulty determined by the GM, based on the following sample difficulties:

Action	Difficulty
Maneuvering through tight space without reducing speed	4
Catching a falling person	5
Dodging falling debris	5
Righting an out-of-control aircraft	6

When your Flying pool contains 8 or more points, you fly (in combat) at 20m per round, or 10m with an action. (See p. 92 for combat movement rules.) When your pool is lower than 8, you fly at 10m per round, or 4m with an action.

To quickly fly long distances, pay Flight points, as follows:

Speed (in km/h)	Cost For 1km travel	Time To Travel 1km
40	2	90 sec
100	4	36 sec

Grid: B4

Connected: Heat Blast, Strength

Slang terms: zooming, j-packing, roof watching

FORCE FIELD

You can will into existence an invisible wall or bubble at any point within range. If you create a wall, the difficulty of the Force Field test to create it is 1 per square meter. The wall must conform to a straight line. The difficulty to create a bubble is 12 per meter of radius.

When you first create a Force Field, multiply your pool value (after taking into account the loss of any points you spent on the original test) by 4. This is the amount of damage your force field can sustain before vanishing. Through great mental concentration, you can fortify your extant force field by spending Stability points. The damage it can sustain before collapsing increases by 2 for every Stability point spent.

Once created, the force field remains stationary.

Though impervious to liquids and solids, gases pass through the force field unimpeded. It cannot be used to protect you from airborne toxins, or to suffocate those trapped inside it.

Force fields protect against lightning and disintegration blasts, but provide no shelter from light blasts.

Grid: F5

Connected: *Autism*

Slang terms: stayaway, the gate, boundary issues,

GILLS

You can breathe underwater, thanks to a set of gills which open up at the sides of your neck. By spending 2 Gills points, you can cause them to seal up, so that you look normal to all but the closest medical examination. To reactivate your gills, spend another 2 points.

Polluted waters may lack sufficient oxygen to breathe; make a Gills test against a Difficulty of 4 to remain normally active in any oxygen-depleted body of water.

Grid: A4

Connected: Swimming

Correlated: Sonar, Toxin Immunity (Inhaled)

Slang terms: scalo, the pinks, wetnap

GRAVITY CONTROL

You can increase the pull of gravity in a chosen area. The area is centered on any point within range, with a diameter of your choice, up to your current Gravity Control pool in meters. You may spend either 2 or 4 Gravity Control points to activate the power. If you spend 2, the movement rates of all characters within the area are halved. If you spend 4, anyone within the area must make an Athletics test with a Difficulty equal to your Gravity Control rating to move at all. In combat, this attempt takes all of the character's energy and attention, forfeiting their chance to make an attack during the current round. The gravity field remains in force for a number of rounds equal to your rating, or until you choose to drop it.

You can also decrease the pull of gravity on a particular object, causing it to rise into the air and float uncontrollably upwards like a balloon, where it remains for a number of minutes equal to the number of Gravity Control points you spend to activate the power. It then drifts gently downwards for an equal number of minutes, like a depleted helium balloon, coming to a harmless landing on the nearest horizontal surface. While suspended in the air, the object's weightless state may cause it to be buffeted by winds, so that its eventually lands far from its point of origin. Even a gentle breeze can move it a considerable distance. The object's mass is limited by the size of your Gravity Control pool (*before* you spend to activate the power):

Pool	Maximum mass (in kg)
1	1
2	2
3	4
4	8
5	16
6	32
7	64
8	128
9	256
10+	512

People and animals can easily (that is, without having to make a roll) slip out of the anti-gravity bubble created by this effect before they get more than a few inches off the ground. It works only on living creatures who are unwilling or unable to resist it.

Grid: E4

Connected: High Energy Dispersal

Slang terms: crushing, helium, planetary

HEALING

You can cure wounds and injuries (though not diseases or genetic defects) with a touch of your hands—skin contact is required. Spend X Healing points to restore X Health points to any living subject. Recipients' final Health pools may not exceed their Health ratings.

By making a Healing test, you can revive the recently dead. The Difficulty depends on the time that has elapsed since the patient died:

Time	Difficulty
0–5 minutes	6
6–15 minutes	8
16–59 minutes	10
1–2 hours	12
3–6 hours	16

No revivals are possible after six hours.

You may cure your own wounds, although if you also have Regeneration, you will find that a more economical method of repairing damage to your own body.

Certain toxins are cured by Healing; others, by Cure Disease.

Grid: B3**Connected:** Messiah Complex**Correlated:** Transmutation**Slang terms:** handsing, waveaway, fixiting**HEAT BLAST**

You can radiate a narrow blast (see sidebar, p. 43) of intense scorching heat.

In addition to damaging your opponents in combat, you can use your heat blast to melt objects. The difficulty depends on the type of substance, for example:

Substance	Difficulty
Wax	1
Plastic	3
Tin	4
Silver	5
Gold	6
Copper	6
Steel	7
Iron	8

You can melt 1 kg of the substance for each minute of effort you devote to the task. To keep your heat blast going for an extended period, spend 1 Heat Blast point for each minute after the first.

Heat Blast can cancel an Ice Blast before it reaches its target. The character generating the blast calculates what the damage will be if it hits; you test Heat Blast against it, using the potential damage as the Difficulty. If you succeed, the ice attack has no effect.

Grid: B5**Connected:** Flight**Slang terms:** the ripple, toaster, convection**HIGH ENERGY DISPERSAL**

With a quick shake of your head, you can disperse all energy generated by nearly any blast power within range.

By spending 2 High Energy Dispersal points, you can prevent most blast powers from doing any damage to any target, human, animal, or inanimate. The beam is dispersed after it is generated but before it hits its target. Any points expended by the blast power's wielder on its damage modifier remain spent. High Energy Dispersal does not counter Concussion Beam or Ice Blast.

The power has no visible effect but is accompanied by a

low swishing noise, like the air being let out of a tire.

Grid: E4**Connected:** Gravity Control, Lightning, Reflexes**Correlated:** Kinetic Energy Dispersal**Slang terms:** nuh-uh, tude, NYD**ICE BLAST**

You can create a stream of hard ice pellets and send them hurtling them at an opponent causing damage. This is a blast power; see sidebar, p. 43.

Ice Blast can be countered by Kinetic Energy Dispersal or Heat Blast.

Conversely, Ice Blast can cancel a Heat Blast before it reaches its target. The character generating the Heat Blast calculates what the damage will be if it hits; you test Ice Blast against it, using the potential damage as the Difficulty. If you succeed, the heat attack has no effect.

Grid: A2**Connected:** Reduce Temperature**Correlated:** Wind Control**Slang terms:** frosty, icicle, the shoulder**ILLUSION**

By overriding individuals' sensory systems, especially the visual, you can make them see nonexistent objects or beings. Doing so costs 3 Illusion points for each person affected.

Your targets may make Stability tests to discern the unreality of your illusion. They continue to perceive it for its duration but know that their senses are being interfered with. Difficulties of these Stability tests depend on the illusion's complexity:

Illusion	Difficulty
Inanimate object	9
Machine with moving parts	8
Animal	7
Person	6
Specific animal known to target (like a pet)	5
Specific person known to target	4
Entire location altered in appearance	3
Complex audio (like a song)	2
Fantastic creature or impossible vista	1

Where the illusion contains multiple elements, the Difficulty is based on the element imposing the lowest

challenge to the target.

If you create an illusion in which the family pet (Difficulty 5) turns on a tape recorder (Difficulty 8) with its nose and plays you the latest Arcade Fire tune (Difficulty 2), the final Difficulty derived from the lowest of those values, and is therefore 2.

If you are within range of your target, you may continue to direct the course of a successful illusion, putting dialog in the mouths of your imaginary characters, moving creatures about, and so on.

Subjects react to horrifying illusions as if mesmerized; this power, no matter how gruesomely executed, cannot be used to induce them to flee the scene. For greater understanding of this phenomenon, consult the scientific paper "Quasi-Hypnagogic State Variance Between Mutant Mental Abilities As Correlated To Neurotransmitter Activity", Dr. Aaron N. Rosenblum, *Journal Of Anamorophological Neurology Studies*, 12(1): 112-124.

Even if the subject believes an illusion which suggests he is being harmed, he takes no actual damage. A character who is already prone to cardiac arrest or severe anxiety may be required to succeed at a Health or Stability test, respectively, to stave off an attack.

Grid: E5

Connected: Multiple Personality Disorder

Slang terms: Caligari, sorcerer, psych

IMPERSONATE

You can expertly mimic the vocal timbre, speech patterns, gestures, body language and gait of a chosen subject. You must first closely observe the subject, either in person or on film or video, for at least an hour.

Your impostures are an incredible feat of brain processing power, and require sustained focus. After an hour, you must pay 1 Impersonate point or drop out of character. You may continue on by paying 1 point for each hour after that.

Impersonate grants you no psychic knowledge of the subject. However flawless your outward mimicry, you can still be tripped up when you take an uncharacteristic action or fail to answer a question correctly.

The process of mimicry does grant a limited instinctive insight into your subjects: when faced with a question you can't answer or a choice you don't know how to

make, you can spent 1 Impersonate point to convincingly finesse the issue. You don't get the right answer, but do find a convincing way to put off the question.

Alone, this ability requires you to use costume and makeup to disguise yourself as the subject in order to pass visual inspection. In tandem with the connected power Alter Form (p. 39), you can bodily alter yourself to match the subject, right down to fingerprints and retina pattern. (You do not, however, copy the subject's DNA or blood type.)

If the subject is behaving abnormally during your observation period, you will replicate these atypical traits. For example, if you try to impersonate Johnny Depp by watching the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies, you'll wind up acting like Captain Jack Sparrow, not the real person behind the performance.

Especially bold impersonators have been known to, after performing extensive research, move in with their victim's families, taking over their lives like cuckoos commandeering a nest full of hatchlings. The extended absences of their subjects are often secured through murder. In at least one notorious case, the wife of a wealthy victim in such a scheme stood by the impersonator at trial, proclaiming him infinitely more loving and attentive than the original.

Legal ramifications: Gaining advantage by posing as another person constitutes fraud, and may also be punishable under identity theft statutes. Law enforcement operatives using Impersonate to go undercover in the pursuit of their official duties are granted waivers shielding them from prosecution on either count.

Grid: E5

Connected: Alter Form

Slang terms: cowbell, Limewire, catwalk

INDUCE AGGRESSION

You can send a psychic signal directly into a subject's limbic system, prompting him to launch an immediate attack against the person on the scene he considers to be most threatening to him. If he considers more than one person equally threatening, he attacks the one closest at hand. Although the power itself grants you no influence over your victim's choice of target, you can always try to manage the situation in other ways to achieve the desired result.

To use this power, make an Induce Aggression test against the standard Difficulty of 4. If successful, the subject may make a Stability test, with the result of your test as the Difficulty. If he succeeds, the power has no effect. In rare cases where the victim doesn't feel remotely threatened by anyone around him, the GM may grant a bonus to his Stability test. It is frighteningly easy to use this power to turn people against their loved ones and family members. Underneath the strongest and most sincere bonds of affection lurk deeply buried fears and resentments, which this ability ruthlessly exploits.

When you Induce Aggression, your eyes briefly but obviously glaze over, as if covered with opaque red contact lenses. The subject, if affected, then displays the same red-eyed appearance for the effect's duration.

The effect lasts for 3 rounds of combat. To extend it past then, spent 1 Induce Aggression point for each additional round.

Legal ramifications: Acting under the influence of Induce Aggression has been accepted as an affirmative legal defense against assault and murder charges. The vagaries of the justice system being what they are, defendants in several high-profile cases have nonetheless been convicted, despite evidence that they were targeted by it.

Grid: C0

Connected: Induce Fear

Correlated: Induce Mental Disorder

Slang terms: matador, the pike, the angries

INDUCE FEAR

You can send a signal deep into a subject's limbic system, prompting him to flee the scene immediately in terror.

To use this power, make an Induce Fear test. If successful, the subject may make a Stability test, with the result of your test as the Difficulty. If he succeeds, the power has no effect. If he fails, he must exit the area at maximum speed using the best means at his disposal. He continues to flee for at least ten minutes. When he first begins his flight, you can increase that time by spending 1 Induce Fear point for each additional five minute interval.

Even after he stops running, the subject feels a powerful aversion to the spot where you terrified him. He must make a Difficulty 4 Stability test to return there. After having done so, he still feels a nagging unease at that

location, which dissipates over weeks, months, or years, depending on how often he has occasion to return to that spot. If you scare him out of his own home, for example, he readjusts much more quickly than if you terrorized him from a location he rarely visits.

Induce Fear mirrors the visual manifestations of Induce Aggression (above) but with bright yellow eyes.

Connected: Induce Aggression, *Panic Disorder*

Slang terms: limbo, the terrors, number nineteen

INDUCE MENTAL DISORDER

You scramble the electrical signals in a victim's brain, causing it to mimic the symptoms of a mental disorder of your choice. You can replicate the stage-two effects of the defects Attention Deficit Disorder, Autism, Depression, Dissociation, Low Impulse Control, Messiah Complex, Panic Disorder or Schizophrenia. Or you can induce the following disorders:

Amnesia: The subject is unable to recall details of his identity or past, though he retains a general cultural knowledge.

Kleptomania: The subject is seized by a self-destructive compulsion to steal things, pursuing both the thrill of illicit thievery and the mortifying attention of being caught.

Pathological Liar: Driven by wounded self-esteem, the subject lies compulsively, to make himself seem more impressive than he really is.

Paranoia: The subject becomes convinced that he is under constant surveillance by unseen enemies who mean to destroy him, and everyone he meets may be one of their minions.

Sociopathy: The subject pursues his goals without conscience, and may perform dangerous or sadistic acts for the sheer sick joy of it.

A collaborative GM may allow you to propose additional disorders.

To use this power, make an Induce Mental Disorder test. If successful, the subject may make a Stability test, with the result of your test as the Difficulty. If he succeeds, the power has no effect.

The simulated mental disorder holds sway over the victim for three hours. When you originally use the

power, you can extend the duration by spending 1 Induce Mental Disorder point for each additional three hour period.

When you use this power, your eyes exhibit a gray, swirling pattern like the eye of a hurricane. They remain this way for the effect's duration.

Legal ramifications: Giving new life to the term "temporary insanity", courts allow defendants to claim influence of this power as an affirmative legal defense against various crimes. Juries, who typically resist even valid insanity defenses, are sometimes responsible for wrongfully convicting affected defendants.

Grid: C0

Connected: Endorphin Control (Others)

Correlated: Induce Aggression, Induce Mental Disorder

Slang terms: Dr. Shakey, crazymaker, straitjacket

INVISIBILITY

You can bend light around your body, so that you can't be seen by those whose vision is confined to the visible spectrum. Cameras and other standard imaging devices are likewise incapable of registering your presence. You can, however, be detected by thermal imagers and mutants with the Thermal Vision power.

To become invisible for ten minutes, spend 1 Invisibility point. At the end of this period, you may remain invisible for another ten minutes by spending another point, and so on.

Where opponents who can't see you are concerned, your Hit Threshold increases by 1 if you are touching someone or if your last action was an attack, by 2 if you are moving but not otherwise touching or attacking criteria, and by 3 if you are standing perfectly still. Environmental conditions, like snow or sand, that make your position clear even to those who can't see you, may fully or partially nullify Hit Threshold increases, at the GM's discretion.

While invisible, you may spend Invisibility points as Infiltration or Surveillance points, gaining a +2 bonus to your roll for each Invisibility point spent. In the former instance this may enable you to surprise opponents; see *Surprise*, p. 92.

Grid: D5

Connected: Light Control, Multiple Personality Disorder

Slang terms: wipeout, seethru, goodbye

KINETIC ENERGY DISPERSAL

With a wave of your hand, you can disperse all kinetic energy invested in a single movement. This includes blunt force trauma, the force from bullets, the crushing energy of falling debris, impact with objects moved by Telekinesis, and the blast powers Concussion Beam, Ice Blast and Water Blast.

By spending 2 Kinetic Energy Dispersal points, you can reduce damage from any single blow or source to any single subject within range, including yourself, to 0. This occurs after any ability points have already been spent by the party generating the kinetic energy.

The power is visible as a swirling vortex that appears momentarily in the air at what would otherwise be the point of impact, accompanied by a crackling noise reminiscent of an unfolding ball of cellophane.

For reasons anamorphologists have as yet been unable to explain, Kinetic Energy Dispersal does not prevent damage from bladed weapons, even though they are propelled by kinetic energy. Dr. Lucius Quade has argued that the fault lies within the mutant's imposition of a false mental framework on his own abilities, but has so far been unable to prove his hypothesis.

Grid: D4

Connected: Limb Extension, Concussion Beam

Correlated: High Energy Dispersal, Light Blast

Slang terms: jiu-jambo, bulletproof, trix

LIGHT BLAST

You can project a beam of blinding white light from your hands. This is a blast power; see sidebar, p. 43.

Light Blast is slightly less damaging than other blast powers; you begin with a base damage modifier of -1, to which any Light Blast points you spend are then added.

Victims of a Light Blast must make Difficulty 4 Health tests after each hit. Those who fail suffer momentary, partial blindness, suffering a +3 increase to the Difficulties of any tasks requiring clear vision, as per the GM's discretion. This condition lasts until the end of the next round. Penalties from successive light blasts are not cumulative.

Grid: D4

Connected: Light Control

Correlated: Kinetic Energy Dispersal

Slang terms: lumo, whiteout, spotty

LIGHT CONTROL

You can increase or decrease the light output of any or all light sources within range. Make a Light Control test; the Difficulty equals 2, plus the number of steps of change up or down on the following list:

- No light emitted
- Candle
- Incandescent (less than 100 W) or glass halogen
- Incandescent (100 W) or quartz halogen
- Fluorescent, LED
- Arc lamp
- Sodium lamp
- Sunlight

To plunge an area illuminated by glass halogen lights into darkness would incur a Difficulty of 4: the base of 2, plus 2 for the two steps down from "glass halogen" to "no light emitted."

You can't blot out the sun, or other massive or distant light sources, but can dampen their rays within a sphere centered on any point within range. The sphere has a diameter of 1 m per Light Control point in your pool.

Grid: D5

Connected: Invisibility, Light Blast, X-Ray Vision

Slang terms: switch, panel, dimmer

LIGHTNING

Lightning is a blast power; see sidebar, p. 43.

Lightning, which follows a jagged line to find its target, is hard to dodge. Add 2 to the Difficulties of targets attempting to dodge lightning blasts.

Grid: E4

Connected: High Energy Dispersal

Slang terms: jaggy, zap, golfhater

LIGHTNING DECISIONS

When determining whether you are an aggressor or defender in any contest, you may spend 2 Lightning Decisions points to be considered the aggressor, regardless of your pool number in the relative ability, compared to the other contestant.

If the other contestant also has Lightning Decisions, the character willing and able to spend the highest number of Lightning Decisions points is declared the aggressor.

If you are both willing to spend the same number of

Lightning Decisions points, your pools in the ability both drop by that amount, and the normal method of determining aggressor and defender is then used.

Grid: E3

Connected: Threat Calculus, *Attention Deficit Disorder*

Correlated: Cognition

Slang terms: yepster, jumper, tinsky

LIMB EXTENSION

You can extend your arms or legs far beyond their normal length. Your bones and musculature enter a semi-liquid state for the duration of the effect.

Spending 1 Limb Extension point gains you up to an additional meter of length on one limb. You may extend a single limb by more than one meter, and/or extend multiple limbs at once. Extension becomes tiring after ten minutes, after which you must make a Health test (Difficulty 4) or be forced to retract the limb or limbs in question. If successful, you must test again after each ten minute interval, with the Difficulty increasing by 1 each time. Retracting costs you nothing.

Grid: C4

Connected: *Arthritis*, Kinetic Energy Dispersal

Correlated: Strength

Slang terms: stretch, bandman, armstrong

MAGNETISM

You manipulate magnetic waves, allowing you to perform the following stunts:

Demagnetize: By spending 1 Magnetism point, you can erase any single item of magnetic media, including hard drives, diskettes, credit card strips, and recording tape, within X meters of your fingertips, where X is your current Magnetism pool, before taking the required expenditure into account.

Magnetize: By spending 1 Magnetism point per kg of a metal item's weight, you can charge it with magnetic energy, causing it to adhere powerfully to any larger metal object. The force is sufficient to send the object hurtling dangerously through the air to its destination.

Redirect Bullets: When another character fires a gun within range of you, you may pay 2 Magnetism points to choose a new target for the bullets, who must also be within range. Wait to announce you're using this stunt until after the shooter has fired the gun, making his test and deciding how many Shooting points to add to it. You must then make a Magnetism test, at least matching the

shooter's result; otherwise, you fail to snag the bullets with your magnetic field and they continue on to their original target. If you succeed and if your Magnetism test exceeds the new target's Hit Threshold, they hit your target. The bullets lose kinetic energy when magnetically redirected, delivering 2 damage points less than they otherwise would. If your Magnetism result is enough to snag the bullets but does not match the new target's threshold, you spoil the original attack but fail to harm the new target.

Grid: E6

Connected: Earth Control

Slang terms: uby, filer, fridge

MEMORY ALTERATION

You can send a scrambling electronic pulse into a subject's brain, interfering with his centers of memory storage. You can erase memories from a given period, possibly masking the period of amnesia with false memories of your choice.

To simply erase an individual's memory of a given block of time, make a Memory Alteration test, against a Difficulty determined by the interval you want to obliterate:

Interval	Difficulty
0–5 min	4
6–10 min	5
11 min–1 hour	6
1–3 hours	7
1 day	8
1 week	11
1 month	14
1 year	17
3 years	20
10 years	23
Erase all memories	26

To implant a false memory, multiply the Difficulties given above by 1.5, rounding up to the nearest whole number. The memory is only as detailed as the player's verbal description of it, so it's much easier to implant a believable memory that covers a short interval than one spanning a longer period.

To use this ability, you must touch the victim's cranium with your bare hands. If he knows you've done this, he'll seek out means to recover his memory (see below), so you'll either want to include the alteration in your selected interval, or ensure that he is under sedation or

otherwise unable to accurately perceive your actions.

When you tamper with his memory, you can spend any number of additional Memory Alteration points; these are added to the Difficulty of any Stability tests the victim may later make to recover his stolen recollections.

The memory alteration is of indefinite duration. Whenever the subject might have reason to regain his memory, he may make a Stability test (base Difficulty 4.) Reasons to make this test might include hypnotic regression therapy, or traumatic events evoking the suppressed incident. If your victim succeeds, he remembers the truth, and rejects his false memories.

Although of little to no use in ethically performed police work, Memory Alteration is a power in great economic demand. Mutants with this power set up private practices, erasing patients' unwanted memories. They enforce corporations' draconian non-disclosure agreements, erasing the memories of top executives before they leave to join competing firms. Spy agencies are known to use memory alteration to remove classified data from the minds of agents and operatives.

Legal Ramifications: Non-consensual memory alteration is a felony carrying a recommended sentence of 5–10 years per offense.

Grid: E2

Connected: Megalomania

Slang terms: wiper, deja didn't, vodka

NATURAL WEAPONRY

You are equipped with either claws or bony spikes. If you choose spikes, decide whether they protrude from your knuckles, ulna, elbow, or forehead.

When using these weapons in Scuffling combat, your Damage Modifier is +2.

You may retract or extend your natural weapon(s) by spending 2 Natural Weaponry points.

Grid: C5

Connected: Arthritis

Correlated: Olfactory Center

Slang terms: claws, spikes, scratchers

NONDESCRIPT

You blend easily into crowds and small groups, leaving little impression when you're present, and remaining profoundly unmemorable after you depart. It's not that you're invisible; instead, you seem so boring that no one

thinks to engage with you.

Activate this power by spending any number of Nondescript points. To notice you while present or remember you later, others must make Stability tests (Difficulty 4 + your Nondescript expenditure.)

Your preternatural dullness lasts for as long as you remain in a single location, keeping your head down and doing whatever everyone else is doing.

If you do something dramatic while the power is activated, people take notice, and can, if they want, take appropriate measures to stop you. However, afterwards they will remember the incident but may have trouble giving anything but the vaguest description of you. They can remember you more distinctly by making Stability tests (Difficulty 4 only.)

Grid: F0

Connected: Empathy

Slang terms: nowheresville, huh, mumbles

NIGHT VISION

You can switch your visual senses to see plainly at night or in complete darkness. You perceive the world in the green hues of a night vision scope. Unlike technological night vision equipment, you can even see in places where no radiation is present, a fact anamorphological science has yet to explain convincingly. Spend 1 Night Vision point for every ten minute interval of active power use.

Grid: D6

Connected: Microvision, *Voyeurism*

Correlated: Olfactory Center, Spatial Awareness

Slang terms: N-peeper, greenscope, blairbing

PAIN IMMUNITY

You can shut down your body's pain receptors at will.

You may spend 3 Pain Immunity points to remove all effects of a single source of pain. These include:

- The need to make Stability tests to avoid taking an unwanted action motivated by pain, including giving into torture or ceasing an activity that's causing you injury.
- The need to make Health tests to avoid passing out from pain or injury.
- Any Difficulty modifiers you incur due to distraction from pain or injury.

This power does not protect you from injury, just from

the unpleasant sensory warnings that accompany it.

Grid: E1

Connected: Endorphin Control (Self)

Correlated: Disease Immunity

Slang terms: macho, wireless, nullgrunt



PHASE

You can render yourself insubstantial, walking through walls and other solid barriers. Spend 3 Phase points to pass through any single barrier. Barriers of 0.5 meters or more may, at the GM's discretion, cost an additional 3 points for each half a meter of thickness.

You may also render yourself immune to most weapons by becoming insubstantial; this reduces the damage suffered from any attack to 0 and costs you 3 Phase points per attack. You attempt this after your attacker has made a successful attack test, but before he announces the result of his damage roll. (You do not lose your opportunity to phase if the GM or opposing player forgets that you have the power and goes straight to the announcement of damage.)

A suspect takes a swing at you in the interrogation room, using his Scuffling ability. He spends 2 Scuffling on the test and rolls a 2, for a test result of 4, enough to get past your Hit Threshold. "Are you going to phase?" asks your GM. You decide to do so, spending 3 Phase points. The GM does not bother to roll damage, so you never know how hard a blow you just spent your points on.

Phasing offers you no protection against blast powers, except for Concussion Beam and Ice Blast.

You can solidify a hand or other extremity while still inside another person (or living organism), but this destroys not only all of your opponent's tissue with which you overlap, but the extremity as well. You must succeed at a Scuffling test to move your fist or foot into a critical organ, like the brain, heart, or liver.

You then automatically reduce the opponent to -11 or -12 Health, depending on the location of the attack. You are reduced to -8 Health. If you recover, you lose one-third of your Health rating, and no longer have the hand or foot. For obvious reasons, this is an ill-advised move in all but the most desperate circumstances. Having Regeneration is no help here, as the lack of an extremity to reattach prevents you from fully restoring yourself.

You can phase up to about a kilogram of clothing and small personal effects with you. You cannot solidify clothing or other objects while inside another person (or living organism.)

Legal Ramifications: Phase is an Article 18 power; see p. 124.

Grid: B2

Connected: *Dissociation, Touch*

Slang terms: ghosting, slipout, tweening

PLANT CONTROL

You can invest all plants within a discrete area with rapid growth and mobility, allowing them to immobilize one or more targets. Choose any point within range as the center of the effect; it works on all vegetation within a circular area with a diameter of 1m per point in your Plant Control pool (*before* any points are spent to increase your test result or the number of targets.) Designate the number of targets you want to restrain, paying an additional 1 Plant Control point for each after the first.

If your result equals or exceeds a target's Hit Threshold,

he is immobilized. Assuming he resists, he must spend his next action attempting to free himself from the entangling vegetation. He succeeds on a test of Athletics, Strength, or any blast power against a Difficulty of 4. You may increase the Difficulty (for all entangled opponents) by X, by spending X additional Plant Control points.

Obviously, this power is useless in areas without significant plant life, like many streets in highly urbanized areas.

Grid: E0

Connected: Plant Communication

Slang terms: thumbing, gardening, mad salad

POSSESSION

You can override the consciousness of a chosen victim, controlling his motor impulses and impelling him to perform one or more actions. The subject must be within 1 m of you; you must be able to make direct eye contact with him. Make a Possession test (Difficulty 4.) The victim must be able to see your eyes; it doesn't matter whether you can see his or not. Mirrorshades and similar devices offer no protection against possession. However, during fights, chases and other fast moving situations where eye contact is tough to establish, the Difficulty of your Possession test may increase from +1 to +4, at the GM's discretion.

On a success, the subject must make a Stability test with your Possession result as the Difficulty. If he fails, you override his volition. His eyes become glassy; if you impel him to speak, his voice is slow and slurred. Even a layman can spot these obvious symptoms of a possession in progress. It takes an expert in the EMAT protocol to spot the signs of recent, but no longer active, possession.

At no further cost, you can command the subject to perform one action. Each action after that costs you an additional 4 Possession points. You may not access any Investigative abilities, or the following general abilities: Threat Calculus, Cognition, Empathy, Enter Dreams, Illusion, Impersonate, Mechanics, Medic, Observe Dreams, Precision Memory, Read Minds, or Surveillance. Other abilities may be used but suffer a +2 Difficulty modifier. The victim's personality is completely suppressed, so you can command his body to do whatever you want, regardless of his conscience or moral code.

If the victim's failed Stability test came within 2 points of the needed Difficulty, he remains aware but helpless as

you control him. Otherwise, he remains unaware of what he is doing, and retains no memory of it thereafter.

Possession continues indefinitely, until you perform any other action requiring you to use an investigative ability, or make a general ability test.

When you first establish the possession, and each time you force the victim to take action, your eyes glow bright green. This effect can easily be seen by nearby witnesses and captured on still or video camera.

Legal ramifications: Use of the Possession power, which is nonconsensual essentially by definition, is a felony punishable by up to 10 years in prison. Claims of possession have been accepted as an affirmative legal defense against various criminal charges. Juries, however, remain skeptical where solid evidence of possession cannot be shown by defense counsel.

Grid: D1

Connected: Command Insects, *Plasma Deficiency*

Slang terms: override, puppet, kermass

PRECISION MEMORY

You display astonishing recall of events and visual details. You can recite the contents of a thousand-word document verbatim after glancing at it for a few seconds.

Whenever you, the player, make a statement based on a faulty recollection of prior events in the game, the GM immediately steps in to correct you. This is a mistake, you, the character, would never make. Each correction costs you 1 Precision Memory point. If your pool is at 0, the GM allows your faulty memory to stand.

You may retrospectively gain clues that were available to you in prior scenes, by thinking back on the scene. This costs you 1 Precision Memory point per scene, whether or not you recover useful clues. These must be clues that could logically be pieced together without returning to the scene or conducting further physical interactions with it. You can't know what was in a box if you didn't open it. However, remembering its outer markings in detail, you can retrospectively employ your Art History ability, identifying it as a 16th century piece in the style of Benvenuto Cellini. Given the above limitation, you can even make spends retroactively. This effect is only useful in games using the standard GUMSHOE clue gathering rules, where you have to look in the right place and request a spend. It is of no particular benefit in games using the optional no-spend rules on p. 88.

Grid: E3

Connected: Cognition, *Megalomania*

Slang terms: eidetic, total, replay

PSIONIC BLAST

You emit a wave of electrical energy which interferes with a living being's brainwaves, causing mental trauma and, in some cases, brain damage. This is a blast power; see sidebar, p. 43.

Psionic Blast differs from other blast powers in that it reduces the victim's Stability instead of Health. However, the damage suffered is a physical blunt force injury to the brain, rather than emotional trauma. If a Psionic Blast drives a character's Stability pool to 0 to -5, the victim is Hurt. If it is between -6 and -11, the victim is Seriously Wounded and must make a Consciousness test. If Psionic Blast drops a Stability pool to -12 or below, the victim is dead.

Damage from Psionic Blast can be healed by the Empathy ability. The victim heals naturally at a rate of 2 Stability points per day.

Grid: D3

Connected: Threat Calculus

Slang terms: brainblast, mindzap, hangover

QUILLS

Your back, shoulders and forearms are covered with dozens of long, spiny quills, like those of a porcupine. Your damage modifier when Scuffling unarmed is +1. Whenever an opponent who is Scuffling with you gets a Scuffling test result exactly equal to your Hit Threshold, that opponent suffers a die of damage, plus your +1 modifier.

You may spend 2 Quills points to retract or extend your quills.

Grid: A1

Connected: Blade Immunity

Slang terms: porcupine, acupuncturer

RADIATION IMMUNITY

Whenever you suffer damage from Radiation Projection, or any other radiation source, you may pay 1 Radiation Immunity point to reduce the damage to 0.

If you also possess the Radiation Projection power, you are automatically immune to the damage inflicted by your own power, and needn't pay points to reduce it to 0. You must still pay when targeted by other mutants'

Radiation Projection.

Grid: C2

Connected: Radiation Projection, Toxin Immunity (Ingested)

Slang terms: shroomer, clicky, Homer

RADIATION PROJECTION

You may bombard targets with highly concentrated radiation. This is a blast power; see sidebar, p. 43.

Whenever you use your power, everyone within X meters of you (where X is your current Radiation Projection pool) must make a Health test or lose 1 point of Health to radiation damage. This includes you, unless you also possess the power Radiation Immunity.

At the end of any scene or combat in which you used your power, everyone who took damage from you must make a Health test against a Difficulty equal to the number of Health points you cost them. Again, this includes you, unless you also have Radiation Immunity. Characters who fail contract radiation sickness. Every 24 hours, they suffer an amount of damage that doubles each day: 1 Health points the first day, 2 the second, 4 on the third, 8 on the fourth, and so on. The doubling continues until the character is healed (only the Cure Disease power will do the trick) or reaches -12 Health points and dies.

Legal Ramifications: Radiation Projection is considered an Article 18 power (see p. 124); mutants possessing it face severe legal restrictions. If your character has this dangerous and much-feared power, you'll have to explain to the GM's satisfaction how you ever got hired onto the HCU. If you are ever caught using it, on duty or off, it will probably spell the end of your career, requiring you to retire the character.

Grid: C3

Connected: Radiation Immunity, Self-Detonation

Correlated: Transmutation

Slang terms: millirad, Chernobyl, three-mile

REDUCE TEMPERATURE

You can reduce temperatures in a spherical area centered on any point within range. The diameter of the sphere is 1m for each point in your Reduce Temperature pool. To activate the power, make a Reduce Temperature test. The Difficulty equals 3, plus 1 for every 5°C you want the temperature to drop.

Grid: A2

Connected: Ice Blast, Touch

Slang terms: popsicle, freezer, chiller

REFLEXES

You react to incoming threats with preternatural speed.

You may spend 2 Reflexes points to automatically succeed at any dodge attempt (see p. 43) that would normally require an Athletics test. This includes dodges of blast powers.

To avoid a successful Shooting or Scuffling attempt, make a successful Reflexes roll, with the result of the Shooting or Scuffling attempt as your Difficulty.

Grid: E4

Connected: High Energy Dispersal, Speed

Slang terms: hooper, fly-fast, bounce

RESIST INFLUENCE

When you make a Stability test to avoid the effect of a mutant power, the Difficulty of that test is reduced by 2. You may reduce the Difficulty by an additional 1 for every Resist Influence point you spend.

Grid: C0

Connected: Command Amphibians and Reptiles

Slang terms: bullhead, lizard brain, limbic shield

REGENERATION

Your body naturally heals itself of even the most gruesome injuries. Once every three minutes, you may spend 1 Regeneration points to refresh 2 lost or spent Health points. This requires no concentration on your part; you can carry on doing whatever you're doing as lacerated muscle knits together, bones fuse and snap into place, and sliced skin smooths itself over.

If your Regeneration rating is 8 or more, the power can bring you back from the dead. Provided that your Health pool is no lower than -18, you can continue to spend Regeneration points (once every three minutes, as usual) until you reach -11 and come sputtering back to (seriously wounded) life.

You can't regrow a limb or other lost or severed body part in its entirety, but if you still have the missing bit you can stick it back onto or into its correct anatomical location and watch in nauseated wonder as your regeneration power knits the severed tissue back together. Your once-severed organ or extremity is considered reattached when you cross the boundary

from seriously wounded to hurt. If you are already hurt or healthy, it fully reattaches upon your first expenditure of Regeneration points.

Grid: B4

Connected: Strength, *Messiah Complex*

Correlated: Toxin Immunity (Inhaled), Toxin Immunity (Ingested)

Slang terms: lumo, whiteout, spotty

SECRETE ACID

The pores of your palms secrete a powerful acid, which can be used to destroy small objects, or at least render them unusable. To destroy or degrade an object, make a Secrete Acid test, with the Difficulty determined by the GM, with the following examples as a guideline:

Object	Difficulty
Document	2
Cell phone, handheld computer	4
Door lock	4
Kilo of illicit drugs	4
Watch	4
Laptop or desktop computer	5
Gun	6
Suitcase full of money	6
Diamond	10

If you touch someone's bare skin while secreting acid, they lose 1 Health point. If you strike them in a Scuffling contest, you add 1 to your damage bonus for every 2 Secrete Acid points you spend. You can spend no more than 20 Secrete Acid points on a single attack. Unlike the damage from blast powers, there is no way to dodge this.

Grid: C1

Connected: Analytic Taste, Spit Acid

Correlated: Blade Immunity

Slang terms: the melts, slough, vinegar

SELF-DETONATION

You blow up real good. By initiating a chemical reaction in your entire body, you can initiate a spontaneous detonation. To activate the power, first decide which class of explosive device you wish to emulate—see p. 99. This determines the eventual Difficulty of your Self-Detonation test:



Class	Equivalent To	Difficulty	Reconstitution Interval
1	Pipe Bomb	4	1 hour
2	Grenade	8	2 hours
3	IED	12	12 hours
4	Truck Bomb	32	1 week
5	Bunker Buster	64	1 month
6	Nuke	96	1 decade

It takes you a number of rounds to activate the power equal to the specified explosive class. You must stand still and concentrate throughout this period. Your body trembles and is surrounded by a nimbus of crackling energy, making what you are doing obvious to any trained eye. All HCU officers have been trained to recognize these signs.

If you lose consciousness or take any other action during the activation period, you lose a number of Self-Detonation points equal to the Difficulty of the attempt, and the effect does not occur.

At the end of the activation, make your test. On a success, the specified explosion occurs, with your position as its center.

Your constituent atoms float about in the atmosphere for a period called the Reconstitution Interval (see table, above.) When it elapses, you reform, unharmed, with all of your pools refreshed. Your reappearance occurs at a location of your choice within a distance of the blast location equal to your Self-Detonation rating times 250 meters.

If you also possess the power Radiation Projection, you can choose to activate it as you explode, heavily irradiating the area of the explosion, and, in the case of an open-air explosion, polluting the air with radioactive fallout.

You are unable to produce explosions less effective than a pipe bomb.

Legal Ramifications: Self-Detonation is an Article 18 power, incurring draconian legal restrictions on anyone possessing it.

Grid: C2

Connected: *Depression*, Radiation Projection

Correlated: Disintegration

Slang terms: dynamite, TNT, blammo

SEXUAL CHEMISTRY

You may, at will, emit powerful pheromones provoking in others an intense desire to have sex with you.

The ability is not selective; a pheromone emission will affect everyone within approximately 30m. Judicious mutants use it only when they are alone with their chosen targets.

Affected individuals must make a Stability test to avoid influence. You may spend any number of Sexual Chemistry points, adding to the test's base Difficulty of 4. All targets are affected by this expenditure. The Difficulty of the test decreases by 8 for targets whose sexual orientation would normally rule you out as a sex partner.

Those who succumb to your chemical charms will behave toward you as they would toward anyone they feel an overwhelming physical attraction. People on the sexual prowl will come onto you. Those who react to sexy people by becoming shy and withdrawn become helplessly introverted. Individuals deeply committed

to celibacy or monogamous relationships will fight to control their sudden urges.

In all instances, however, subjects will feel a reflexive urge to cater to you and make you happy. This impulse is limited by the individual's typical code of behavior. An already-shady character might commit crimes for you. An upright citizen will refuse, but will feel sufficiently drawn to you not to inform the authorities.

You may spend Sexual Chemistry points to refresh your Flirting pool, if you have one. Each Sexual Chemistry point converts into 2 Flirting points.

When a PC is affected by the power, the player decides to what extent the character's reaction exceeds a general desire to please the wielder.

Legal ramifications: Use of this power is not illegal but has on occasion led victims to sue those who wield it in civil court for causing undue emotional distress, with mixed success.

Users of this ability have occasionally been charged with riot incitement. Deploying it in a crowded place can be extremely dangerous to the user. Rapists have been exonerated or given reduced sentences by arguing that they were acting under the influence of this power.

Grid: F1

Connected: Empathy, Low Impulse Control,

Correlated: Addictive Personality

Slang terms: phero, the hots, sex bomb

SONAR

By emitting a series of high frequency sounds and waiting to hear them echo back to you as they bounce off of various surfaces, you can sense your relationship to other people and objects in three-dimensional space.

Your sonar sense extends from you in all directions, to a maximum distance of 10m per point in your Sonar pool.

Sonar provides more reliable depth perception information than the sense of sight. You may grant yourself a single +2 modifier on any Shooting test by spending 1 Sonar point.

This sense allows you to detect mutants using the Invisibility power. You automatically succeed in disbelieving any illusion with a strong visual component, because your echolocation registers elements of the

illusion as lacking physical substance.

If you also have the Gills mutation, you can also use Sonar underwater, overcoming problems of visibility, even in the deepest and darkest waters.

If you suffer from Blindness, Sonar allows you to continue to perceive people and objects. It does not compensate for the ability to see colors, or to make out markings on flat surfaces, like documents or television screens.

Grid: B5

Connected: *Blindness*, Sonic Blast

Correlated: Gills

Slang terms: blippo, the waves, batshit

SONIC BLAST

This blast power (see sidebar, p. 43) allows you to emit a high-frequency screech, which forms in your diaphragm and emanates from your mouth. High frequency sound waves buffet your intended target, damaging his soft tissue and internal organs.

Sonic blasts cause collateral damage. If you succeed in damaging your opponent, anyone standing within X meters of your target, where X is your current pool in Sonic Blast, also loses 1 Health point. You are immune to your own sonic blast, but not to those of other mutants.

Grid: B5

Connected: Sonar

Slang terms: howler, fat lady, voxbox

SPEED

You can run at a highly accelerated speed.

So long as you have 1 or more points in your Speed pool, you can move at the following rates during combat:

You can travel 20m (or ten grid squares) if all you're doing is moving. Alternatively, you can take significant action and also move 10m (or five grid squares.) This movement can take place before or after your action, or you can break it up in 2m increments, bookending your action as desired. You can therefore could move 2m, take an action, then move another 8m, or move 6m and then 4m, and so on.

Under difficult terrain or environmental conditions, like uneven ground or storms, your maximum speed is 10m/5 grid squares (without an action) or 4m/2 grid squares with an action.

To run at high rates of speed over long distances, pay the following number of Speed points for each km, or fraction of a km, you run at the following speeds:

Speed (in km/h)	Cost For 1km travel	Time To Travel 1km
40	1	90 sec
100	2	36 sec
200	3	18 sec
500	4	7.2 sec
750	5	4.8 sec
1000	7	3.6 sec

Additionally, you can dodge gunfire and other Shooting attacks by making Speed tests, just as any character may dodge blast attacks by making Athletics tests—see p. 43.

Grid: E4

Connected: Reflexes

Correlated: Attention Deficit Disorder

Slang terms: speedster, cheetah, [brand name of currently popular athletic shoe]

SPIT ACID

You can spit globules of highly concentrated acid at your enemies, damaging them from a distance. Test Spit Acid against your target's Hit Threshold. If you hit, your target loses 5 Health points immediately, 2 Health points the subsequent round, and 1 Health point the round after that. Each successful attack costs you 1 Spit Acid point. You may attack anyone within a number of meters equal to your Spit Acid pool.

The acid produced by this power is chemically distinct from that of the Secrete Acid power, and is incapable of doing significant damage to inorganic matter.

Grid: C1

Connected: Secrete Acid

Slang terms: xeno, wark, sprayjob

SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION

You can initiate a process of rapid oxidization, causing objects within standard range to burst into flames. Test Spontaneous Combustion against a Difficulty determined by the type of material. GMs should extrapolate Difficulties for unlisted materials based on the entries below.

Material	Difficulty
Paper	1
Gasoline	2
Wood	3
Plastic, Cloth	4
Living Flesh	8
Metal	10

This assumes you're igniting about 1kg of material. Double the Difficulty for each additional kg of material initially ignited. In the case of a materials with a base Difficulty of 4 or less, fire will quickly spread to the rest of the object. Less flammable materials will tend to burn out when the area you have ignited is consumed.

Damage done to living tissue causes a loss of 1 Health point per 1 kg ignited, to a maximum of 3 lost Health points. Unlike a Fire Projection blast, Spontaneous Combustion can't be dodged.

The flame you generate can be extinguished by any normal means—and by Fire Control, of course.

Grid: D3

Connected: Fire Immunity, *Trance Susceptible*

Slang terms: rash, sponco, fuh-sizzle

SPREAD PATHOGEN

By triggering genetic changes in the benign bacteria inhabiting a subject's body, you can infect him with a debilitating, contagious flu-like disease. Make a Spread Pathogen test against a target within a number of meters equal to your Spread Pathogen pool. The subject makes a Health test; if your Spread Pathogen test exceeds both 4 and the Health result, the pathogen takes effect.

The subject loses a number of Health points equal to the difference between the two results. He sickens rapidly, and after ten minutes, begins to suffer from a constellation of symptoms including coughing, sneezing, sinus pressure, headache, chills, and physical weakness. Subjects are unable to think properly, losing the ability to use investigative abilities, and suffer a +3 increase to all general ability Difficulties. To undertake any action that would delay them from heading home and crawling into bed, they must make Stability tests [Difficulty 4.]

At the moment the subject gets sick, spend any number of Spread Pathogen points; this expenditure determines the virulence of the pathogen. If you spend no points, it is not contagious. Anyone coming within 1m of the subject while he remains sick must make a Health test

against the number you have set as the virulence. If they fail, they suffer the same ill effects as the original victim. Unlike your primary target, their version of the pathogen is not contagious.

Sufferers of the infection may make a Health test at the end of each twenty-four hour period to recover from it. The Difficulty starts at three times the virulence and drops by 2 every day.

Legal Ramifications: Spread Pathogen is an Article 18 power; see p. 124.

Grid: E1

Connected: Cure Disease, Plant Communication

Correlated: Command Insects

Slang terms: Mary, crud, the icks



STRENGTH

The SME hardened your muscle fibers to the strength of steel, allowing you to perform incredible feats of strength.

Your Damage Modifier when fighting unarmed is +4, or +1 for every 4 points in your Strength pool, whichever is lower.

You can spend Strength points in Athletics tests in which muscle power is a factor, including lifting, running, and breaking down doors, gaining 3 Athletics points for every Strength point spent.

When the feat you wish to attempt surpasses the limits of ordinary human ability, you instead make a Strength test, with a Difficulty chosen by the GM, using the following guidelines as a benchmark.

Feat	Difficulty (with mutant Strength)	Difficulty (w/o mutant Strength)
Lift 100 kg	1	4
Lift 150 kg	2	6
Lift 200 kg	3	8
Lift 300 kg	4	12
Lift 400 kg	5	Not possible
Lift 500 kg	6	Not possible
Lift 600 kg	8	Not possible
Lift 800 kg	10	Not possible
Lift 1000 kg	15	Not possible
Throw person 3 m	4	12
Throw person 6 m	6	Not possible
Throw person 9 m	8	Not possible
Throw person 12 m	12	Not possible
Break reinforced door unaided	4	12
Break steel door unaided	8	Not possible
Bend steel jail cell bars	8	Not possible
Stop oncoming car	10	Not possible
Stop oncoming train	20	Not possible

Grid: B4

Connected: Flight, Regeneration

Correlated: Limb Extension

Slang terms: strongman, rips, spinach

SUPPRESS EXPLOSION

You can alter the kinetic energy fueling an explosion, dissipating its force and converting it into a harmless implosion.

As an explosion first occurs, make a Suppress

Explosion check, with a Difficulty equal to twice the device's Explosive Device Class (see p. 99.) If successful, the bomb fizzles and has no effect. If you fail, it does its normal damage.

If preventing a mutant with the Self-Detonation power from exploding, make a Suppress Explosion test, with the result of your opponent's Self-Detonation test as your Difficulty.

HCIU members with this mutation probably served on the bomb squad before earning a transfer to their present assignment. If so, remember to buy yourself the investigative ability Explosive Devices.

Grid: C2

Connected: Analytic Taste, Depression

Slang terms: tard, D.D., anticat

SUPPRESS INFLUENCE

You can block mind controlling mutants from exercising their influence in a particular area. Specify an area up of up to 3 cubic meters. No individual within that area, other than yourself, can be targeted by mutant powers resisted by a Stability test. The protection remains active for ten minutes for each Suppress Influence point you spend. You may expand the area by 3 cubic meters for each additional Suppress Influence point you spend.

Grid: F2

Connected: Detect Influence

Slang terms: the cone, foiler, wormshield

SWIMMING

You can swim at a high rate of speed, executing complex maneuvers in the water. Your movement rate while swimming equals your running speed on land. While swimming, most physical feats you undertake use Swimming tests, instead of Athletics.

Grid: A4

Connected: Command Fish, Gills, Water Manipulation

Slang terms: flipper, endado, spitzer

TECHNOKINESIS

You can impel machines and devices to do your bidding. You must be touching the machine to activate the power. Make a Technokinesis test against a Difficulty determined by the complexity of the machine. Only devices including electronic components are subject

to your whims; simple devices like pendulums, levers and pulleys, or even low-tech guns, are beyond your control. Generally, the machines appear to be operating themselves. When you cause a car to drive, for example, its steering wheel and pedals move as if controlled by an invisible entity.

GMs use the following table as a guideline to machine complexity:

Machine	Difficulty
Gas pump	2
Tennis ball machine	2
Car, vintage	3
Stereo	3
Television	3
Vending machine	3
Automated teller	4
Cell phone	4
Electronic lock	4
Steam shovel	4
Car, modern	5
Firearm with electronic components	8
Missile launcher	9
Cruise missile	10

Although you can override a machine's controls, locks and safety mechanisms, you can't cause it to do anything beyond the limits of its design. You can command a vending machine to spit out its coins or release all of its cans of soda, but you can't get it to fire missiles at incoming attackers or trundle down a corridor to block a door for you, because it is not designed to perform these tasks.

Grid: E4

Connected: Technopathy

Slang terms: shorting, twelve, blinkster

TECHNOPATHY

Technopathy allows you to extract information from any machine that stores digital data, such as a computer hard drive. It functions as a more impressive, faster version of Data Retrieval—you get clues without having to make a test or spend points. If Data Retrieval spends are available in a scene, and you touch the computers or other machines containing the information, you gain them automatically, without spending Data Retrieval points. You must touch the item where the data is stored; contact with a computer monitor in one room does not permit you

to access information from a server in another part of a building. However, you can access a wi-fi network simply by touching the copper contact points of a laptop wireless card to your tongue.

Legal Ramifications: In many instances, Technopathy allows you to gather electronic information covertly and non-invasively. However, evidence gathered this way is not admissible in court.

Grid: E3

Connected: Cognition

Slang terms: carding, malpathy, fishing

TELEKINESIS

You can move objects by sheer force of will. The base Difficulty of the Telekinesis test to move an object is 0, modified by factors including its size, the distance you want it to travel, and its speed.

Factor	Change To Difficulty
For every 1 kg mass	+1
For every 1m of distance object is to travel	+1
For every additional object moved, after the first	+1
Object travels distance in 5 seconds	+0
Object travels distance nearly instantaneously	+2
Object travels distance in 15 seconds	-2

Objects moved nearly instantaneously can, if your Telekinesis test result exceeds a target's Hit Threshold, do damage, like a missile weapon. The Damage Modifier from such attacks is determined by the mass of the item:

Mass (In kg)	Damage Modifier
1	-2
2	-1
3	0
4	+1
5	+2
6	+3
7	+4

Kinetic Energy Dispersal can be used to counter these telekinetic attacks.

Grid: E6

Connected: Autism, Spatial Awareness

Slang terms: geisting, spacek, whooshing

TELEPATHY

You can silently project your thoughts into the minds of others. Recipients hear your thoughts spoken in your voice, as if through earphones. You can establish the link so that it is one way only, or so that you can hear their thoughts as well. Participants in the telepathic link communicate only the thoughts they wish to. You can't use Telepathy to read minds; nor do your subjects gain unauthorized access to your thoughts.

You can open a psychic channel to a single individual by paying 2 Telepathy points. You may maintain multiple links at once. To open several active links so that participants can communicate with each other as well, pay an additional 2 Telepathy points.

A telepathic link remains active until you shut it down, or for fifteen minutes, whichever is greater. You may pay an additional 2 points per link to maintain it past the fifteen minute duration. If you have already established multi-party communication, this capability is extended at no additional point cost if you pay to extend the duration of all of its constituent links.

The subject must be within direct visual range of you when the link first is established. To keep the link active, subjects must remain within a range equal to your Telepathy *rating* times 1000 m. If the distance between you and a subject exceeds that distance even briefly, the link is severed.

Taking part in a telepathic link is only a little more distracting than listening to people talk, and does not hamper you or your subjects as you perform other tasks.

Subjects who do not want to hear you talking in their heads can attempt Stability tests, with your Telepathy pool as the Difficulty. If successful, the link is briefly established, then broken.

Grid: F3

Connected: Cognition

Slang terms: B-streaming, cortexting, myspazzing

TELEPORTATION

You can disappear in one location and instantly reappear in another. Doing so requires a Teleportation test against a Difficulty derived from the distance traveled and your familiarity with your chosen destination. Add all pertinent factors from the table below to get the Difficulty of your attempt.

Factor	Change To Difficulty
You can now see destination unaided	+0
You can now see destination with aid of surveillance device (binoculars, camera, sniper scope, etc.)	+1
You have studied destination from multiple photographs or video	+6
You have been in destination for five minutes or less	+4
You have spent hours at destination	+3
You have spent days at destination	+2
You have spent weeks at destination	+1
You have spent months or more at destination	+0
Destination is within 1000m	+0
Destination is within 1 km	+1
Destination is within 10 km	+2
Destination is within 100 km	+4
Destination is within 1000 km	+6
Destination is within 5000 km	+12
Destination is within 10,000 km	+18
You have teleported X previous times in the current session	+2x

You can't intentionally teleport into the middle of an object, barrier, or person. If an object or barrier has been moved to your desired destination since you last familiarized yourself with it, you will instead appear at the nearest safe location.

Like any other power (except where explicitly noted) teleportation takes an action in combat. Therefore, you can't both attack and teleport, or vice versa, during the same round. (This is our round-about way of confirming that, sorry, you can't do the cool thing that blue guy with the tail in those comics and movies does.)

Legal Ramifications: Teleportation is an Article 18

power; see p. 124.

Grid: E5

Connected: Spatial Awareness

Slang terms: bamfing, redshirting, besting

THREAT CALCULUS

You are able to predict what physical moves the people around you are about to make. So long as you are able to observe a subject, he can never make a physical move that surprises you. The GM models this by warning you ahead of time before a character makes a sudden move.

Your Hit Threshold increases by 1 against opponents you are able to observe.

When any other character successfully revs up a blast power, you can tell how damaging it will be; see the Blast Powers sidebar, p. 43. You can use this insight to decide how much effort to invest into a dodge attempt. By shouting a one-word warning to your allies ("Duck!") you can convey the same information to others.

Maintaining this awareness takes active concentration. To activate it, spend 1 Threat Calculus point. The power remains active for ten minutes, after which it may be renewed by spending an additional point for another ten minutes of duration, and so on.

Threat Calculus does not protect you from actions taken by people you are unaware of.

Grid: E3

Connected: Lightning Decisions, Psionic Blast

Slang terms: TC, Will Robinson, conred

TELESCOPIC VISION

You can selectively alter your vision to see distant objects as if they are right in front of you. This allows you to, among other things, conduct surveillance without the need for cumbersome equipment. The range of this sense depends on your rating:

Range	Rating
250m	1
500m	2
1 km	3
2 km	4
4 km	5

Telescopic Vision does not allow you to see through objects, but if you have X-Ray Vision as well, you can combine the two powers.

Legal ramifications: Several mutants have been successfully prosecuted for using telescopic vision to violate Peeping Tom statutes.

Grid: D6

Connected: Microvision

Slang terms: telepeeping, scrooping, teevee

TOXIN IMMUNITY (INHALED)

Microscopic mutant filtration cells in the lining of your lungs immediately blocks the absorption of toxic substances into your bloodstream. Whenever you are exposed to gaseous or powdered toxins, spend 2 Toxin Immunity (Inhaled) points to ignore any damage and ill-effects you would otherwise incur, without having to make a Health test. The ability also protects you against smoke inhalation.

Grid: A4

Connected: Deplete Oxygen

Correlated: Gills, Regeneration

Slang terms: teach, aqualung, dealt-it

TOXIN IMMUNITY (INGESTED)

Your enhanced liver processes toxins that would kill an ordinary person, allowing them to pass through your body without harm. The toxins are neutralized in the process, so you can urinate in the serene confidence that you're not introducing dangerous substances into the water supply.

Whenever ingest a poisonous substance, including bacterial toxins from food poisoning, spend 2 Toxin Immunity (Ingested) points to ignore any damage and ill-effects you would otherwise incur, without having to make a Health test.

Grid: C4

Connected: Fire Control, Radiation Immunity

Correlated: Regeneration

Slang terms: tiger, cast iron, guts

TRACKING

If provided with a scent sample from a living subject, and a location where the subject recently was, you can track him to his current location. Your tracking sense is so highly developed that methods used to throw off bloodhounds don't work on you. Even if the quarry crosses a river or masks his scent with perfume, you'll still find him.

If a subject's location provides a clue necessary to the solving of a case, you automatically succeed.

Otherwise, you must spend points to find the present location of other subjects. The cost varies according to the time elapsed between the subject's presence at your start point, and the beginning of your tracking effort. (Where durations on the chart overlap, use the most forgiving option.)

Maximum Duration	Cost
15 minutes	1
1 hour	2
3 hours	3
6 hours	4
9 hours	5
12 hours	6
1 day	7
2 days	8
3 days	9
1 week	10

Although you automatically succeed if you spend the appropriate number of points, you may face other obstacles along the way, from bears to bear traps. The above costs assume a mostly natural environment. To track in an urbanized environment, double the cost.

Grid: C6

Connected: Environmental Awareness, Olfactory Center.

Slang terms: hound dog, smelt, Waldo

TRANSMUTATION

You can alter the elemental composition of inanimate objects. To do so, test Transmutation against a Difficulty of 4, or the number of steps separating the elements in the following list, whichever is greater:

- Graphite
- Sulfur
- Calcium
- Titanium
- Iron
- Nickel
- Copper
- Aluminum
- Silver
- Tin
- Platinum
- Gold
- Lead

You can transmute 100g or less of material per day, based on the weight of the substance before it is

changed, without strain. To transmute more than this in a single day, pay 3 Transmutation points for each additional 100g.

Transmuted elements are identifiable as such using a simple Herceg-Mikkelsen test, which any trained person can quickly administer with the aid of an inexpensive chemical solution. Transmuted precious metals typically fetch 1% of the price of their naturally-occurring counterparts and are not used in coinage or luxury items. However, many mutants with this power make a living transmuting base metals into precious ones for industrial use.

Legal ramifications: Passing off transmuted precious metals as genuine constitutes fraud.

Grid: B3

Connected: Disintegration

Correlated: Healing, Radiation Projection

Slang terms: philosophy, alchemy, FG

VENOM (BITE)

By biting an opponent's exposed flesh, you can inject him with a powerful neurotoxin. At the time of the bite, spend any number of Venom (Bite) points to increase the Difficulty of all later Health tests made by your victim while attempting to resist the effects of the toxin. This number is referred to as the bite's Toxicity.

One minute after the bite, the victim must make a Health test against a Difficulty of 4, plus the Toxicity. On a failure, the victim immediately succumbs to the toxin. On a success, he still has one half hour per point of Toxicity before the toxin strikes.

When the toxin strikes, the victim makes a second Health test, again against a Difficulty of 4 plus the Toxicity. On a failure, his Health pool is immediately reduced to -9, unless he is already at -9 or less, in which case he dies. On a success, his Health pool is reduced by the bite's Toxicity.

In either case, the victim cannot refresh Health points (except through the Healing power) and continues to lose 1 Health every 3 hours until he is administered an antivenin. Antivenins to mutant powers are too perishable and expensive to appear in standard first aid kits, so victims will need to find them at hospitals.

HCIU officers who have reason to believe they'll be facing venomous suspects can requisition supplies of antivenin.

Multiple bites against a single target are redundant.

Unless you also have Fangs, the damage modifier from a bite attack is -3.

Grid: C1

Connected: Analytic Taste, Secrete Acid

Correlated: Fangs

Slang terms: viper, rattle, zina



VENOM (SPIT)

Glands in your throat produce a powerful poison, which you can expel as a projectile onto an opponent's exposed eyes or mouth. The range for this ability is your Venom (Spit) pool in meters. Test Venom (Spit) against your target's Hit Threshold. If successful, you do damage with a +1 modifier. Also, until he clears the gob of toxic mucus from his face, your opponent is wracked with pain and suffers blurred vision. To clear away the mucus, he (or a character coming to his aid) must make an Medic test, with the result of your Venom (Spit) attack as the difficulty. If no one aids him, he will attempt to do so

instinctively, even if he lacks the ability and has little chance of success. He can suppress this instinct only on a Stability test with the result of your Venom (Spit) attack as the difficulty. If successful, he may ignore the pain, but it and the blurred vision increases the Difficulties of all actions he undertakes by 2.

After ten minutes, the Difficulty of the Medic test to clear the mucus decreases by 2, and continues to decrease by 2 at ten minute intervals. When it drops to 0, the venom's effect ceases.

This ability is useless against a target wearing a helmet or other protection over his entire face.

Grid: C1

Connected: Command Amphibians & Reptiles, Venom (Stinger)

Correlated: Venom (Stinger)

Slang terms: cobra, naja, gob

VENOM (STINGER)

Your spinal column houses not only your spinal cord, but a meter-long, thin, prehensile organ terminating in a barbed stinger. The stinger delivers a paralytic poison which immobilizes your victims.

By spending 2 Venom (Stinger) points, you can cause this organ to emerge from your first thoracic vertebra. It costs 2 Venom (Stinger) points to retract.

You can attack your enemies with this organ when close enough to Scuffle with them. Test Venom (Stinger) against your opponent's Hit Threshold. On a successful hit, you do no damage, but force the victim to make a Health test with the result of your Venom (Stinger) attack as the difficulty. On a failure, he loses an additional 2 Athletics points whenever he makes an Athletics, Driving, Infiltration, Scuffling, or Shooting test, or makes a test of a mutant power. When he drops to 0 Athletics points, he is paralyzed. Although conscious, he is unable to move. (If he has no Athletics pool when you first hit him, he is paralyzed immediately.)

He may not refresh Athletics while paralyzed. Every ten minutes, he may make a new Health test, at first against the result of your Venom (Stinger) attack. After every subsequent ten minutes, the Difficulty decreases by 2. On a successful result, the effect ends.

The toxin's effects may be ended at any time with a successful application of the Cure Disease power, against a Difficulty of 4.

Grid: C1

Connected: Webbing, Venom (Bite), Venom (Spit)
Wall Crawling

Tiny filaments protrude from your palms and the undersides of your fingers, allowing you to cling to walls and ceilings without other aid. You automatically succeed at any climbing attempt. Your rate of speed while climbing depends on your Wall Crawling rating, as follows:

Rating	Climbing Speed
1-4	Normal movement/2
5-8	Normal movement
9-12	Normal movement x2
13-16	Normal movement x3
17+	Normal movement x4

Grid: B1

Connected: Scleroderma, Webbing
Slang terms: freckle, mantis, sidewaysing

WATER BLAST

You can emit a high-pressure stream of water from your fingertips. This is a blast power; see sidebar, p. 43.

On a successful hit, your opponent is knocked back by the spray, moving 1m directly away from you, in the same direction as your blast, for every point of difference between your Water Blast result and his Hit Threshold. If this knocks him into a solid barrier, such as a wall, he loses an additional 2 Health points.

Water Blast is countered by Kinetic Energy Dispersal.

Grid: A5

Connected: Water Manipulation
Slang terms: H2, scour, cannoning

WEBBING

You secrete sticky proteinaceous fibers from glands located in your forearms. Though lighter than rope, the web material possesses a tensile strength comparable to steel. The webbing has three primary uses:

Adhesive: You can secrete a sticky blob of webbing which you can use as a powerful glue to stick two objects together. For example, you could use it to quickly stick a GPS device on the bottom of a suspect's car. Pay 1 or more Webbing points each time you do this. The glue remains insoluble for thirty minutes for each point you spend, after which it quickly biodegrades into a watery goo.

Movement: You can cast the web up above you and then climb it like you would a rope, scaling up or rappelling down sheer surfaces. The sticky webbing adheres to any ordinary surface, supporting your weight even more securely than would a grappling hook. Spinning a length of climbing-suitable webbing costs you 2 Webbing points. Making difficult maneuvers using your webbing requires the Athletics ability. Swinging from web to web is possible but very difficult, with a base Difficulty of 6, which can be additionally complicated by other factors, such as wind speed and storm conditions.

Restraints: You can restrain subjects by spraying them with a wide beam of webbing, which keeps them immobilized for a cost of 2 Webbing points for every two hours you want the webbing to retain its strength. Hitting a moving target with your webbing requires a successful Shooting test. If you shoot webbing at a subject and miss, you still have to pay the 2 points. A webbed subject can make an Athletics or Strength test to free himself, with a Difficulty equal to 4 plus your Webbing pool as of the moment you began to spin the restraint webbing (that is, before you spent the 2 points to activate it.) Another person who is not caught in the web can carefully cut a restrained person out of it with a utility knife or other blade of similar sharpness, though this takes several minutes.

Grid: B1

Connected: Venom (Stinger), Wall Crawling
Correlated: Command Insects
Slang terms: silking, rackrope, nidding

WATER MANIPULATION

You can shape water, causing it to cohere into a bounded, though still liquid, form, and directing its movements. Stunts you can perform, and accompanying Difficulties, include:

Stunt	Difficulty
Explode plumbing	4
Fill hole with ground water	4
Keep area dry during rain storm	4
Cause miniature rainstorm within area	4
Retard flood waters within area	6
Cause body of water to flood its banks within area	4
Create animated water-puppets in human or animal shape	6

After animating a manlike shape from water, you can

direct it like a puppet, to fight your enemies. Use your Water Manipulation ability as its Scuffling; its liquid fists carry a Damage Modifier of +0. It cannot be damaged by ordinary weapons, but loses the ability to move if the temperature drops to 0°C or less. You must remain in direct visual contact with it, and can do nothing but direct its movements. If you are hit, entangled or forced to take other significant action, the water sloshes into a puddle and drains away.

Grid: A5

Connected: Swimming, Water Blast

Slang terms: fountain, Plumber's Helper, weatherman

WIND CONTROL

Through force of will, you can increase or decrease wind speeds. To alter prevailing wind velocity, test Wind Control against a Difficulty equal to 4, plus the number of steps of separation from the present state and your desired state, on the following list:

- Calm
- Breeze
- Strong Breeze
- Near Gale
- Gale (light structure damage begins)
- Storm (trees uprooted; moderate structure damage)
- Violent Storm (heavy structure damage)
- Hurricane (structures may be obliterated)

The area affected is a sphere with your current range as its diameter, and your position as its center point. Your miniature storm moves as you do.

Having generated your miniature wind storm, you must spend 1 Wind Control point per minute to keep it going.

When your storm, violent storm or hurricane first appears, everyone inside it (including you) must make an Athletics test against a Difficulty equal to your Wind Control result. Those who fail lose a number of Health points equal to the difference between their results and the Difficulty, from flying debris.

Combat movement rates within a storm, violent storm or hurricane, including your own are halved.

You can also create, in the same sphere, an area of highly variable wind speeds. These make it more difficult for users of missile weapons to predictably hit their targets. (Even in strong winds, a trained shooter can compensate, as long as the winds remain consistent.)

Test Wind Control against a Difficulty of 6; if successful, the effective Hit Threshold of any target within the sphere increases by 2.

Grid: A3

Connected: *Asthma*, Command Birds

Correlated: Ice Blast

Slang terms: gale, puff, albatross



MINOR MUTATIONS

The spectacular and useful mutations listed in this section are not the only fruit of the Spontaneous Mutation Event. Another 1% of the population acquired odd mutations of little practical benefit. In popular parlance these are called minor mutations, although anamorphologists prefer the term B-category mutations. The powers of the Quade diagram are called A-category mutations. People manifest either one or the other, never both A and B mutations. Common minor mutations include the following.

Individuals may exhibit irises of unusual color, including red, bright purple, yellow, or a bizarre rainbow pattern. Other eye mutations include slitted pupils recalling the eyes of a cat or alligator, and vastly enlarged irises. People exhibiting the latter condition are sometimes called "Anna Mays."

New hair colors include candy apple red, violet, and green. Other people sport hair which is literally coppery or golden, or which resembles vegetation.

Fast-growing nails and hair are also common. Some unlucky mutants have to get their hair cut two or three times a week. Others suffer from spontaneous tattoo-like skin discolorations, or disfigurements of the face. Although many were disfigured by the SME, as many others became more beautiful than they'd been before.

A check of Internet fetish sites will locate a small community of drooling enthusiasts for any B-category mutation you care to name.

DEFECTS

As they investigate their cases as HCIU officers, the PCs also face personal obstacles called Sub-Plots; these are further described on p. 166. Genetic defects connected with their mutant powers serve as a major source of sub-plots. Forced Refreshes (p. 103) and Stability loss (p. 102) can also trigger defects.

Just as certain enhanced abilities are connected on the Quade Diagram, certain combinations of powers introduce propensities for particular psychological or physical defects. You do not start play with a full-blown version of the defect. Instead, it is in its **incipient** stage. You are aware that you might develop the defect, and exhibit minor symptoms which perhaps cause you worry but do not hamper your performance on the job or in daily life.

When a sub-plot focuses on your defect, you will probably experience a crisis that threatens to escalate the severity of your condition. Each defect has a **resistance ability**: Health for physical ailments, or Stability for neurological conditions or personality disorders. You may be able to avert the crisis through roleplaying choices. If not, you test your resistance ability against a Difficulty of 4. If you fail, your condition worsens by one stage.

At **stage one**, your defect affects your performance only slightly. You may experience brief episodes of physical disability, or moments where you are unable to control your behavior.

At **stage two**, you are clearly and consistently disabled, but not so much that your effectiveness as an HCIU officer has come to an end. Your superiors and comrades work with you to minimize the impact of your defect on the outcome of your cases.

Stages one and two are (usually) reversible.

If the resistance ability is Stability, you can seek counseling or rehabilitation. After three consecutive

sessions in which you depict your character as making an effort to get better, you may make a Stability test against a Difficulty of 6 for stage one, or 8 for stage two. If you succeed, you move back down a step. Another PC with the Cure Disease power may spend points from his pool to increase your result.

If your resistance ability is Health, you can undergo a combination of rehabilitation and pharmaceutical therapy. After three consecutive sessions in which you make your treatment regime part of the story, you may decrease your defect state by one stage by making a Health test against a Difficulty of 6 for stage one, or 8 for stage two. Another PC with the Medic and/or Cure Disease abilities may spend points from those pools to increase your result.

When you reach **stage three**, you are effectively crippled by your disorder, and face mandatory retirement. Your character is removed from play; you start over with a rookie detective joining the unit for the first time. During the episode in which you face and fail the crisis to avoid stage three status, the GM may collaborate with you to see that your character goes out in a blaze of glory, spectacularly ending his police career—as if the actor playing him is being written out of the TV series. Maybe he even dies.

Note that our description of these conditions reflect the dramatic license typically taken by procedural melodramas. They should not be regarded as strictly realistic, or as an attempt to trivialize the impact of their real-world counterparts on people's lives. These descriptions also neatly separate conditions which in reality are often connected.

None of these defects are exclusive to mutants, of course. Players who wish to take on defects for the roleplaying challenge may do so, provided that the GM is confident that this will enhance play. (Some players relish the opportunity to grab the spotlight and thwart

other players by portraying their flaws with excessive zeal. If you fit this profile, don't be surprised by your GM's decision to disallow you the use of additional defects.)



ADDICTIVE PERSONALITY

Resistance Ability: Stability

Grid: E1

Incipient: You like thrills, risk, and activities that give you accelerating levels of stimulation when repeated. You've been known to drink a few too many, and also to experiment with soft illicit substances. You always have a bet down on an upcoming game. When you surf the Internet, you keep going until you're bleary-eyed, always looking for another cool site or cache of very specific X-rated material. When you fire up a new video game, you can't stop until you've beaten the damn thing. Your brain doesn't kick into gear until you've had your morning dose of caffeine, which you probably repeat throughout the day.

Stage One: You have at least a couple of drinks a day

and spend most of your off-hours stoned. Your drugging no longer stops at pot and ecstasy, but incorporates the occasional jolt of coke or heroin. Whenever you spot a TV set tuned to a sports channel, you can't help being distracted by it, looking for opportunities to crawl out of the hole you've gotten yourself into with your bookie. Though your buddies still cover for you, your bloodshot eyes, tired demeanor, and rumpled clothing are beginning to catch the attention of your bosses. To make an investigative spend, you must also spend 1 Stability point per investigative ability point.

Stage Two: You are now addicted to the substance or activity involved in the crisis that brought you to stage two, and your propensity for other addictive behaviors has also accelerated. If you're addicted to a substance, you must continually dose yourself just to appear normal and functional. When you do not have a supply, you must make a Stability test (Difficulty 6) to proceed with the current investigation. Otherwise, you slip off to resupply. If you're addicted to a behavior, you must make the same Stability test whenever presented with the opportunity to engage in it. If you fail, you succumb, neglecting your duties. You continue to be distracted on the job: to make an investigative spend, you must also spend 2 Stability points per investigative ability point.

Stage Three: You have become such an obvious degenerate drunk, druggie, gambler or whatever that you are fired from the force.

ARTHRITIS

Resistance Ability: Health

Grid: E1

Incipient: Your joints ache for several hours after you undertake Athletics or Scuffling tests, or use the powers Flight, Strength, Limb Extension, or Natural Weaponry. You can counter this effect with over-the-counter pain medication.

Stage One: Whenever you use any of the above abilities, you lose an additional 1 Athletics point, reflecting increasing joint pain.

Stage Two: As above, but you also lose 1 Health point whenever you use any of the cited abilities. You also experience pain when attempting everyday activities, from opening bottles to operating a TV remote.

Stage Three: Your chronic pain has become so bad that you have no choice but to seek early retirement from the force on medical grounds.

ASTHMA**Resistance Ability:** Health**Grid:** A3

Incipient: You have trouble breathing after exposure to pollutants, common allergens, changes in temperature, and excesses of humidity. When you catch a cold, breathing problems linger long after the infection clears your system. Medication, delivered by an inhaler, controls your symptoms.

Stage One: After any Athletics or Scuffling test, or the use of the powers Deplete Oxygen, Gills, Ice Blast, Reduce Temperature, Toxin Immunity (Inhaled), or Wind Control, make a Difficulty 4 Health check. On a failure, you lose 2 Health.

Stage Two: As above, but the Difficulty is 5 and the Health loss 3.

Stage Three: Chronic breathing problems make it impossible to pass your regular department physical. You may either take a desk job or leave the force on a disability pension. In either case, the character leaves play.

ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER**Resistance Ability:** Stability**Grid:** E3

Incipient: You are forgetful and have trouble focusing on single tasks. With your boundless energy and desire for constant stimulation, you were probably a class clown as a kid and are still the precinct-house cut-up today. When playing your character, fidget constantly, occasionally get to your feet and pace around, and exhibit the occasional tic.

Stage One: Your hyperactivity and manic demeanor begin to cross the line from endearing to annoying. To make an investigative spend, you must also spend 1 Stability point per investigative ability point.

Stage Two: You lose the ability to make investigative spends.

Stage Three: You have become so manic and incapable of focusing on tasks that you can no longer use your investigative abilities at all. After a series of poor performance reviews (which happen offstage, between cases), you are discharged from the force.

AUTISM**Resistance Ability:** Stability**Grid:** F6

Incipient: When you are tired or stressed, you begin to suffer from sensory overload. Sounds are too loud. Colors are too vivid; moving objects, too numerous and too fast. The sense of touch conveys an overwhelming flood of information.

Stage One: You exhibit mild signs of adult-onset autism. You lose touch with abstractions and the emotional needs of others, instead preferring to see the world only in concrete, measurable terms. Sensory overload now occurs at all times. As a result, to make an investigative spend of any kind, you must also spend 1 Stability point per investigative ability point.

Stage Two: You see, hear and feel too acutely: even the movements of the air are visible to you. Unfortunately, the pain this causes ensures that your sharpened senses are more distraction than help: you must spend 2 Stability points for each investigative point you spend. Also, you must make a Stability test against a Difficulty of 4 to remain in any situation of high sensory impact, like a loud factory or a dance club with flashing lights and thumping music. To remain in the presence of the emotionally distressed, you must make a Stability test against a Difficulty of 5.

Stage Three: People, with their incessant emotional demands and desire to touch you all the time and their intruding smells—they have become unbearable to you! You don't hate them, but it's all too much! You submit your resignation and go off to live a life of blissful isolation.

BLINDNESS**Resistance Ability:** Health**Grid:** B5

Incipient: You feel a constant pressure behind your eyes, which relaxes somewhat after a night of perfect, uninterrupted sleep. You need glasses; your prescription lenses become thicker with every check-up.

Stage One: Objects in the far distance blur. Peripheral vision starts to fade. Your glasses now resemble the bottoms of glass soda bottles. The effective Hit Thresholds of all opponents you target with Shooting or blast powers increases by 1. The ranges of all of your mutant powers decrease by one-third. When

you make a Surveillance test dependent primarily on vision, its Difficulty increases by 2.

Stage Two: Some mornings you suffer a terrifying precursor of things to come: you wake up unable to see anything at all. This lasts for ten to thirty minutes. You have lost your peripheral vision entirely; objects in the middle distance blur. Hit Thresholds of all opponents targeted with Shooting or blast powers increases by 2. The ranges of all of your mutant powers decrease by two-thirds. When you make a Surveillance test dependent primarily on vision, its Difficulty increases by 4. After any Scuffle, make a Health test against a Difficulty of 4; if you fail, you lose your sight completely for about an hour.

Stage Three: You are now completely blind. You may choose between retirement on disability grounds, or reassignment to an administrative job where your handicap can be accommodated. Either way, your character departs from the series.

DEPRESSION

Resistance Ability: Stability

Grid: C2

Incipient: The stress of your job sometimes leaves you anxious for no apparent reason, and at other times plunges you into a state of dull, deadened melancholia. Although you sometimes appear withdrawn or tired, you are nonetheless able to conceal your anomie from friends and colleagues.

Stage One: You have trouble sleeping, motivating yourself, and thinking optimistically. You can never act as the aggressor in a contest. In a group combat, you are always the last PC to act. (If more than one PC suffers from this drawback, use normal rules to decide which of them acts first.)

Stage Two: You continue to suffer the above symptoms and drawbacks. In addition, you are now haunted by suicidal thoughts. Though most of the time you appear enervated and withdrawn, you may become recklessly enthusiastic in the face of danger. At the GM's discretion, you must make a Stability test (Difficulty 4) to avoid or retreat from any life-threatening situation. If you fail this test and plunge into danger, all Difficulties you face while you remain in jeopardy increase by 1, reflecting your lack of attention to self-preservation.

Stage Three: In time-honored police fashion, you eat your gun. At the beginning of the next session, you fail

to show up for shift. When your colleagues are unable to contact you, they conduct a search and eventually find you dead from suicide, at your home or some other significant location. A final note confirms that you've ended your own life.

If, however, you have the power Self-Detonation, your character remains in play until he gets his next opportunity to explode himself. However, he does not reform afterwards, remaining in a state of voluntary obliteration for all eternity.

DISSOCIATION

Resistance Ability: Stability

Grid: B2

Incipient: You feel that the world is becoming increasingly unreal, and that your connections to it steadily more tenuous. It's as if the sense of detachment all police officers must cultivate to protect themselves from the emotional toll of the job has infected all aspects of your emotional life. Unless you're careful to disguise your reactions, you can come off as aloof, cold, even robotic.

Stage One: Your sense of detachment from reality increases. You find pop culture oppressive and strange, and try whenever possible to avoid large gatherings. Feigning interest in the personal concerns around you becomes a challenge. You may seek solace in eastern religions, especially those that teach the fundamental unreality of the material world. Whenever you become the target of a mutant power which requires you to make a Stability test, the Difficulty of that test increases by 2.

Stage Two: You become convinced that you are dead or hallucinating, and that nothing you perceive is real. Maybe you're trapped in a manipulated dream, or in an illusion generated by an enemy mutant. You become heedless in combat and other situations of personal danger. Your Hit Threshold decreases by 1. As a compensating bonus, your heedlessness under missile fire allows you to stake out advantageous positions to shoot from: the effective Hit Thresholds of your targets in Shooting or blast power tests also decrease by 1.

You also continue to experience the defect's stage one drawbacks.

Stage Three: Your disinterest in the illusionary world you live in becomes so acute that you can no longer motivate yourself to show up for work. You resign or are

fired. If spiritually inclined, you may seek a meditative life as a cloistered Buddhist monk. Or maybe you simply wind up as another dull-eyed homeless person, walking the streets and mumbling to yourself.

EROTOMANIA

Resistance Ability: Stability

Grid: E2

Incipient: You are prone to romantic crushes and fixations, invariably directed to objects of affection who are unapproachable or unavailable. This seems like harmless and ordinary behavior, and part of a broader various consumption of gossip and pop culture.

Stage One: Your interest in pop culture starlets slackens as you become deeply obsessed with an acquaintance you find attractive. This person enjoys much greater status than you do and has no romantic interest in you whatsoever. If you have used the Read Minds ability on someone who fits this description, he or she will become your target. You continue to contact and awkwardly proposition this person even when told to stop.

Stage Two: You become convinced that this person is involved in a relationship with you, albeit one that for some reason remains a secret to everyone else. You detect hidden messages from your lover on television, in billboards, and in the lyrics of songs you hear on the radio. Whenever you are reminded of this person, you must make a Stability test (Difficulty 4) or attempt to contact him or her. The nature of your communications to the object of your fixation becomes increasingly bizarre: you may send coded messages, dead flowers, disturbing collages cut up from magazines, or makeshift medicine bundles full of creepy found items symbolizing your eternal love. If you discover that this person has an actual lover, you become intimidatingly jealous. Whenever you are reminded of your rival, you must make a Stability test (Difficulty 5) to resist the urge to threaten, harass or even attack this interloper. You may believe this person to be a CIA agent, demon or pod person. At this stage of the disorder, you manage to disguise your tracks effectively enough that your imagined inamorata and possible rival are unable to discover your identity and lodge a complaint against you.

Stage Three: Your efforts to connect with your secret love become so blatant that your identity stands revealed. You face Internal Affairs charges, and are booted from the force.

LOW IMPULSE CONTROL

Resistance Ability: Stability

Grid: F1

Incipient: You react impulsively in emotional situations, especially when your personal boundaries are threatened.

Stage One: When you perceive an insult or an invasion of your personal space, you face a powerful urge to lash out verbally, no matter what the consequences. To cool yourself down before you say something stupid and self-destructive, you must make a Stability test (Difficulty 4.)

Stage Two: As per stage one, except that the Difficulty rises to 6, and, if you fail, you lash out with minor physical violence: shoving, throwing objects, or landing single punches. Of course, if the offending party responds in kind or escalates, you're all too ready to turn up the heat and transform the altercation into a full-scale brawl. Generally, however, you keep these incidents to a level your police buddies can smooth over and keep out of your personnel file.

Stage Three: At a dramatically appropriate moment, you lash out against a perceived insult in an explosively career-ending manner. Either you punch out someone influential enough to earn you an immediate pink slip, or you cross the line from minor assault to felony battery or murder.

MEGALOMANIA

Resistance Ability: Stability

Grid: E2

Incipient: You have an outsized perception of your own importance and accomplishments. However, you are clever enough to conceal the full extent of your self-involvement from others: they see you as engagingly cocky and assertive.

Stage One: You have increasing trouble disguising your belief that you are smarter and better at your job than the time-wasters, seat-fillers and sniveling mediocrities who fill the police command structure. Whenever you get an order you don't like, or are treated with disrespect by some idiot not fit to polish your shoes, you must successfully test Stability (Difficulty 4) or give them a piece of your mind.

Stage Two: Your certitude that you are destined for greatness solidifies into a ruthless action plan. Maybe

you'll be police chief one day. No, wait, that's not a lofty enough perch for a person of your obvious leadership qualities. You'll be a senator. The president!

Your concern for others drops to zero. In any circumstances where you can demonstrate your superiority over someone else, or gain even a small advantage, without being exposed, you'll act to take the tribute that is due to you, as your natural right. Moral strictures which rightfully apply to the inferior must not be allowed to impede the great. To resist this impulse, test Stability against a Difficulty of 6.

Stage Three: Mutants are not ordinary people, you decide. They are gods in the making. And what are you, but the head of the new pantheon, destined to rule from a new Mount Olympus?

After a scandal provoked by your conscience-free pursuit of grandiose ambitions—or maybe just the results from a routine psych test—you are quietly ejected from the force. The player retires the character, who may return to the series later, as an insane criminal controlled by the GM.

MESSIAH COMPLEX

Resistance Ability: Stability

Grid: B3

Incipient: When people are in trouble, you feel that you are the one who can and must save them. If they're hurting, you must heal them. If they've strayed from the core values of humility, self-sacrifice and charity, it is you who must set them straight. Others can help you in your mission, of course—provided that they understand that you're the one in charge, the one who bleeds for the world.

Stage One: When presented with an opportunity to unwisely follow any of the above imperatives, you must make a Stability test (Difficulty 4), or wade right in, consequences be damned.

Stage Two: As per stage one, but the Difficulty is 8.

Stage Three: At some point during the next session, the GM will engineer a scene in which the character is presented with a crisis that can be averted only through a suicidal act of altruism. The part of the scene in which your demise is assured is played out without reference to rules—you automatically succeed in performing the heroic act, and are just as automatically killed in the line of duty.



MULTIPLE PERSONALITY DISORDER

Resistance Ability: Stability

Grid: E5

Incipient: You are prone to sudden shifts of mood and judgment. You make your decisions with swift confidence—only to find yourself radically questioning them moments later. When talking to witnesses and suspects, you find yourself slipping into their speech patterns, body language—even adopting their attitudes.

Recently, you started talking to yourself.

At the incipient stage, this defect sharpens your game in the interrogation room. Your ability to get inside the heads of others allows you one 1-point interpersonal spend per session at no cost, even if you lack the ability in question.

Stage One: In private moments, you begin to hold conversations with one or more imagined personalities, who you keep secret from loved ones and colleagues. If confronted, you explain that you have created these

additional interlocutors as a way of thinking out loud, and that you in no way believe them to exist. They're not even hallucinations, you insist—pure figments of your imagination, and nothing more.

However, when you're alone and talking to them, they begin to seem more and more real to you, with their own emotions, histories, and agendas.

Create your additional persona or personae in collaboration with the GM. They should reflect different sides of you. Their histories may evoke the moment of crisis that drove you to stage one multiple personality disorder. For example, if you first succumbed after finding the mutilated corpse of a trusted informant, the new persona might share his personality, general history, and imagined appearance.

When under stress, you must test Stability (Difficulty 4) or slip briefly into the persona of one of your imaginary friends.

Stage Two: You no longer talk to your imagined personalities. In fact, you no longer remember their virtual existences. Instead, you sometimes respond to stress by going into briefly a fugue state, then emerging as one of your additional personalities, known as an alter. (To avoid this, test Stability versus a Difficulty of 6.) If you have detailed more than one alternate personality, the GM decides which one appears, based on the triggering situation. A belligerent alter may appear in response to a violent situation. A helpless, endearing child might appear when you feel lost or in need of reassurance. The alter remains in command for 1–6 hours, or until a different stressful situation arises. In the latter case, if the character's main persona is best equipped to deal with the new crisis, you regain control of your body, with no test required. If another alter is most suited to it, that persona takes over. Stability tests to avoid a personality switch occur only when you are in your primary persona.

No matter whose hands are on the psychic steering wheel, you believe that you are this person, and act accordingly. As an alter, you know of your primary personality, and are aware of the need to act circumspectly, to avoid being given away. However, your agenda and impulses are quite different from that of the original personality, and you may not be especially good at suppressing them. To successfully hide your personality transformation from someone else, test Stability (Difficulty 8.)

Stage Three: The character exits the series in one of two ways:

His disorder comes to the attention of his superiors, perhaps through a departmental psych evaluation, resulting in a discharge on medical grounds.

One of your alters permanently usurps your primary personality. This self has no interest in a police career, and resigns in search of a new, fulfilling life.

PANIC DISORDER

Resistance Ability: Stability/Health

Grid: C0

Incipient: You're just a little jumpy. You startle easily—even while sleeping. A frequent victim of insomnia, you spend sleepless nights thrashing in bed, worrying about possible disasters large and small. No matter what your course of action you're considering, you find it all too easy to envision multiple negative repercussions from it.

Stage One: You freeze up in the first flush of danger. When determining order of action, you always go last—except to sufferers of stage one Depression, who are even slower than you are. During the first round of any combat, the Difficulties of all tests you undertake increase by 2.

Stage Two: In addition to the above symptoms, you suffer a severe physical reaction under stress which resembles a miniature heart attack. Whenever your Stability drops by more than 2 points, you must make a Health test (Difficulty 6.) If you fail, you begin to sweat profusely, experience blurriness of vision, and eventually collapse in a near-faint. You take one die of damage and are unable to take significant action for approximately thirty minutes.

Stage Three: You suffer an immediate, massive coronary. Make a Health test (Difficulty 10); if you fail, you die. If you succeed (or are revived, for example with the aid of the Cure Disease power), you survive but are cashiered from the force on a medical disability.

PLASMA DEFICIENCY

Resistance Ability: Health

Grid: D1

Incipient: Your complexion is pale and waxy. You need more sleep than most people, and even when you wake up, dark circles hang below your eyes. Your body reacts to red meat as if it's supercharged with caffeine.

Stage One: Your body's ability to produce its own blood plasma drops off radically. At the same time, you develop the ability to replenish yourself by drinking human blood (or pure plasma.) Every time you spend points on a test of Athletics, Scuffling, or a mutant power, you must consume either a pint of blood or the equivalent of half a pint of plasma within half an hour. If you do not, you lose 1 Health point every hour, and can't refresh Health or any general ability until you get your supply. If you drop down to -6 or fewer Health as a result of plasma deficiency, you automatically fail your Consciousness test and lapse into a coma. While comatose, your condition stabilizes. You remain in a coma throughout the period of your hospitalization (see p. 95), then wake up spontaneously.

Sufferers typically feed on plasma they've purchased and stored, but, hey, emergencies happen. Before you know it, you'll find yourself suckling on somebody's open vein. If you have Fangs, you can plunge them into an artery and feed directly through them. Otherwise, you'll have to perform a potentially messy procedure, most likely drawing blood with a hypodermic needle. Incidents of nonconsensual blood-drinking are, needless to say, treated as aggravated assault.

On the upside, you become immune to the effects of AIDS, hepatitis, and all other blood-borne diseases—except for SEDS (see sidebar, p. 82.) You can still contract and communicate AIDS or hepatitis as a carrier.

Stage Two: As above, but you must consume 1 pint of blood or half a pint of plasma for each point spent on Athletics, Scuffling or mutant power tests, and suffer 1 die of damage with a +3 modifier for every hour spent without drinking needed plasma.

Stage Three: You can survive only with the aid of a life support machine which, in a procedure similar to plasmapheresis, constantly cycles your blood and reinvigorates it with an enriched super-plasma. You remain lucid but bedridden and unable to work cases. Police health benefits ensure your treatment until the end of your days.

SCHIZOPHRENIA

Resistance Ability: Stability

Grid: F0

Incipient: When tired or otherwise stressed, your ability to interpret social cues slips away from you. Aside from your family and partners on the job, you find it difficult to form trusting relationships. Sometimes you hear weird noises that no one else does.

Stage One: You occasionally suffer mild auditory hallucinations, which you can usually distinguish as unreal. You become less emotionally expressive; your physical and vocal traits flatten. Reflexive distrust, an occupational hazard for all police officers, becomes your default response to all encounters with new people. Sometimes you fear that even your family members and partners are out to get you. Add 1 to the cost of all Interpersonal spends.

Stage Two: Your hold on reality slips further. Your false perceptions now extend to senses of sight, smell and touch. Voices in your head become a frequent companion. Now they're clear enough to take on an identity in keeping with your distorted worldview. You may identify them as angels, demons, aliens, psychic mutant enemies, or earthly forces of authority such as the FBI or DHS. They warn you to protect yourself against threats, which surround you from all sides. The voices tell you not to trust anyone, not even your family or fellow squad members. At this point, you're still trying not to listen to them. Sometimes you suspect that they're the very beings intent on destroying you. To suppress these voices and act like a normal person is a constant struggle. You seem cold, preoccupied, and fearful. If you're not careful to exercise steely self-control, your speak becomes disorganized, rambling, and incoherent. Seeking medical treatment for your deteriorating mental state might quell the hallucinations, but would end your career if the bosses find out. Add 2 to the cost of all Interpersonal spends.

Stage Three: The voices are right. Enemies are everywhere. They manipulate the basic laws of time and space to menace you and compel your obedience. Your friends and family are all their robot Frankenstein mind slaves. With secret messages encoded in the media, the Others bully and threaten you. They arrange for your removal from the force on trumped-up "psychiatric" grounds. Supposedly, you have gone insane, but it's everyone else that's really crazy. They can't see the enemy all around them. Don't listen to their demands that you take those anti-psychotic

SEDS

The communicable disease called SEDS, for Sudden Enhanced Death Syndrome, is the scourge of the mutant community. The virus appears spontaneously in the blood and bone marrow of mutant carriers suffering from the SEDS Carrier defect. The virus remains dormant in a victim's system, sometimes for years, until triggered by a physical or psychic shock. When an infected character's Health or Stability drops to 0, he must make a test of the ability in question against a Difficulty of 2. On a failure, the victim's blood boils, and his body is shaken by violent tremors, as the virus converts itself into a high-potency enzyme which rapidly breaks down fat and muscle. This catalyzes a chemical reaction which converts the victim's body into a biological bomb. The body explodes, showering everyone within 5m in blood and shredded tissue.

Any mutant exposed to this contaminated tissue must test Health (Difficulty 3) or become infected with the virus. Characters with the SEDS Carrier defect are immune, even if the victim was infected by a different carrier.

The virus is also communicable through exposure to infected blood or semen, which can occur through blood transfusion, childbirth, sharing of intravenous needles, and sexual contact. Stage-two SEDS carriers can also communicate the disease through saliva. When exposed, make a Health test versus a Difficulty determined by the nature of the exposure:

Exposure	Difficulty
Shared lipstick or drinking vessel (stage-two carrier)	2
Accidental jab from infected needle	3
Kiss from stage-two carrier	4
Unprotected sex	5
Shared needles	6
Transfusion	12

There is no known cure for SEDS. Nor is there an emergency treatment which will stave off the deadly climactic reaction once it begins. Neither the pathogen or enzyme catalyzation reaction respond to the Cure Disease power.

SEDS cannot survive or propagate in the systems of non-mutants. They can't be carriers.

pills prescribed by your so-called "doctor." These are the final element of total enemy mind control. It is essential that you maintain true perception of your hellish reality, even if they keep you locked up forever in your padded cell.

SCLERODERMA

Resistance Ability: Health

Grid: B1

Incipient: Patches of your skin become discolored and tough. They appear on your torso and are easily concealed while clothed.

Stage One: You are diagnosed with scleroderma, a chronic disease in which excess collagen gathers in

deposits in your skin. Distinctive scar tissue appears on your hands and face, reducing your score in the following Interpersonal abilities by 1 point each: Flattery, Flirting, Impersonate, Interrogation, and Negotiation.

Stage Two: The disfiguring effects of the disease become more pronounced. You lose another point apiece in Flattery, Flirting, Interrogation and Negotiation, and cannot perform Impersonation tasks that place you within line of sight of the witness or suspect.

Stage Three: The expanding collagen deposits damage your lungs, intestinal tract, and/or kidneys. You are hospitalized and, after a painful struggle of many months, die of renal failure.

SEDS CARRIER**Resistance Ability:** Health**Grid:** E1

Incipient: Your body possesses the potential to manufacture the SEDS virus (see sidebar), although it has not yet begun to do so. You exhibit no signs or symptoms of the disease, and never will—you yourself are completely immune to it. Although there is no test to determine whether you're a SEDS carrier, you know that if you have both the Disease Immunity and Cure Disease powers, you stand a high chance of becoming one.

Stage One: You test positive for SEDS but are in no danger for it. The virus is present in your blood and, if you are male, your semen.

Stage Two: The virus is now also communicable via your saliva.

(Stage Three): This defect has no third stage, per se. However, if you knowingly communicate the disease—including by sharing beverages—you can be fired from the force. If any of your victims die, you may be charged with criminally negligent homicide.

TRANCE SUSCEPTIBLE**Resistance Ability:** Stability**Grid:** D3

Incipient: You have a tendency to stare off into space, and are easily distracted by television screens, moving lights, and shiny things.

Stage One: Difficulty of all Stability tests to resist the effects of mutant abilities increase by 1, except for resistance tests to Emotion Control, Possession, Induce Aggression and Induce Fear, which increase by 2.

Stage Two: Difficulties of all Stability tests to resist the effects of mutant abilities increase by 2, except for resistance tests to Emotion Control, Possession, Induce Aggression and Induce Fear, which increase by 4.

Stage Three: In a scene pre-planned by yourself and the GM, your character falls under the sway of a charismatic supporting character outside the world of the police force. This may be the high priest of a cult, the leader of an authoritarian political movement, or some other controlling, vaguely sinister figure whose words you follow as if handed down from on high. This may be a character who subjected you to any of the above-

listed mental powers. Your character retires from the HCU to follow his new mentor, but may return later on in the series as a supporting character, perhaps as a recurring figure in his former colleagues' subplots.

VOYEURISM**Resistance Ability:** Stability**Grid:** D6

Incipient: You would rather watch things from a distance than participate directly. You're always the first to volunteer for stake-out duty, and increasingly reluctant to talk to witnesses face-to-face. Life is much more interesting from the other side of a two-way mirror.

Stage One: You outfit your home with hidden cameras. You shirk off-duty obligations to spend your time obsessively reviewing video footage of unknowing people filmed performing their day-to-day activities. Romantic attachments suffer as you withdraw into your world of vicarious surveillance. You gain a point of Electronic Surveillance.

Stage Two: You become incapable of sexual arousal, except by watching others. You fantasize about spying on people without their knowledge but are not yet ready to cross the line into outright perv territory. Face-to-face encounters become a challenge for you; you lose 1 Stability whenever you take direct part in a witness or suspect interview. You gain another point of Electronic Surveillance.

Stage Three: In a series of sequences pre-planned by yourself and the GM, your character spirals into compulsive Peeping Tom activity, either as a direct observer or through the use of hidden cameras. Finally you are caught, arrested, prosecuted, and ejected from the force.



THE GUMSHOE RULES SYSTEM

This chapter describes the basic GUMSHOE rules system and is addressed to players and GM alike. But first bear with us for a little explanatory theory.

WHY THIS GAME EXISTS

Investigative scenarios have been done wrong since the early days of roleplaying games. As a consequence, they're hard to run and prone to grind to a halt. GUMSHOE is here to fix all that.

What's wrong about the traditional way of doing investigative games? They're based on a faulty premise. Story-based roleplaying, of which investigative games were an early if not the earliest example, evolved from dungeon-bashing campaigns. They treat clues the same way that dungeon games treat treasure. You have to search for the clue that takes you on to the next scene. If you roll well, you get the clue. If not, you don't—and the story grinds to a halt.

However, treasure gathering isn't the main event in a dungeon game. There, the central activity is killing the monsters and enemies who live in the dungeon. The treasure-finding phase comes afterwards, as a mere reward. If you don't get all the treasure in a room, you lose out a bit, but the story keeps going, as you tromp down the hallway to the next monster-filled chamber.

Imagine a dungeon game where you always had to roll well to find another room to plunder, or sit around feeling frustrated and bored.

In a fictional procedural, whether it's a mystery novel or an episode of a cop show, the emphasis isn't on finding the clues in the first place. When it really matters, you may get a paragraph telling you how difficult the search was, or a montage of a CSI team tossing an apartment. But the action really starts after the clues are gathered.

Investigative scenarios are not about finding clues, they're about interpreting the clues you do find.

GUMSHOE, therefore, makes the finding of clues all but automatic, as long as you get to the right place in the story and have the right ability. That's when the fun part begins, when the players try to put the components of the puzzle together.

That's hard enough for a group of armchair detectives, without withholding half the pieces from them. Every investigative scenario begins with a crime or conspiracy committed by a group of antagonists. The bad guys do something bad. The player characters must figure out who did it and put a stop to their activities.

FROM STRUCTURE TO STORY

The GM's structure notes are not a story. The story occurs as you, the team of players, brings the structure to life through the actions of your characters. The story proceeds from scene to scene, where you determine the pace, discovering clues and putting them together. Your characters interact with locations, gathering physical evidence, and supporting characters run by the GM, gathering expert and eyewitness testimony.

The first scene presents the mystery you have to solve. You then perform legwork, collecting information that tells you more about the case. Each scene contains information pointing to a new scene. Certain scenes may put a new twist on the investigation, as the initial mystery turns out to be just one aspect of a much bigger story. As clues accumulate, a picture of the case emerges, until your characters arrive at a climactic scene, where all is revealed and the bad guys confronted. A wrap-up scene accounts for loose ends and shows the consequences of your success—or, in

rare instances, failure. (Why is failure possible at all? Its possibility creates urgency and suspense.)

To move from scene to scene, and to solve the overall mystery, you must gather clues. They fuel your forward momentum.



TIP FOR PLAYERS: CONTAINING SPECULATION

Investigative scenarios often bog down into speculative debate between players about what *could be* happening. Many things *can* be happening, but only one thing *is*. If more than one possible explanation ties together the clues you have so far, you need more clues.

Whenever you get stuck, get out and **gather more information**.

GATHERING CLUES

Gathering clues is simple. All you have to do is: 1) get yourself into a scene where relevant information can be gathered and 2) have the right ability to discover the clue and 3) tell the GM that you're using it. As long as you do these three things, you will never fail to gain a piece of necessary information. It is never dependent on a die roll. If you ask for it, you will get it.

You can specify exactly what you intend to achieve: "I use Textual Analysis to determine if the memo was really written by Danziger."

Or you can engage in a more general informational fishing expedition: "I use Evidence Collection to search the crime scene."

If your suggested action corresponds to a clue in the scenario notes, the GM provides you the information arising from the clue.

Dedicated cop John Brody looks for the campsite hideout of a gang of anti-mutant thugs called barheads. He searches a section of forested land off the highway for evidence of their presence. His player, Justin, says, "I put my video camera in infrared mode and scan the area for heat traces." This is all he needs to do to get the information he needs to proceed to the next scene, a confrontation with the barheads in their encampment. "Blobs of

heat energy pop up to your right, about a hundred yards away. It looks like there's four or five people, appearing and disappearing behind a barrier."



Some clues would be obvious to a trained investigator immediately upon entering a scene. These passive clues are provided by the GM without prompting. Scenarios suggest which clues are passive and which are active, but your GM will adjust these in play depending on how much guidance you seem to need. On a night when you're cooking with gas, the GM will sit back and let you prompt her for passive clues. When you're bogging down, she may volunteer what would normally be active clues.

For each scene, the GM designates a **core clue**. This is the clue you absolutely need to move to the next scene, and thus to complete the entire investigation. GMs will avoid making core clues available only with the use of obscure investigative abilities. (For that matter, the character creation system is set up so that the group as a whole will have access to all, or nearly all, of these abilities.)

Certain clues allow you to gain **special benefits** by spending points from the relevant investigative ability pool. During your first few scenarios, your GM will offer you the opportunity to spend additional points as you uncover these clues. After that it's up to you to ask if there's anything to be gained by spending extra time or effort on a given clue. You can even propose specific ways to improve your already good result; if your suggestion is persuasive or entertaining, the GM may award you a special benefit not mentioned in her scenario notes.

Each benefit costs either 1 or 2 points from the relevant pool, depending on the difficulty of the additional action and the scope of the reward. When asking you if you want to purchase the benefit, the GM always tells you how much it will cost. Additional information gained provides flavor, but is never required to solve the case or move on to a new scene. Often it makes the character seem clever, powerful, or heroic. It may grant you benefits useful later in the scenario, frequently by making a favorable impression on supporting characters. If you think of your GUMSHOE game as a TV series, an extra benefit gives the actor playing your character a juicy spotlight scene.

"Can I tell what kind of barrier they're behind?" asks Justin. The GM knows that it's the barheads' tricked-out recreational vehicle. This information isn't necessary to move forward, and in fact John will stumble across it in a moment if he keeps going toward the cannibal camp. But it would be mighty impressive, in a Sherlock Holmes kind of way, if he could answer that question now.

"Do you want to spend an Evidence Collection point?" asks the GM. Justin agrees, and reduces his pool from its maximum of 3, down to 2.

The GM explains as follows: "You remember the contours of this vehicle from the course on automotive identification you took when you were detailed for training at the FBI headquarters in Quantico. It's a luxury motor home, a 2006 Patriot from Beaver Motor Coaches. You remember the price tag on one of those puppies. Over three hundred grand."



EXAMPLE BENEFITS

Here are some special benefits you might get from investigative point spends.

The benefit gives you an advantage in a future contest of General abilities.

- you find your gas tank has been punctured before you drive the vehicle
- you notice that there is a hole in the fence around the back of the complex or that the goons go off-duty at 6.00pm
- the plans show that the bomb must remain horizontal if you are not to trigger it

The benefit gives a favorable impression to supporting characters.

- you recognize and recover stolen artwork for the original owner, who will then be more inclined to help you
- you spend points to discover a hidden room where there is a hostage who can either give clues or even help with General abilities.
- You spend Flattery to get a good case from the Lieutenant.

The benefit can lead to a flashback scene.

- you find the body of a old colleague, and remember that he was a good cop gone bad.
- you get your clue in the form of a recalled harangue from the lieutenant

Point spends can help you resolve a moral dilemma. If your character finds the action required to get a Core Clue distasteful you might make a point spend to avoid this.

- Intimidating a local might get you a core clue for free, but a two point Reassurance spend on the same local could get you the same information without upsetting your source

Extra point spends might speed up an investigation

- a Bureaucracy spend supplemented by Flattery might get the DNA evidence processed a day earlier.

John whistles through his teeth. "Somebody's funding these idiots, big time."

Spending points on benefits gives often you an advantage, perhaps in a later General conflict. Thus it is to your advantage to propose cool benefits to the

GM, even when they aren't specified in the scenario.

The act of spending points for benefits is called a **spend**. The GM's scenario notes may specify that you get Benefit X for a 1-point spend, or Benefit Y for a 2-point spend.

GMs of great mental agility who feel comfortable granting their players influence over the details of the narrative may allow them to specify the details of a special benefit.

If you wish to make a spend in a situation where the GM has no special benefit to offer you, and cannot think of one that pertains at all to the investigation, you do not lose the points you wish to spend.

INCONSPICUOUS CLUES

Sometimes the characters instinctively notice something without actively looking for it. Often this situation occurs in places they're moving through casually and don't regard as scenes in need of intensive searching. The team might pass by a concealed door, spot a droplet of blood on the marble of an immaculate hotel lobby, or approach a vehicle with a bomb planted beneath it. Interpersonal abilities can also be used to find inconspicuous clues. The classic example is of a character whose demeanor or behavioral tics establish them as suspicious.

It's unreasonable to expect players to ask to use their various abilities in what appears to be an innocuous transitional scene. Otherwise they'd have to spend minutes of game time with every change of scene, running down their abilities in obsessive checklist fashion. That way madness lies.

Instead the GM asks which character has the highest current pool in the ability in question. (When in doubt for what ability to use for a basic search, the GM defaults to Evidence Collection.)

If two or more pools are equal, it goes to the one with the highest rating. If ratings are also equal, their characters find the clue at the same time.

John visits the hospital to get his lip stitched up after a nasty fall. His squad-mate Orlando Daniels waits with him. The doctor in the ER is a anti-mutant sympathizer, too, and intends to tip off his barhead buddies that the cops are onto them. The GM decides that the Bullshit Detector ability will alert them to the panicked anxiety underlying

the doctor's wearily professional demeanor. Both characters have the skill; John has 2 points in his pool, while Orlando has 3.

"Orlando," says the GM, "you can't put your finger on it, but there's something hinky about the doctor."

EVIDENCE AND FORWARD MOVEMENT

Investigations in Mutant City Blues differ in one crucial manner from those in the other GUMSHOE games we've published to date. When you're a cop, it's not enough to know what happened and get to the next scene, and eventually lay a climactic smackdown on the perps. You have to be able to prove your case in court. Here the sequence of core clues leads not only to the answer to the mystery, but to a situation where the group will finally have amassed enough evidence to trigger a prosecution. Sometimes the unit will find itself in a position where they know what happened, but have to find the evidence to make the case stick. Maybe they (or other officers) engaged in an illegal search. Perhaps they believe a witness's account but fear that his credibility will be torn to shreds by a good defense attorney. In this structure, the core clues lead them to the physical evidence that allows them to make an arrest, even if they've had a good idea of the perp's identity from early on in the scenario.

In certain cases, you can throw a change-up at your players, by creating a trail of clues leading to a conclusion contrary to their suspicions.





OPTIONAL RULE: NO-SPEND INVESTIGATIVE SPENDS

Although most groups enjoy the investigative spend rules, a few have reported problems with them. Some players find that the need to ask for investigative spends intrudes too much on the illusion of fictional reality, or makes it too clear that there are certain actions they ought to take during particular scenes.

Here's another method of providing the flavor clues available through investigative spends, for groups that prefer it. This optional rule is equally applicable to all GUMSHOE games. Be aware that, like most optional rules, this imposes a trade-off you should be aware of before implementation. In this case, the GM takes on a greater bookkeeping burden in exchange for making the system more transparent to her players.

Before play begins, the GM checks all character sheets for investigative abilities with a rating higher than 1. She compiles a master list, arranged per ability, ranking the characters in order of their ratings. Martina Uno has Streetwise at 3. Jessica Anton has it at 2, and Mike Merula at 4. The entry in the GM's master list looks like this:

Streetwise
Mike 4
Martina 3
Jessica 2

Players alert the GM whenever they add to their investigative abilities, so they can keep the master list up to date.

Whenever the PCs enter an investigative scene in which a spend is available, the GM checks the master list to see if any of them could afford to make the spend. The first time this happens, the GM chooses the topmost character, and puts a number of ticks next to the name equal to the size of the spend.

During subsequent scenes in which a spend can be made in the same ability, the GM chooses, from among the PCs whose ratings equal or exceed the spend, the one with the fewest tick marks. The tick marks do not represent expenditures; under this system it is possible for a player with 2 points in a particular ability to get two or more 2-point clues, if no one else in the group qualifies to earn them. This approach doles out the flavor clues in a way that favors players who've invested the most points in any given ability, but hides the mechanism from them, so they can't see the plot gears in motion. It also tends to result in the revelation of more flavor clues.

Example: The PCs are interviewing a witness, a hollow-eyed slacker named Lou. The scenario notes say that on a 1-point spend, a character with Streetwise will know the meaning of the rubber friendship bracelet, pierced by three studs, that Lou wears on his left wrist. You, the GM, check your master list for Streetwise, and see that no spends have been made against it this scenario. So the highest-ranked character with the least tick marks is Mike. You describe the bracelet and tell his player: "The bracelet indicates that he's a sdorph—an addict who places himself in a submissive relationship with a mutant who has the Endorphin Control (Others) power, who then gets him high."

Two scenes later, another opportunity for a Streetwise spend comes up. This is for a 2-point spend, to know that the burn scars on the arm of a witness are the result of a prison fight with Latin Kings gang leader Ventura Rey, during which Rey first manifested his Fire Projection power. You check the list, which now looks like this:

Streetwise
Mike 4 ✓
Martina 3
Jessica 2

Mike already has a tick next to his name, so Martina gets this clue. You then put two tick marks next to her name:

Streetwise
Mike 4 ✓
Martina 3 ✓✓
Jessica 2

The GM can either start fresh with no tick marks at the beginning of each scenario, or continue the existing list from one case to the next.

TESTS

A test occurs when the outcome of an ability use is in doubt. Tests apply to general skills only. Unlike information gathering attempts, tests carry a fairly high chance of failure. They may portend dire consequences if you lose, provide advantages if you win, or both.

Even in the case of general skills, the GM should call for tests only at dramatically important points in the story, and for tasks of exceptional difficulty. Most general ability uses should allow automatic successes, with possible bonuses on point spends, just like investigative abilities.

There are two types of test: simple tests and contests.



DIE ROLLS

All die rolls in GUMSHOE use a single ordinary (six-sided) die.

SIMPLE TESTS

A simple test occurs when the character attempts an action without active resistance from another person or entity. Examples include driving a treacherous road, jumping a gorge, sneaking into an unguarded building, binding a wound, shooting a target, disconnecting a security system, or resisting mutant mental powers.

DIFFICULTY NUMBERS

The GM determines how hard any given action is by assigning it a Difficulty Number ranging from 2 to 8 (occasionally even higher), where 2 offers only a slim chance of failure, 4 is the norm and 8 verges on the impossible. The player rolls a single die; if the result is equal to or higher than the Difficulty Number, the character succeeds. Before rolling the die, the player may choose to spend any number of points from the relevant ability pool, adding these to the final die result. Players who forget to specify the number of points they want to spend before rolling are stuck with the unmodified result.

In the game world, expenditure of pool points in this way represents special effort and concentration by the character, the kind you can muster only so many times during the course of an investigation.

John wants to climb a high wall to see if his perp

is on the other side. John's player, Justin, has a full 8 points in his Athletics pool. He decides that he really needs a win on this one and decides to spend half of them on the attempt. He rolls a 5. With the 4 points from his pool, this gets a final result of 9. Displaying impressive aerobatic grace, John hauls himself over the wall.

The GM never directly reveals Difficulty Numbers. She may, in response to player questions, give rough verbal indications of how hard a task seems to the naked eye:

"A little kid could jump that fence."

"You've climbed fences that high before, but never easily."

"You've never managed to climb a fence that high without hurting yourself."

OPTIONAL RULE: REVEALING DIFFICULTY NUMBERS

For a more super-heroic feel, you can let the players know what the Difficulty number is for conventional obstacles such as walls and hot pursuits. You should never reveal Difficulty Numbers for Sense Trouble (see p. 29)

The test represents the character's best chance to succeed. Once you fail, you've shot your wad and cannot retry unless you take some other supporting action that would credibly increase your odds of success. If allowed to do this, you must spend more pool points than you did on the previous attempt. If you can't afford it, you can't retry.

Orlando has just failed his Mechanics test to repair a broken pump in the sinking ship he and the other detectives are trapped in. He spent 2 points from his Mechanics pool on this attempt. The GM decides he'll have one more shot at it before the ship capsizes. Now he must spend at least 3 Mechanics points. Fortunately he has 4 points left in his pool. The Difficulty Number of the repair attempt is 5. Orlando rolls a 6, adding 3 points to get a final result of 9. The pump kicks back in, just in time to reverse the ship's sinking.

PIGGYBACKING

When a group of characters act in concert to perform a task together, they designate one to take the lead. That character makes a simple test, spending any number

of his own pool points toward the task, as usual. All other characters pay 1 point from their relevant pools in order to gain the benefits of the leader's action. These points are not added to the leader's die result. For every character who is unable to pay this piggybacking cost, either because he lacks pool points or does not have the ability at all, the Difficulty Number of the attempt increases by 2.

Although they have a warrant for their raid on a mutant cult leader's compound, John, Orlando, Kim and Sharmaine decide to sneak in, to take the suspects by surprise when special forces vans bust through the front gate. This should forestall any chance of a super-powered showdown, which might endanger the many children resident in the complex. Kim, with an Infiltration of 8, takes the lead. John, Orlando and Sharmaine have 2, 0, and 4 points in their Infiltration pools, respectively. John and Sharmaine pay 1 point apiece; their pools go down to 1 and 3. Because Orlando has no points to spend, the Difficulty Number of the Infiltration increases from 4 to 6. (If the group left him behind, it would be easier to sneak in, but he's the one with Emotion Control.) Kim spends 3 points on the attempt and rolls a 1. This would have overcome the Difficulty if it wasn't for Orlando's presence. Clearly, he's stumbled on his way into the back garden, setting off a jury-rigged alarm system.

In most instances a group cannot logically act in concert. Only one character can drive a car at one time. Two characters with Preparedness check their individual kits in sequence, rather than checking a single kit at the same time.

COOPERATION

When two characters cooperate toward a single goal, they agree which of them is undertaking the task directly, and which is assisting. The leader may spend any number of points from her pool, adding them to the die roll. The assistant may pay any number of points from his pool. All but one of these is applied to the die roll.

John and Orlando are trying to salvage boxes of crucial documents from a suspicious blaze. John has 3 points left in his Flight pool. Orlando has 2 points in Limb Extension. They decide that John will fly over the burning pile of boxes, tossing what he can to Orlando, who will grab them with rubbery, outstretched arms. The GM rules that these improvised uses of the powers, though not explicitly

mentioned in their rules descriptions, make dramatic sense in a mutant-powered world, and thus have a chance to succeed. Both choose to spend all of their remaining points on the attempt. John adds 3 points to the die roll. Orlando spends 2 points, but adds only 1 to the die roll. John's player rolls a 3, for a result of 7. This beats the Difficulty Number of 6, allowing them to zoom away with evidence that will make it easier to prosecute their suspect.

CONTESTS

Contests occur when two characters, often a player character and a supporting character controlled by the GM, actively attempt to thwart one another. Although contests can resolve various physical match-ups, in a horror game the most common contest is the chase, in which the investigators run away from slaving entities intent on ripping them limb from limb.

In a contest, each character acts in turn. The first to fail a roll of the contested ability loses. The GM decides who acts first. In a chase, the character who bolts from the scene acts first. Where the characters seem to be acting at the same time, the one with the lowest rating in the relevant ability acts first. In the event of a tie, supporting characters act before player characters. In the event of a tie between player characters, the player who arrived last for the current session goes first in the contest.

The first character to act makes a test of the ability in question. If he fails, he loses the contest. If he succeeds, the second character then makes a test. This continues until one character loses, at which point the other one wins. Typically each character attempts to beat a Difficulty Number of 4.

Pursued by a distraught suspect with the self-detonation power, John flees through the evacuated halls of the Quade Institute, hoping to put enough distance behind him to clear the other mutant's blast radius. His Athletics pool is 6; the suspect's is 7. As the fleeing character initiating the chase sequence, Orlando is the first character to act. He rolls against a Difficulty of 4, spending 1 point. He rolls a 4, and manages to scramble into a laboratory. Orlando spots a button controlling a blast door which will seal off the lab complex from the rest of the building.

The suspect spends 1 point as well, rolling a 3. He picks up speed, ducking down to slip beneath the blast door before it closes.

Orlando spends another point, taking his Athletics to 4. He rolls a 6, for a final result of 7. The GM invites his player to explain how: "I spot an open window and clamber down onto a ledge."

The GM rolls for the suspect, spending 1 point and rolling a 2. That's a failure. "Exhausted and panting," the GM narrates, "the suspect stops, leaning against a wall. He begins to weep, talking to himself between sobs. You can't make it all out, but he's saying something about his daughter."

Not having heard about a daughter before, Orlando senses an important piece of information. As he clings to the ledge, he wonders if he can now calm the suspect down with Reassurance, and then get him to explain his situation.

Where the odds of success are skewed in favor of one contestant, the GM may assign different Difficulties to each. A character with a significant advantage gets a lower Difficulty Number. A character facing a major handicap faces a higher Difficulty Number. When in doubt, the GM assigns the lower number to the advantaged participant. An investigator scrabbling up a rock face without gear finds it harder to move quickly than the well-equipped climber he's pursuing. In this case he might face a Difficulty Number of 4, while the mountaineer gets the lower Difficulty of 3.

Throughout the contest, GM and players should collaborate to add flavor to each result, explaining what the characters did to remain in the contest. That way, instead of dropping out of the narration to engage in an arithmetical recitation, you keep the fictional world verbally alive.



DIFFICULTY NUMBERS AND STORY PACING

Just as the GUMSHOE system keeps the story moving by making all crucial clues accessible to the characters, GMs must ensure that tests and contests essential to forward narrative momentum can be easily overcome. Assign relatively low Difficulty Numbers of 4 or less to these crucial plot points. Reserve especially hard Difficulty Numbers for obstacles which provide interesting but nonessential benefits.

For example, if the characters have to sneak into the cannibal campground in order to stage the final confrontation, assign the relatively low Difficulty Number of 4 to the task. If it seems to the characters that they ought to have a tougher time of it, insert a detail justifying their ease of success. The cannibal assigned to patrol duty might be found passed out at his post, say.

OPTION – YOU ALWAYS SUCCEED

The following rule is more in keeping with the GUMSHOE premise, but might not suit everyone. Where it is essential to overcome a General obstacle in order to reach a core scene, allow success whatever the result, but give a negative consequence other than failure for the roll. For example, the PC climbs the fence, but receives an injury. This rule never preserves characters from Health or Stability loss.



SUPER-POWERED ACTION

Mutant City Blues series may include as little combat and action as any other GUMSHOE series. GMs can structure their games so that the player characters investigate crimes, and an enhanced tactical squad goes out to capture the mutant wrongdoers once the arrest warrants have been drawn up. This is a realistic touch: in real police organizations, crime investigation and high-risk takedowns are handled by separate squads with quite different skill sets.

Most players, however, will look over their lists of super powers and expect to be able to use them in the occasional comic-style donnybrook. GMs who choose to recognize this desire can structure their scenarios to include the possibility of one or more big action set piece sequence per investigation.

Doing so requires a more tactical approach than GUMSHOE has to date presented. This section provides the rules crunch necessary to run super-powered battles and action sequences.

DISTANCE

Until now, distance has been de-emphasized as a factor in GUMSHOE combat, to be treated with the hand-waving usual to fight sequences in story-heavy roleplaying games. With various mutant powers introducing distance-dependent effects, you may wish to set up some miniatures and a battle map.

Useful tools include measurement devices for your minis map:

A length of string or cord, marked in scale meters, and a pin to anchor it. This can be used to measure the extent of spherical and circular effects.

One more cubes roughly 1 scale meter on each side, to measure cubic meters.

GUMSHOE uses the metric system; most commercially



SURPRISE

Characters are surprised when they find themselves suddenly in a dangerous situation.

Surprise supporting characters by sneaking up on them with a successful Infiltration or Surveillance test. The basic Difficulty is 4, which may increase for especially vigilant characters.

Avoid being surprised with a successful Sense Trouble test. The basic Difficulty is 4, but may be higher in the case of notably sneaky opponents.

Surprised characters suffer a +2 increase to all general ability Difficulties for any immediately subsequent action. In a fight, the penalty pertains to the first round of combat.

This rule applies to any GUMSHOE game.

available battlemats are marked with one-inch grids meant to represent 5 feet. Treat these as 2m squares in GUMSHOE, and try not to sweat the discrepancies. If the thought of this horrifies you, draw up your own battlemat with an accurate 2m scale grid.

MOVEMENT IN COMBAT

Most characters can move 10m (or five grid squares) during a single combat round. In a round in which they take some other significant action, like attempting to strike an opponent or deliver healing to a downed comrade, they also can move 4m, or two grid squares. They can move 4m before or after taking their main action, or can move 2m, act, and then move another 2m.

Difficult terrain or environmental conditions, like uneven ground or storms, may slow characters to



JÉRÔME 08

SUPER-POWERED ACTION

4m/2 grid squares (without an action) or 2m/1 grid square with an action.

FIGHTING

Fights are slightly more complicated contests involving any of the following abilities:

- Scuffling vs. Scuffling: the characters are fighting in close quarters.
- Shooting vs. Shooting: the characters are apart from one another and trying to hit each other with guns or other missile weapons.
- The various mutant powers follow their own rules, listed under abilities.

The aggressor is the first character to move against the other. When the status of aggressor and defender are unclear, the combatants compare their current pool numbers in the abilities they're using in the fight. The character with the highest number chooses whether to act as aggressor or defender. (Unlike an ordinary contest, in a fight it is often advantageous to strike first.)

A contest proceeds between the two abilities. When combatants using the Scuffling or Shooting abilities roll well, they get the opportunity to deal damage to their opponents.

Hit Thresholds: Each character has a Hit Threshold of either 3 (the standard value) or 4 (if the character's Athletics rating is 8 or more.) The Hit Threshold is the Difficulty Number the character's opponent must match or beat in order to harm him. Less competent supporting characters may have lower Hit Thresholds. Creatures may have Hit Thresholds of 4 or higher, regardless of their Athletics ratings.

Dealing Damage: When you roll on or over your opponent's Hit Threshold, you may deal damage to him. To do so, you make a damage roll, rolling a die which is then modified according to the relative lethality of your weapon, as per the following table:

Weapon Type	Damage Modifier
Fist, kick	-2
Small improvised weapon, police baton, knife	-1
Machete, heavy club, light firearm	0
Sword, heavy firearm	+1

For firearms, add an additional +2 when fired at point blank range.

Characters may never spend points from their combat pools to increase their damage rolls.

The final damage result is then subtracted from your opponent's Health pool. When a combatant's Health pool drops to 0 or less, that combatant begins to suffer ill effects, ranging from slight impairment to helplessness to death; see sidebar. Any combatants currently engaged with him in a close quarters fight can then deal another instance of damage to him.

Unlike other contests, participants do not lose when they fail their test rolls. Instead, they're forced out of the fight when they lose consciousness or become seriously wounded—see sidebar.

NON-LETHAL ATTACKS

In *Mutant City Blues*, a trained police officer can effectively restrain an unarmed subject with a success in a Scuffling vs. Scuffling contest, followed by an expenditure of an additional 2 Scuffling points. If another officer is on hand and free to physically assist, that officer can complete the restraint for his partner, spending only 1 Scuffling point. The subject is then subdued, cuffed, and ready for transport to a holding cell. The GM may determine that it breaks story logic for those who are highly trained in unarmed combat, and mutants with certain powers, for example Strength, Force Field, and the various blast powers, to be subject to ordinary unarmed restraint tactics.

This option is not available to PCs in other GUMSHOE games where it might be used by players as a shortcut to a straight-up kill.

Although tasers exist in the world, they are not used by HCU officers. A string of incidents in which victims suffered fatal heart attacks after overzealous taser use have led to stringent departmental restrictions. Although patrolmen get them as standard equipment, the paperwork requirements for taser requisitions by detectives are onerous. Using them in the field leads to even more red tape. Departmental lore has it that you'll get passed over for promotion if the brass sees too many taser use reports stapled to your personnel jacket.

(This emulates the treatment of tasers in the source material. In real life they might arguably be a life-saving non-lethal technology. Because they make action sequences boring and short, popular fiction occasionally

puts them in the hands of bad guys and their minions, but does not give them to the heroes. Sympathetic characters use holds, punches, mutant powers and/or threats of gun violence to subdue recalcitrant suspects.)

No matter what kind of attack you're making, you can retroactively specify that a given hit was aimed not to kill but to disable. When you damage an opponent

enough to knock him to -12 Health or below, spend 2 points of the attack ability you just used to make it a disabling hit. He loses consciousness (if he hasn't done so already) but does not die. Instead, he is only seriously wounded. Occasionally, the GM may disallow this option and allow an important NPC to die if it's appropriate, but won't use this to hose the players. For example, the GM wouldn't disallow it to get the PC into trouble for killing someone.



EXHAUSTION, INJURY AND DEATH

Unlike most abilities, your Health pool can drop below 0.

When it does this, you must make a Consciousness Roll. Roll a die with the absolute value¹ of your current Health pool as your Difficulty. You may deliberately strain yourself to remain conscious, voluntarily reducing your Health pool by an amount of your choice. For each point you reduce it, add 1 to your die result. The Difficulty of the Consciousness roll is based on your Health pool *before* you make this reduction.

Sharmaine faces a meth-crazed concussion beamer in the urine-stained hallways of a filthy squat. She takes a force blast that drops her Health pool to -2. The tweaker turns and runs; she struggles to remain conscious so she can radio backup with a description. The absolute value of -2 is 2, so this is the Difficulty of her Consciousness roll. She chooses to expend another 2 Health points she doesn't have. That gives her a bonus of 2 to her roll. She rolls a 6, for a final result of 8. Sharmaine calls it in, but now her Health pool is down to -4.

If your pool is anywhere from 0 to -5, you are hurt, but have suffered no permanent injury, beyond a few superficial cuts and bruises. However the pain of your injuries makes it impossible to spend points on Investigative abilities, and increases the Difficulty Numbers of all tests and contests, including opponents' Hit Thresholds, by 1.

A character with the Medic ability can improve your condition by spending Medic points. For every Medic point spent, you regain 2 Health points—unless you are the Medic, in which case you gain only 1 Health point for every Medic point spent. The Medic can only refill your pool to where you were before the incident in which you received this latest injury. He must be in a position to devote all of his attention to directly tending to your wounds.

If your pool is between -6 and -11, you have been seriously wounded. You must make a Consciousness roll.

Whether or not you maintain consciousness, you are no longer able to fight. Until you receive first aid, you will lose an additional Health point every half hour. A character with the Medic ability can stabilize your condition by spending 2 Medic points. However, he can't restore your Health points.

Even after you receive first aid, you must convalesce in a hospital or similar setting for a period of days. Your period of forced inactivity is a number of days equal to the positive value of your lowest Health pool score. (So if you were reduced to -8 Health, you are hospitalized for 8 days.) On the day of your discharge, your Health pool increases to half its maximum value. On the next day, it refreshes fully.

When your pool dips to -12 or below, you are dead. Time to create a replacement character.

¹ In other words, treat the negative number as a positive. For example, if your Health pool is at -3, the Difficulty of the roll is 3, and so on.



While undercover as a corrections officer in a facility housing mutant convicts, John fends off Alejandro Reiter, a beefy guard who's been helping gang leader El Monstroso run his criminal empire from behind bars. Reiter comes at him from behind in the break room, making this a close quarters fight, for which the Scuffle ability is required. The GM declares that Reiter is the aggressor. Reiter has a Scuffle rating and pool of 12, a Health rating and pool of 10, a Hit Threshold of 4 and, thanks to his Strength power, a Damage Modifier of 2. John's Scuffle rating is 10 but his pool is down to 6. His Health pool is down to 8 from a rating of 12. His Hit Threshold is 4. With no weapons at hand, his Damage Modifier is -2.

The GM spends 2 points from Reiter's Scuffling pool, dropping it from 12 to 10. The GM rolls, getting a 2. Modified by the point spend, that comes out to a 4, which beats John's Hit Threshold. Reiter may then make a damage roll. The GM rolls a 4;

with his Damage Modifier of 2, that equals 6 points of damage. Reiter places him in a choke hold, reducing John's Health pool from 8 to 2.

John attempts a judo throw to break the hold. His player, Justin, spends 3 points, taking his pool from 6 to 3. He rolls a 3, for a result of 6, which more than meets Reiter's Hit Threshold. Justin rolls a 5. Combined with his -2 modifier, this comes out to 3 points of damage. Reiter's Health pool drops from 10 to 7. He throws Reiter over his shoulder and onto a break room table, which collapses under his massive bulk.

Reiter responds by barreling for John's legs in an attempt to knock him down and pin him to the floor. The GM spends another 2 Scuffle points for Reiter, taking his pool from 10 to 8. The roll is high, a 5, which modifies to a 7. The ensuing damage roll is a 2, which his Damage Modifier brings to a total of 4. John's Health drops to -2. He is now **hurt**, and suffers an increase of 1 to all Difficulty Numbers, including his opponent's Hit Threshold, which now becomes 5. He must make a Consciousness roll, against a Difficulty of 2, which is the absolute value of his Health pool. He rolls a 3, and remains conscious.

Now it's John's turn to hit back. Justin spends 2 points, reducing his pool from 3 to 1. He rolls a 2, for a total of 4. Before he got hurt, that would have been enough, but now he's just short of the mark. He tries to jab his thumbs into Reiter's eye sockets, but can't exert enough pressure to do more than annoy him..

Reiter attacks again, spending another 2 Scuffle points, taking its total from 8 to 6. The GM rolls a 5, for a total of 7—again enough to deal damage. The damage roll is a 3, plus the Damage Modifier of 2. Reiter delivers a stunning head butt, dropping John's Health total from -2 to -7. He is now **seriously wounded** and thus unable to continue fighting. That puts John out of the fight. His Consciousness roll faces a Difficulty of 7, the absolute value of his Health pool. He could go even further into the red to strain for a bonus, but elects not to. There's no point in making the roll, which is guaranteed to fail. John passes out. Given the intensity of the result, the GM describes the head butt as having given him a concussion and possible brain injury.

Reiter, having attacked John impulsively, is now left wondering what to do with him. At this point, another undercover HCU officer, Orlando Daniels, enters the break room. Reiter slips out, realizing that he'll now have to go on the lam to avoid arrest.

John is seriously wounded and will die if not stabilized. Fortunately, Orlando Daniels can get him to the prison infirmary for immediate treatment.

FREE-FOR-ALL COMBAT

Combat becomes more chaotic when two groups of combatants fight, or a group gangs up against a single opponent. The GM abandons the aggressor/defender model. Instead, the GM determines an order of action, ranking all participants in the combat according to their present *pool* values in the fighting skills they'll be starting the fight with—Scuffling or Shooting. Ties are broken in favor of characters with higher *ratings* in those skills. If characters are still tied, player characters win out over creatures and enemies, and early-arriving players win over late-arriving players.

The time it takes to go through the ranking order once, with each character taking an action, is called a **round**. When one round ends, another begins. When called upon to act, each character may strike at any opponent within range of his weapons. Some supernatural creatures may strike more than once per round. They make each attack in succession, and may divide them up between opponents within range, or concentrate all of them on a single enemy.

Creatures may choose to use their actions to deal additional damage to downed or helpless opponents rather than engage active opponents. They automatically deal once instance of damage per action. Only the most crazed and bestial human enemies engage in this behavior.

Characters who join a combat in progress come last in order of precedence. If more than two characters join during the same round, the GM determines their relative precedence using the rules above.

The fight continues until one side capitulates or flees, or all of its members are unconscious or otherwise unable to continue.

ARMOR

Armor may reduce the damage from certain weapon

types. If you're wearing a form of armor effective against the weapon being used against you, you subtract a number of points from each instance of damage dealt to you before applying it to your Health pool. Light body armor, as worn by police officers, reduces each instance of damage from bullets by 2 points and from cutting and stabbing weapons (knives, swords, machetes) by 1 point. Military-grade body armor reduces bullet damage by 3 points.

Orlando is shot by a street punk. The GM rolls a 3 for the punk's damage, adding 1 point for his high-caliber handgun, for a total damage of 4. Orlando wears light body armor, reducing the damage to 2 points. His Health pool decreases from 6 to 4.

Light body armor is heavy, hot, and marks you out as someone looking for trouble. All of these drawbacks apply doubly to military-grade body armor. Investigators can't expect to walk around openly wearing armor without attracting the attention of the local SWAT team. Armor and heavy weapons may prove useful in discrete missions conducted away from prying eyes.

In choosing to make contemporary body armor highly effective against firearms, we're drawing on the portrayal of Kevlar vests in cop shows and movies. We make no claims for any resemblance between these rules and real life. The rules also favor close-up physical confrontations, which are more in keeping with the genre than firefights. GMs using the GUMSHOE rules in more realistic investigative settings may wish to reduce the effectiveness of body armor against gunfire.

COVER

In a typical gunfight, combatants seek cover, hiding behind walls, furniture or other barriers, exposing themselves only for the few seconds it takes them to pop up and fire a round at their targets. The GUMSHOE rules recognize three cover conditions:

- **Exposed:** No barrier stands between you and the combatant firing at you. Your Hit Threshold decreases by 1.
- **Partial Cover:** About half of your body is exposed to fire. Your Hit Threshold remains unchanged.
- **Full Cover:** Except when you pop up to fire a round, the barrier completely protects you from incoming fire. Your Hit Threshold increases by 1.



ONE GUN, TWO COMBATANTS

If your opponent has a gun well in hand and ready to fire, and you charge him from more than five feet away, he can empty his entire clip or chamber at you before you get to him, badly injuring you. You are automatically hit. He rolls one instance of damage, which is then tripled. Yes, we said tripled. And, yes, the tripling occurs after weapon modifiers are taken into account. This is why few people charge when their opponents have the drop on them.

If your opponent has a pistol but it is not well in hand and ready to fire, you may attempt to jump him and wrestle it from his grip. If he has a pistol well in hand but is unaware of your presence, you may also be able to jump him, at the GM's discretion. The characters engage in a Scuffling contest to see which of them gets control of the gun and fires it. The winner makes a damage roll against the loser, using the pistol's Damage Modifier, including the +2 for point blank range.

If you jump an opponent with an unready rifle, a Scuffling combat breaks out, with the opponent using the rifle as a heavy club.

AMMO CAPACITY

MCB sets aside the loving attention to firearm intricacies characteristic of most contemporary-era RPG systems¹. For example, characters need to reload only when dramatically appropriate. Otherwise, they're assumed to be able to refill the cylinders of their revolvers or jam clips into their automatic weapons between shots.

When reloading is an issue, GMs may request a Shooting test (Difficulty 3) to quickly reload. Characters who fail may not use their Shooting ability to attack during the current round.

Separated from his teammates, a wounded Orlando crawls into a condemned tenement to hole up. The punks give chase. The GM decides

that limited resources will increase the sequence's sense of suspense, and declares that Orlando has only four shots left in his Glock autopistol, and only one extra ammo clip in his pocket. She plans to have the punks gang up on him, forcing him to roll Shooting to successfully reload as they rush him.

RANGE

The effect of range on firearms combat is likewise simplified nearly out of existence. Handguns and shotguns can only be accurately fired at targets within fifty meters. The range limit for rifles is one hundred meters.

HAZARDS

In or out of combat, the characters' survival may be threatened by assorted hazards, from electrical shock to poisoning.

ELECTRICITY

Damage from exposure to electricity varies according to voltage. You can suffer:

- **Mild shock**, equivalent to briefly touching a "hot" microphone or open household electrical circuit. You lose 1 Health and are blown backwards for a couple of meters.
- **Moderate shock**, equivalent to a jolt from a stun gun. You lose 2 Health and (if in combat time) your next four actions. You always lose at least one action, but may buy off the loss of other actions by paying 3 Athletics, Lightning or Regeneration points per action.
- **Extreme shock**, equivalent to a lightning strike. You suffer one die of damage, with a +4 modifier.

The GM should always give you some opportunity to avoid being shocked, whether it be an Athletics test to avoid unexpected contact, or a Surveillance test to spot the danger.

If you are reduced to -6 or fewer Health, the current is assumed to have traveled through your heart or brain, causing cardiac arrest or brain damage, respectively. The GM describes appropriate symptoms during your hospital convalescence, and may, if narrative credibility so demands, decide that you need a session of mutant Healing to fully recover.

1. More crunchy combat rules are available in the Esoterror Fact Book.

EXPLOSIVES

Explosives divide into six classes:

Class	Equivalent To	Annihilation Radius	Damage Radius	Debris Radius
1	Pipe Bomb	—	1m	4m
2	Grenade	—	2m	6m
3	IED	—	3m	12m
4	Truck Bomb	3m	9m	36m
5	Ballistic Missile	12m	60m	240m
6	Nuke	500m	3km	4km

If you are within a device's damage radius (but outside of its annihilation radius) when it explodes, you take a die of damage, plus a modifier equal to three times its class.

If you are outside of its annihilation or damage radii but within its debris radius, make an Athletics with its class times three as the Difficulty. If you fail, you take a die of damage, plus a modifier equal to its class.

Should you find yourself within a bomb's annihilation radius when it detonates, you will find the term grimly self-explanatory. A tearful funeral sequence, followed by the introduction of your new character, will ensue shortly afterwards.

GMs are free to create additional explosive devices falling between these six broad increments. Some weapons, like fragmentation grenades or pipe bombs packed with nails, may be designed to deliver especially damaging debris, with a damage modifier equal to twice the device's class.

FIRE

Damage from exposure to fire varies according to the surface area of your body exposed to the flame, and repeats for each round (or, outside of combat, every few seconds) you remain exposed to it.

- **Minor exposure**, most often to an extremity like a hand or foot, carries a damage modifier of -2.
- **Partial exposure**, to up to half of your surface area, carries a damage modifier of +0.

- **Extensive exposure**, to half or more of your surface area, imposes a damage modifier of +2.

The GM should always give you a chance to avoid being set on fire. The difficulty of extinguishing a flame (except by Fire Control, which works equally well whatever the source) varies depending on the substance. If your clothes are simply on fire, the flames are easier to put out than if you are covered in an adhesive accelerant, like the incendiary gel used in many types of napalm.

TOXINS

Toxins are either inhaled, ingested or injected directly into the bloodstream. They vary widely in lethality. A dose of household cleanser may impose a damage modifier of -2, where a sophisticated nerve gas might range from +6 to +16. Inhaled toxins tend to take effect right away. Injected and ingested toxins take delayed effect, anywhere from minutes to hours after exposure. Their damage might be parceled out in increments, and may prevent you from refreshing Health points until somehow neutralized. As with any hazard, the GM should always give you a chance to avoid exposure to them.

IMPROVISED POWER USE

In the continuities of the big comic book companies, built up over decades of stories featuring hundreds of disparate heroes, their antagonists, and supporting casts, pretty much anything can happen. Powers come from multiple sources, including radioactivity, magic, genetic mutation, high technology, and alien heritage. Powers are not generic but unique—Johnny Fire's flame abilities might work quite differently from those of the Blazemaster. Comic book heroes routinely improvise new applications of their powers to get themselves out of tough situations. Super-powered characters are still very rare, and the police remain consistently baffled when they're used to commit crimes.

By making all superhuman abilities consistent and predictable, *Mutant City Blues* allows you to run procedural mysteries in a world of extraordinary powers. This is not a world where anything can happen, but one in which a well-documented set of superhuman capabilities must be factored into the reconstruction of any crime scene. When an investigator examines a crime scene, he has to entertain the possibility that the perpetrator could fly, teleport or phase through a



wall, but knows that he couldn't travel through time or turn himself into a robot. Two individuals with the same power might not be able to wield it to the same degree, but its underlying capabilities remain consistent. The limits of fire powers are the same for both Johnny Fire and the Blazemaster.

To preserve the predictability of mutant powers, GMs should curtail or completely disallow the sort of improvised power use that is a staple of the source material.

If you choose to interpret this rule strictly, characters are able to improvise minor effects only. These are impressive but small gestures that announce or illustrate the character's power, but accomplish nothing difficult enough to require a test. (As an example, see the interstitial fiction on p. 138, where Cecilia alerts a reluctant witness to the fact she has the Lightning power by causing a spark to travel between her fingertips.)

A looser version of the rule allows characters to improvise effects for general mutant abilities to overcome actual plot obstacles. To do so, they must test the ability against a Difficulty equal to 4, plus whatever the Difficulty would be to solve the problem by mundane means.

Byron Krimmel (played by Justin) wants to use the Gravity Control power to decrease the weight of a deployed blast door, so he can lift its considerable

weight long enough to slide underneath it. The Gravity Control description talks about causing standalone objects to float up into the air, which doesn't seem to fit the situation. However, Justin convinces you that this would be a sensible application of the power, given what else it can do. You accept his argument. Lifting the door with Athletics carries a Difficulty of 8. Adding 4 to that for the improvised power use, you arrive at a Difficulty for his Gravity Control test of 12.

Disallow improvised power uses when they duplicate the specified effects of another existing power. For example, you can't use Read Minds to see into a subject's dreams, because that steps on the Observe Dreams power. Allow them when they permit the character to do something that can be accomplished by a non-mutant ability, or which cannot otherwise be done at all. In the latter case, assign them a Difficulty of 12.

The improvisation that takes place is by the player, not the character. The PC is not finding a new use for the ability, but instead doing something that in the game world is standard and well-documented, but happens not to appear in this rule book. It is then treated as a pre-existing, predictable technique that other mutants with the same power have been using all along. When examining crime scenes in later episodes, the detectives can assume that other characters can duplicate the feat. The GM then reassigns its default Difficulty to bring it line with the documented applications of this and other powers.

Big Time Comics headquarters was a warren of tiny offices, smelling of dry rot, copier toner, and ancient sweat. Lomax curled his nose at the posters of chicks in bondage gear, their anatomically impossible bodies splayed out in unlikely postures as they threatened one another with fireballs and ninja swords. It was a playground of latent pedophilia, as far as he was concerned.

Carl Brueggen sat wedged behind a pressboard desk. Elaborately sculpted plastic figures of monsters and heroes crowded his workspace. "Just another second," he said, holding up a stubby finger. Another image of a BDSM chick appeared on the black T-shirt draping his ample frame, dodging spatters of dried mustard. The editor of *The Fish* sported a bushy beard and an idiosyncratic mullet/pompadour combination. Narrow eyes squinted behind oversized gold-framed aviator glasses, which he continued to wear despite the fact that they had again become fashionable. Brueggen hit the send button on a scathing email to another of the no-talent idiot writers his publisher had saddled him with and then tucked into his Italian sub. "All right, all right," he said, talking through his food. "You can now speak, without derailing my thought train."

Lomax had agreed to let Cece take this one. She was more wired in to goob culture.

"What's going to happen to Mr. Stagg's comic, now that he's been murdered?" she asked.

Brueggen paused to savor his sandwich's ranch dressing. "My first impulse is to say the same as if he'd lived, which is, it's headed for cancellation. But if you two make a big enough deal of this in the press, maybe the publicity will invigorate sales." He stopped to think. "Hmm, yeah. If this plays out right, we could maybe bring in some big names to reboot his character."

Lomax couldn't stop himself. "You'd keep it going, now that he's dead?"

Brueggen shrugged. "I dunno, ask the publisher. But the book will sure be easier to do, without input from the protagonist."

"You didn't care for Mr. Stagg?" Cecilia asked.

"He was a pain in the ass." Seeing the detectives exchange meaningful glances, Brueggen put down his sandwich. "Hey, don't get the wrong idea. This is comics. Everyone is an ego-crazed malcontent. If I started killing on that account, I'd be knee-deep in human remains."

"Mr. Stagg's comic wasn't selling well?"

"The trend's bottomed out."

"What trend?"

"Real life mutants. No one wants to read about them anymore. They're boring! They don't do anything. Not like the classic characters Big Time comics was built on—they put on their costumes and save the world and go into space and wield the power cosmic. What do these real life freaks do? They mow the lawn. Continue their exciting careers in accountancy. When they put on costumes, it's to do a personal appearance. People want the real super-powered heroes back. The imaginary ones."

"Freaks, huh?" Lomax asked. He leaned into Brueggen's space. "Aren't you going to ask me what my power is?"

Brueggen wheeled back in his chair.

Cecilia cleared her throat, a harrumphing warning directed at her partner. "So if he said he had serious money coming to him from a comic book deal, he was not being truthful?"

"More likely he was being lied to." The editor looked down the hallway and lowered his voice. "By our moron publisher, who likes everything about comic books except the comic book part. Probably shining him on about some deal that would never close, just to keep him from signing on with JAM Comics. Like they'd take him. *The Fish*? What kind of character is that? All he does is swim and order mackerel around."

"You speak well of the dead, don't you?" said Lomax.

"To repeat myself, he was a pain in the ass. Before he got his gills, he was a fanboy. He was always siccing his loser friends on me. Every one of them wanting to write for Big Time Comics."

"Which loser friends?"

"Most recently, this total mouth-breather, Stan Guthrie. Wanted to write his own book, featuring himself. Worst script I ever read, and that's saying something! Compared to him, *The Fish* was the greatest character Jack Kirby never invented."

"And you let this Stan Guthrie down gently, when you rejected his work?"

Brueggen stared at her uncomprehendingly. "Comics is a tough business."

"You don't still have a copy of that script around, do you?"

Brueggen cogitated. "Well. I might be able to undelete the file."

STABILITY

In *Mutant City Blues*, Stability does not go below 0, and the insanity rules from horror versions of GUMSHOE are ignored. As with any other ability, you simply lose the opportunity to add extra points to your Stability rolls when your pool runs out. The ability is instead used to resist various mutant powers, and to stave off the effects of neurological and personality disorders.

MENTAL CRISIS

When characters fail Stability tests during a fight or other situation where they, their partners, or innocent people are in jeopardy, the GM may decide that they enter a state of *mental crisis*.

If in a combat situation or other action sequence measured in rounds, the character loses his next action. Whether or not the mental crisis occurred during combat, the character also suffers medium- or long-term emotional damage. If the victim suffers from a mutant defect, he must make its usual resistance test, or suffer an escalation of that defect—see p. 74. If the victim does not have a pre-existing defect, he temporarily displays the symptoms of stage two Addictive Personality, Attention Deficit Disorder, Depression, Dissociation or Panic Disorder. The GM chooses which emotional disorder the victim acquires as seems thematically appropriate, given the crisis' source. The disorder lasts for a number of days equal to the difference between the result of the character's original Stability test and its Difficulty. The character does not become a mutant or acquire a permanent defect, but merely suffers ordinary symptoms of psychological trauma which happen to also be associated with mutant powers.

REGAINING POOL POINTS

Spent points from various pools are restored at different rates, depending on their narrative purpose.

Investigative ability pools are restored only at the end of each case, without regard to the amount of time that passes in the game world. Players seeking to marshal their resources may ask you how long cases typically run, in real time. Most groups finish scenarios over 2-3 sessions. Players may revise their sense of how carefully to manage point spending as they see how quickly their group typically disposes of its cases.

(GMs running extremely long, multi-part investigations may designate certain story events as breakpoints where all investigative pools are refreshed. For

WHAT DO POOL POINTS REPRESENT?

Pool points are a literary abstraction, representing the way that each character gets his or her own time in the spotlight in the course of an ensemble drama. When you do something remarkable, you expend a little bit of your spotlight time. More active players will spend their points sooner than less demonstrative ones, unless they carefully pick and choose their moments to shine.

Remember, all characters are remarkably competent. Pool points measure your opportunities to exercise this ultra-competence during any given scenario.

Pool points do not represent a resource, tangible or otherwise, in the game world. Players are aware of them, but characters are not. The team members' ignorance of them is analogous to TV characters' obliviousness to commercial breaks, the unwritten rules of scene construction, and the tendency of events to heat up during sweeps.

We represent this most purely in the case of investigative skills, which are the core of the game. Their refreshment is tied to a purely fictional construct, the length of the episode.

However, where a pool could be seen to correspond to a resource perceptible to the characters, we handle refreshment in a somewhat more realistic, if also abstract, manner. Characters' ebbing Health scores are perceptible to the characters in the form of welts, cuts, pain, and general fatigue. Stability is less tangible but can be subjectively measured in the characters' moods and reactions. Physical abilities, also tied to fatigue and sharpness of reflexes, are also handled with a nod to the demands of realism.

example, a far-reaching investigation where the team cracks a huge drug ring might allow refreshment of investigative pools after each group of enemies is neutralized.)

The Health pool refreshes over time, at a rate of 2 points per day of restful activity. (Wounded characters heal at a different rate, over a period of hospitalization; see p. 95.) Use of the Medic ability can restore a limited number of Health points in the course of a session.

Pools for the physical abilities of Athletics, Driving, Scuffling, and Shooting are fully restored whenever twenty-four hours of game-world time elapse since the last expenditure. The remaining general abilities, including Stability, refresh at the end of each case, like investigative abilities.

REFRESHING MUTANT POWERS

Investigative mutant powers, like their mundane counterparts, refresh at the end of each case.

A general mutant power pool refreshes fully when twenty-four hours of game time have passed since your last expenditure from that pool.

FORCED REFRESHES

If you suffer from one or more defects, you can attempt a forced refresh. You strain a mutant power to the limits, triggering a defect crisis. Test your defect's resistance ability against a Difficulty of 8. Your pool refreshes whether you succeed or fail—but if you fail, your condition worsens by one stage.

Byron Krimmel has exhausted his Gravity Control pool, but needs to get a remote control device away from a bomber before he uses it to detonate an explosive device on the monorail tracks. He has the Autism defect, and is therefore eligible for a forced refresh. His player, Justin, tests Autism's resistance ability, Stability, against a Difficulty of 8. He spends 3 Stability points, which is all he has, but rolls a 4. Even so, his Gravity Control pool refreshes, giving him all the points he needs to float the remote control off the floor and floating up into the sky, higher than the bomber can reach. Hundreds of people on the monorail are saved, but at a high cost to Byron—his autism goes from incipient to stage one.

If you have more than one defect, the GM determines which one is used for a forced refresh, depending on what seems dramatically appropriate. This may be the defect that was most recently featured in the storyline, or the one that bears a thematic connection to the action at hand.

IMPROVING YOUR CHARACTER

At the end of each investigation, each player gets 2 build points for each session they participated in. (This assumes a small number of 3-4 hour sessions; if you play in shorter bursts, modify accordingly.) Players who had characters die in the course of the investigation only get points for each session involving their current character.

These build points can be spent to increase either investigative or general abilities. You may acquire new abilities or bolster existing ones. If necessary to preserve credibility, rationalize new abilities as areas of expertise you've had all along, but are only revealing later in the series.

IMPROVING MUTANT POWERS

You may acquire additional mutant powers in the course of play, at the same costs you would have paid during character creation. If a defect stands between a current power and one you wish to acquire, you must acquire that defect, at a cost of 0 build points. Like defects acquired during character creation, defects manifesting during play begin in their incipient stage—see p. 74.



THE PREGS

New powers manifest after a several-week period of nausea, sweats and hot flashes. Anamorphologists call this experience as Additional Power Onset Complex, or APOC for short. Colloquially, this is referred to as "the pregs", as in, "I had the pregs something awful for weeks, and then one morning I could shoot fire out of my fingertips." These symptoms are distracting but have no game effect.

You don't have to wait for a couple of weeks of game time to elapse before picking up a new mutant power. Instead, slip in a line of foreshadowing dialog about how you've been feeling crappy for the past few weeks, then use the power as you need it.

HCIU PROCEDURE

The material in the following chapter is excerpted from your local police department's Heightened Crime Investigation Unit operations manual. To balance its official perspective with the between-the-lines realities of the job, we also present, as a series of sidebars, blog entries written by the anonymous HCIU officer who goes by the handle UpCopper.

MISSION STATEMENT

Your duty as members of the Heightened Crimes Investigation Unit are the same as any police officer's—to serve and protect.

You do this by investigating serious crimes where a preliminary survey of the scene suggests the potential involvement of one or more members of the mutant community. In the course of your duties you will identify persons of interest, gather evidence against suspects, and where warranted and in consultation with prosecutors, lay charges. To do so effectively, you must gather sufficient evidence to gain arrests warrants and, finally, to secure convictions against the guilty.

Under high scrutiny from the media, you will conduct yourselves at all times with dignity, rectitude, and respect. Your actions, on and off duty, will bring honor and positive repute to the force.

RECRUITMENT

Assignment to the HCIU is a coveted honor. The squad currently consists of only twenty-four investigating officers, plus commanders and support staff. You won assignment to this squad by demonstrating excellence, first as a cadet, then as a patrol officer, then finally as a detective. As detectives, you accumulated years of positive performance

evaluations while serving in other detachments, such as robbery-homicide, special victims, gang units, organized crime control, vice, or narcotics. Some of you, particularly those with disguise-oriented powers such as Impersonation, Illusion, Form Alteration, and Nondescript, may have distinguished yourselves in undercover operations. Others from technical backgrounds may have transferred out from our various forensics departments, from crime scene analysis to the coroner's branch.

The leadership of this detachment does not believe in leadership by micromanagement. You will be granted wide latitude to pursue avenues of investigation and to employ unconventional tactics afforded you by your extraordinary capabilities. When we say that you occupy a position of extreme visibility, and that your work will be carefully monitored to ensure that it meets the justifiably high expectations of the department and its civilian overseers, it is not to induce in you an attitude of excessive caution. It is merely to point out that, as rare as heightened police officers might be, there is no shortage of candidates hoping to take your place, should you stumble and fall.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

As HCIU investigators, you will be detached to one of six squads, each typically comprising three to six officers. Officers may rotate in and out of cases as their other responsibilities, such as court appearances, paperwork and case follow-up, demand.

Each squad is overseen by one of two watch commanders, each occupying the rank of lieutenant. You will report directly to your lieutenant for duty assignments. Your lieutenant's performance evaluations depend on his case clearance rate, as

do yours. When he deems it fruitful to give you a long leash, he will do so. When your case founders, he will prod you for updates. If you can't explain it to your lieutenant, you don't have enough facts. It is your lieutenant's responsibility to ensure that your investigation proceeds according to operational guidelines, and that the officers under his command

perform efficiently and ethically. Should a question arise within a squad as to the operational correctness of a proposed course of action, take it immediately to your lieutenant. If he suspects you of wrongdoing, he will immediately alert internal affairs, triggering a formal investigation.



THE BLUE WALL

Everybody knows there are the book rules, and there are the real rules. You got to know the book rules, because the brass can use them to jam you up when politics requires. But if you want to put away the bad guys and do the right thing, the real rules are what you got to follow. If you don't know them like the blood in your veins, you ain't a real cop. You're just wearing a uniform.

Real rule #1: Have your partners' backs. You're loyal first to the people you work cases with. If they can't trust you, you can't trust them to come to your aid when some perp throws a fireball at your back.

Real rule #2: Your second loyalty is to your watch commander—provided he's demonstrated he's a stand-up guy and not a prick. If he's a stand-up guy, he'll have your back. That bit in the ops manual about him calling the rat squad the second he gets a bad smell coming off you? That's the prick move. A stand-up commander gives you every benefit of the doubt—provided you've proven you're good, and deserve his trust. He'll go to the wall for you, while you exonerate yourself against whatever bullshit charges they want to pin on you. This assumes you're worthy of the badge, and aren't dirty or a seat-warmer. If you flip out and waste a crowd of citizens with your bone claws, there ain't jack he can—or should—do for your sorry ass.

Real rule #3: Your third loyalty is to any other cop. If you've been around for long enough to earn a detective's badge, you've already learned to divide your colleagues into categories. First, there's the good cops. That's what you strive to be, and what you pray to God your partners are.

Then there's the seat-warmers, the guys who are just putting in time till retirement. Sometimes they're idiots who stand in the way of getting things done. You may have to bust their balls a bit to get them to do their jobs. But you never rat them out, because, whatever else they are, they're still cops. If a boss asks you about them, you maybe roll your eyes. But nothing goes down on paper to jack the poor schlub up.

The last category is the guys who've gone dirty. You won't find them in the HCIU. They avoid getting promoted too far from street level, where the money is. If you're unlucky enough to run across one of them, you've got to handle it right. They can't think you're a prick willing to turn them into the rat squad. But you don't want them entangling you in their crap and dragging you down with them, either. Keep your distance, and avoid seeing anything the bosses would want you to report. They may be scumbags, but they're cop scumbags.

That's assuming they're the kind of scumbags who help themselves to a little dirty money, or let their problems with substances or gambling lead them by the nose. If they shake down honest citizens, or commit rapes and murders, then they're beyond the pale. If they cross those lines, you've got to take them down, and there isn't another cop who won't understand that.

But if you break any of the real rules, they won't understand, and they shouldn't. Don't expect help the next time you go through a door in a bad neighborhood. Expect to be shunned. Hell, I'll be one of the guys giving you the cold shoulder in the locker room.

Organizational charts are readily available for most major jurisdictions. Links are provided on the Pelgrane website. <http://www.pelgranepress.com> Each department displays its own unique structural quirks.

RANKS

Each police force has its own ranking system. HCU officers are usually out of uniform, that is they are detectives. In the UK, police detectives have the same rank structure as uniformed officers, except with the prefix "Detective" in front of the rank title. Two sample rank structures follow.

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT RANK STRUCTURE

- Chief
- Assistant Chief - Deputy Chief II
- Deputy Chief - Deputy Chief I
- Commander
- Captain I/Captain II/Captain III
- Lieutenant I/Lieutenant II
- Detective III
- Sergeant II
- Detective II
- Sergeant I
- Detective I
- Police Officer III+1/Senior Lead Officer
- Police Officer III
- Police Officer II
- Police Officer I

UK POLICE FORCE RANK STRUCTURE

- Chief Constable
- (Most Senior Police Officer)
- Deputy Chief Constable
- Assistant Chief Constable
- Chief Superintendent
- Superintendent
- Chief Inspector (equivalent of Captain)
- Inspector (equivalent of Lieutenant)
- Sergeant
- Constable

All investigating squad members are of equal rank. On any given case, a detective will be designated as the primary investigating officer, or primary for short. This detective takes responsibility for the direction of the case. Although he may not issue orders, or reprimand squad members who do not comply with his requests, other members of his squad are expected to follow his lead in order to preserve effective process flow. If the investigation

concludes in an arrest and trial, he is credited with the case clearance, or collar. This success is noted in his personnel file, as part of his case clearance percentage. Conversely, if the case is not conclusively resolved, the failure counts against him.

DNAS OFFICERS IN THE HCU

Officers without evident mutant powers may occasionally be detailed to the HCU, for any of the following reasons:

- **Personnel shortages.** Otherwise qualified detectives with mutant powers may not be available for promotion into the unit.
- **Relevant skills.** A DNAS individual with, for example, a PhD in anamorphology may be better specialized on issues surrounding the heightened and criminology than a gene-expressive officer.
- **Community liaison.** Investigating officers sometimes find it advantageous to have a DNAS individual on hand to conduct certain interviews or deflect enhancement-related concerns of the general population.

In other words, sometimes the norms don't like it when the chromes wear badges, and it's better to send in one of their own to play good cop.

ASSIGNMENTS

Squads are expected to rotate the duties of primary from case to case, so that the burden is shared between all members over time. Squads are permitted to use whatever system they see fit when distributing this responsibility, provided that the above goal is met. Many robbery-homicide squads employ a practice of assigning primary status to the officer who first picks up the phone when a call comes in. Others may use a roster system to ensure strict rotation. The watch commander must approve all assignments of primary status and may make changes for any reason. Watch commanders may deem that a particular detective's skill set, mutant abilities, or personal history either better enables

him to take the lead on a given case—or requires that he take a back seat.

Most case calls to the HCIU come from central dispatch in response to requests from patrol officers. Uniformed officers respond to 911 calls or may come across crime scenes in the course of their patrol activities. When they determine that a case may involve a mutant perpetrator and/or victim, they call dispatch, who then contacts HCIU. A small handful of case calls come directly from the public directly dialing the HCIU number. When this occurs, you will alert dispatch, who will send patrol officers to the scene. If they verify that the tip is based on accurate information, dispatch will contact you, so you can join patrol officers at the scene.

When another detective squad works a case and discovers in mid-investigation that it involves mutant powers, their watch commander is required to notify the chief of detectives at police headquarters. The chief of detectives evaluates the circumstances and determines whether to keep the case under the aegis of its current investigators, or transfer it to HCIU. When making this decision, he considers the following factors:

- **Duration of case to date.** Cases which have undergone little development by current case officers may be readily transferred with little loss of case knowledge. Where non-heightened officers have instead been working an investigation for extended periods, it becomes challenging to convey all relevant information effectively to a new team.
- **Danger to non-enhanced officers.** Investigations likely to lead to hostile encounters between heightened suspects and police may be better handled by officers with the powers to defend against them.
- **Community and public relations requirements.** Cases threatening to inflame tensions between the heightened community and police may be deemed best handled by members of that community. In high profile cases, pressure from media and other non-police sources may prompt commanders to detail HCIU officers to a case. These decisions are taken out of a necessary concern for public relations and should

not be regarded as a cynical surrender to unpleasant political realities.

If the chief of detectives determines that a case be retained by its original investigating squad, an HCIU officer will be detailed to liaise with that team, providing contacts, expertise and operational assistance, as required.

If he transfers the case to the HCIU, the original primary is detailed to the HCIU as liaison officer, and a new primary is designated from within the HCIU squad chosen to spearhead the investigation. The liaison officer provides full details on the case to date, and continues to participate in the investigation under the lead of the new primary.

It sometimes transpires that a case assigned to the HCIU on the basis of apparent heightened involvement will, after some investigation, be revealed as having no connection to the mutant community. When such a determination is made, the watch commander may contact the chief of detectives to request that the case be transferred to the squad normally detailed to the type of crime in question, whether that be vice, robbery-homicide, fraud, or narcotics.

A clearance is a clearance, so if his squad has been assigned a solvable case, a watch commander will hold on to it like a terrier with a rat in its jaws, even if it turns out to bear no relation to the squad's mandate. If the case smells like a dog, he'll do his best to unload it on another squad and get it off his year-to-year stats. Of course, all the other watch commanders know how this works, and will beg, wheedle and cajole the chief of detectives to avoid getting any loser cases palmed off on them.



PURE COPS, LIXER COPS

Cops are like anybody else, but more so. There's tension between the pure and the lixers out in the real world, and you get that reflected inside the squad room, too. Some norms have chips on their shoulders about us. If you got as far as detective, you learned to tolerate a lot of crap.

When other squads catch a case that turns out to be HC material, their reluctance or eagerness to part with it generally has squat to do with anti-lixer prejudice. Cops are territorial. We hold onto cases we think we can clear, and try to dump that which will screw up our performance evaluations. If we happen to like somebody for a crime, and we develop a healthy hate-on for him, we want to see the case through to the arrest. We want to be the ones to slap the cuffs on. That's as true of the pure cops as of the lixers.

So often another squad will hold onto a case that ought to be ours, holding back their knowledge of the facts that would earn it a swift transfer to our humble bailiwick. This means sometimes you inherit a case after some norm squad has already screwed the pooch on it.

Of course, when it comes to pressure from outside, we forget our squabbles and close ranks. We're cops before anything else.

SHIFTS AND SCHEDULING

Each watch commander oversees three eight-hour shifts, assigning one squad to each: 6 AM to 2 PM, 2 PM to 10 PM, and 10 PM to 6 AM. Squads are rotated between shifts on a quarterly basis.

When you are not working a case or assigned to a specific support duty, such as appearing in court or engaging in a public relations exercise, your presence

is required in the squad room during your shift hours. While waiting to catch cases, you field inquiries, file paperwork and rework cold investigations. Officers are expected to maintain a professional, diligent demeanor. In accordance with memos #43907D, 324097A, and E39780-12, our crackdown on newspaper reading, Internet surfing, and Nerf basketball tournaments during office hours remains in place.

While working on a case, squads may arrange hours as needed to contact witnesses, conduct stakeouts, and consult with technical personnel. The primary is responsible for keeping time records of all squad members' activities. Squad members must clock in for full work weeks. They may bank lieu time with approval of watch commanders. Watch commanders possess limited discretion to permit overtime hours on high-priority cases. Officers receive time-and-a-half for approved overtime, and double time for case work extending into statutory holidays.

EVIDENCE COLLECTION

Although HCIU officers often possess the expertise and equipment (or mutant powers) to examine and process evidence, actual evidence collection is handled, as with any investigation, by civilian criminalists detailed to the Crime Scene Processing unit. Although you can expect them to exercise judgment and collect obvious pieces of evidence, a good detective always remains at the scene to request the bagging and tagging of all relevant materials.

You must perform all necessary paperwork when either accessing or removing materials from Evidence Storage, to thoroughly document the whereabouts of each piece of evidence that might be introduced in court at all times. This process flow is called the Chain Of Custody. Defense lawyers win acquittals by successfully calling into question the chain of custody. When the chain of custody is broken, police careers go along with it.

The first thing I want to know when I hit a homicide scene as primary is: was the vic killed here, or dumped? If it's the former, telling physical evidence will be everywhere. If it's a dumper, I know I'm screwed.



CLEARING CASES

The detective's mantra is ABC: **always be clearing**. Most watch commanders keep a list of all active cases, with the primary's name emblazoned beside the name of each victim. (In a multiple homicide, each victim is treated as a separate case, so if you, as primary, haven't caught a killer of six, you will have six cases lodged against you, with your clearance rate taking a commensurate hit.) In days past, the list was maintained on a blackboard, whiteboard or bulletin board. Now it appears on a plasma screen display.

When your name is on the big board, it should gnaw at you night and day, as it does your watch commander. It threatens your clearance rate. You must get it off that board. Then it becomes a positive statistic. Then a new case goes up next to your name, and that haunts you, until you clear that. And so on. Welcome to the glamorous world of police work.

A case is considered cleared when an arrest is made, or when it is found to be something other than a crime. So if you find out that a supposedly stolen car was borrowed by the owner's son, or that an apparent murder victim in fact committed suicide, that's a clearance. Although it's your duty to help prosecutors put the scumbags in prison after you apprehend them, 95% of the time an arrest counts as a clearance. It's not your problem if the idiot jury fails to convict—unless the defendant is truly exonerated, and evidence appears that the real perp is still out there. Then the case goes back on the board, and if you're lucky, you have to investigate all over again. If you're unlucky, the watch commander docks you the original clearance and then puts a new primary in charge, so you have no hope of making good for the blot on your record.

Despite what the defense shysters say, the department doesn't like to arrest or convict the innocent. Do you have any idea how much paperwork that entails?



INTERVIEWS AND INTERROGATIONS

Successful interviews and interrogations are the key to a high clearance rate. Scientific evidence may prove facts, but narratives win convictions. During the early stages of an investigation, you want to establish what might have happened, then narrow it down to what did happen. Interviews allow you to do this. When interviewing witnesses who are not suspects, be polite, firm, and professional. Witnesses are often reluctant to involve themselves in a police investigation. Without triggering complaints, be sure to inform persons holding vital information of the benefits of sharing it, and of the consequences of withholding it.

The official policy of the department as to a suspect's access to legal counsel is that we never discourage people from availing themselves of their legal rights.



DETECTIVE AS CON MAN

Any good detective is a con artist. He convinces witnesses to talk, even when it's not in their interests to do so.

He persuades suspects that he's on their side, that he shares the same worries, and that he's there to help. He's selling a bill of goods—that a confession offers the best possible deal for the suspect. Now and then the odd undetectable slap upside the head will get your skel's attention, but it's an ability to fashion an appealing sales pitch that separates the detective with the high clearance rate from the hapless mug with red names all over his section of the big board.

The trick to an interrogation is to find what makes your suspect tick. Step one: get to know him well enough to figure out what he thinks he needs. Step two: find a way to convince him that the way to get it is a signed confession.

Courts have upheld your right to deceive suspects. Use it. Tell them you've got hard physical evidence, or that their accomplices have flipped on them, or that an eyewitness just picked them out of a photo array. Lying works more often than not, but if you've got a perp of above-average intelligence, do it carefully. Don't say anything the perp knows to be false. You never want to let a suspect take control of the interview, which is exactly what happens when you get caught in a lie.

As police investigators we are supposed to respect a suspect's right to legal counsel. In fact, we respect it so much that we say whatever is necessary to persuade him not to use it! When a suspect lawyers up, he shuts up. Convince him, *even though it is never true*, that he's better off speaking to you without a lawyer. You can't come out and say this in so many words; you have to hint around it. Suggest that bringing in a lawyer escalates matters, or takes them out of your hands, so that you and he are no longer able to work together to get the best deal for him.

Like most interrogation gambits, this won't fly with hardened criminals. They know the drill, won't talk anyway, and have their shysters on speed-dial.

A truism of police work is that the most likely suspect probably did it. Murders among the heightened are no different than any other. Most are committed among family members, then close friends, and then business associates (especially associates in criminal enterprises.) The chief motivations for murder are commonly listed as sex and money. Even more prevalent is the temporary alleviation of annoyance—the hotheaded murder committed out of momentary anger by a person with limited financial and emotional resources. These are the easy murders to clear. Be grateful when you get them. Suspects are easy to locate and easier to persuade in the interrogation room.

The hardest murders to clear arise from organized crime activities, especially the drug trade. Witnesses are savvy to interrogation tactics and aware that confession is never in their best interests. These cases are solved outside the interrogation room, by working informants and establishing communications surveillance.

It is in these cases, where suspects are connected to multiple murders, draw on considerable financial resources, and can effectively intimidate any witnesses against them, that mind-reading warrants may be applied for, and granted.

HCIU INTERVIEW PRINCIPLES

- Find and exploit your angle.
- Never undercut your partner.
- If he's talking, you're winning.
- When in doubt, let the line go slack.

EMAT PROTOCOL

Perpetrators otherwise lacking a viable defense often claim to have been acting under the influence of a mutant power. It is therefore incumbent on you as investigators to use the EMAT protocol (see *Influence Detection (Interpersonal)* on p. 22 early in any interrogation, to rule out this possibility.

The officer conducting the EMAT examination must to testify in court to its veracity, and should hone his communications skills accordingly.

INTERROGATION TIPS FOR GMS AND PLAYERS

During playtest we found that some players who'd excelled in interviews as fake cops (*The Esoterrorists*), ordinary people (*Fear Itself*) and self-appointed inquirers into cosmic terror (*Trail Of Cthulhu*) became suddenly tentative when called upon to extract information from witnesses and suspects as the badge-wearing police officers of *Mutant City Blues*. The pressure of properly playing trained cops kept them dallying and fretting rather than diving into interpersonal scenes to get the information they needed to move forward.

The following tips should keep interviews on track.

GAME MODERATORS

Takebacks. Players may be too worried about making mistakes in interviews, for fear that they're playing their cop characters incorrectly. Allow them to take back any obviously out-of-character remarks they happen to blurt out as they feel their way through a scene.

Passive use of interpersonal abilities. By default, GUMSHOE assumes that the use of interpersonal abilities is active; the players have to correctly choose an appropriate ability and describe how they're using it to open the witness up to questioning. When you see that players are hesitant, tell the player with the relevant ability that his experienced cop character can sense that it will work here:

- "You get the feeling that this guy will crack if you lean on him a little." (Intimidation)
- "He seems kind of smitten by you." (Flattery)
- "The squeal of a police scanner tells you you've got a wannabe cop on your hands." (Cop Talk)

Kibitzing. Permit players whose characters are absent from the interview to give advice to the players taking the lead in it. If feel the need to make this convention seem realistic, specify that the interviewing characters are wearing tiny ear-implant radio receivers.

PLAYERS

When in doubt, remind yourself of the following:

Find and exploit your angle. It's rarely in anyone's interest to talk to the cops. You're a con artist, selling a bill of goods. As you begin an interview with a resistant subject, your first step is to figure out what he wants. That's your *angle*, usually exploitable through the use of an interpersonal ability. Work your angle to convince the subject that he can get what he wants by cooperating with you. When he buys in, you've got your *opening*. Take advantage of your opening to pry loose the information you seek.

Never undercut your partner. Most interviews are tag-team affairs. Except when working an angle (like the classic good cop/bad cop stratagem), never block or negate a partner's gambit. Instead, build on what he's doing, even when you disagree with it, or sit back and let him make his play. If it blows up in his face, you can come back around to try a new angle. Otherwise you're giving the subject the leverage to play you off against each other.

Don't sweat the occasional setback. As long as the witness is talking, you're winning. In the typical interview, you don't have much to lose. At worst, the subject will clam up entirely. Even if you feel a sense of embarrassment or temporarily lose control of the exchange, you still have a chance of moving it back in your direction.

When in doubt, let the line go slack. If something goes wrong, turn it around and use it. You don't have to control the interview or dominate the subject at all times. Often you can close your con by letting the subject feel that he is on top. Then pull the rug out from under him with new information or a sudden switch to hardball tactics. Comfortable or confident subjects blab. The more someone talks, the more likely he is to give himself away.

The accompanying card serves as a reminder of these bedrock principles during play.

If you discover signs of mental influence, communicate this to prosecutors, as it constitutes exculpatory evidence which must be turned over to the defense, should an arrest result. If you believe that the suspect would not have committed the crime except for the mental influence, this transforms him into a witness against the true culprit—the mutant who influenced him. The case is not considered cleared until you find this individual and build a case against him.

Although you may naturally share your opinion of the case with prosecutors, the decision to forgo charges against an influenced suspect remains theirs.

However, the mere fact of mental influence does not guarantee that the suspect did not independently form the intent to commit a crime. This determination confronts the prosecutor with the difficulty of proving state of mind, but still results in a clearance for you.

As an HCU officer who may come into regular, perhaps unknowing, contact with mind-controlling individuals, you are subject to unannounced EMAT tests as often as once a month. If you do encounter a mind controller, you are required to submit a form 334 within eight hours. An Internal Affairs EMAT specialist will then arrange an emergency EMAT test within 24 hours of filing. (Warning: due to recent budget cuts, wait times for emergency EMAT testing may exceed this ideal time frame.) To refuse a department-administered EMAT results in immediate suspension from the force.

TESTIMONY IN COURT

Every police officer could stand to improve his or her demeanor on the witness stand in court. Juries who we expect to decide cases based on evidence alone often in fact make emotional judgments about the parties on both sides, and then select the factual evidence that fits their chosen side. You must present yourself to the jury as personable, trustworthy, and professional.

Answer prosecutor's questions in a clear, direct manner. A skillful defense attorney will attempt to elicit misleading evidence by framing questions in an unfavorable way. Within the limitations imposed on you by the judge, do your best to respond in a way that makes your point, not the defense's.

Expect defense attorneys to attempt to bait you. Although judges will prevent them from openly appealing to anti-mutant prejudice, they may do so

COURT SEQUENCES IN PLAY

Although the eventual disposition of their investigations in court must be uppermost in detectives' minds as they pursue the cases, they rarely take center stage in a *Mutant City Blues* game. Usually a scenario can conclude with a quick summary of the prosecution and sentencing of the guilty party, as part of a brief denouement.

As a change of pace, however, a case may include one or more court sequences.

A story may begin with the acquittal of a clearly guilty suspect. Perhaps supporting character detectives or forensic scientists have botched the case in some way. Maybe corruption played a part in the acquittal. The PCs now have to pursue the perp for a different crime entirely, this time making sure their case is ironclad. However, the doctrine of double jeopardy prevents the suspect from being retried on the same charges, and the detectives have to be careful to avoid accusations of harassment. (Double jeopardy may not be an issue in certain non-US jurisdictions. For example, in Canada, prosecutors as well as defense attorneys are allowed to appeal verdicts.)

Alternately, a court scene may lead a detective to a new crime. Perhaps he's on the witness stand when he spots a crucial piece of evidence suggesting that the defendant has been framed. Now he must convince prosecutors to abandon their case so he can find the real culprit.

If the PCs flagrantly violate police procedure or the civil rights of their clients, you may feel the need to preserve the believability of your series by continuing a case all the way to its horrifying implosion before a judge.

Sub-plots can also feature scenes that take place in court.

Use the directed scene method to keep all players engaged in court scenes. Give uninvolved players temporary roles as prosecutors, defense lawyers, witnesses, and spectators. You'll probably want to keep the judge as a character under your control, so that you can keep a lid on the pacing and outcome of court sequences.

in covert ways, attempting to portray you as strange or unreliable. This is why it is essential to maintain a spotless personnel file. If you lose your temper or cross a line in the course of one investigation, you are negatively impacting not only that case, but every other case you investigate in the future.

Officers with certain powers should expect the implication that they suffer the well-known defects connected or correlated with them, even when they do not. Because some mind readers are prone to erotomania, officers who can perform this highly useful feat must be prepared to defend themselves against the imputation that they do as well—even when there is no other evidence to support such claims.

A BRIDGE BETWEEN COMMUNITIES

The HCIU exists not only to police the mutant community, but to act as a bridge between it and the department. Like any police force, we are often unfairly branded as an instrument of prejudice. Persuading your community of our good faith is part of your job.

In furtherance of this goal, you may sometimes be detailed to community outreach assignments. Do not think of these as distractions from real police duties. Creating a bond of trust between the department and the gene-expressive community lays essential groundwork for your later investigative work. When you knock on a mutant's door, you want him to happily welcome you into his home, and to open up to you when you ask him what he knows.

Dealing with mutant rights activists requires special diplomacy. Even if you personally dislike their strategies or agendas, we recommend that you express sympathy with them while in turn communicating to them the department's own priorities.



CITIZENS AND SCROTES

During his rookie year, every cop learns that there are two kinds of people in the world: citizens and scrotes.

Citizens are the good people. The ones pay their taxes, follow the rules, and just want to raise their families in safety and peace. They're who you do this job for. When you talk to them, you treat them with deference and respect. Even if maybe they're not so fond of you, on account of your being a mutant. Sometimes you'll deal with a guy who's a bit of dick, but also a citizen. The citizen part trumps the dick part. Maybe you push back a little, but you hold back.

Scrotes are the wrongdoers, the criminals, the low-lives, the druggers and the muggers, the pimps and the pros. They're the societal refuse who give the citizens reason to live in fear. You never cut a scrote a break, because they need leaning on. Maybe one day they'll find God or L. Ron Hubbard or whatever and turn themselves into citizens. But when you're dealing with them, they're scrotes. They're the ones you do this job *to*.

Whether somebody is a norm or a lixer doesn't matter. It's the scrote/citizen divide that counts. A mutant citizen gets your deference and respect. A mutant scrote gets slammed up against the wall.

MEDIA RELATIONS

Every police officer is a representative of the entire department, and should comport himself with dignity and circumspection when interacting with reporters. An HCIU officer must exercise special care and restraint, because he is a figure of great interest to the media. Members of the public are fascinated by the activities of the city's mutant police officers. Any controversy involving you will be magnified a hundredfold. In the past, certain former officers have fallen prey to the siren song of media attention, and have courted publicity, promoting themselves at the expense of the department. HCIU officers are expected to know the difference at all times between themselves and rock

stars. Those hoping to use the unit as a stepping stone to book deals or Hollywood consultancies will face swift, harsh reprimand.

Coordination with the press, especially when entreating the public to come forward with information, can be an invaluable technique in finding missing persons, locating fugitives, and gathering tips. Media strategy is the province of the watch commander. Unauthorized leaks to the press will not be tolerated.

If It Bleeds, It Leads

Note the use of the word "unauthorized" in the phrase "unauthorized leaks." A strategic discharge of information to friendly reporters can be an investigating detective's best friend, especially when leads start drying up. Let's say, for example, you need to shake up an overconfident suspect, so that he makes a mistake you can capitalize on. The exposure can pay off—provided you cover your tracks. To be able to do this, you've got to cultivate relationships with reporters you can trust.

To figure out which reporters have your back, and which ones are out to jam you up, check out some of their articles. Look for ones whose copy divides the world into citizens and scrotes, like you do. Generally, the police beat reporters are stand-up guys, and the investigative reporters are scumbag-enabling weasels out to score points at your expense.

The one mistake you should never make is to take credit for anything, because that's the brass' job. They live for press conferences. Steal their thunder in public, and you'll be reassigned to guarding the auto yard before you know what hit you.



FORENSIC ANAMORPHOLOGY

In a world where super powers are widespread and derive from a consistent (if incompletely understood) point of origin, their physical traces can be subjected to scientific analysis which holds up in court. Just as detectives in our world rely on ballistics to identify bullets found at a crime scene, HCIU officers can use forensics to analyze the physical after-effects of mutant abilities, most notably blast powers. DNA evidence can be scoured to tell mutant from norm, and to identify which powers individuals are likely to manifest.

Forensic scientists have been at the forefront of efforts to find practical applications for the discoveries of anamorphology. The Quade Institute maintains a department of forensic science, which offers training to criminalists and police investigators. Your character may have attended classes there. Even if you didn't, the techniques you rely upon when analyzing crime scenes for traces of mutant powers were shaped in its ultra-modern corridors.

ANAMORPHOLOGY 101

As previously mentioned, the Quade Diagram is an invaluable aid to any HCIU investigator, and can be used by any layman to tell which powers are likely to be found in combination, and which are too far apart to occur in a single individual.

HCIU officers trained in anamorphology will also be aware of Lucius Quade's system of Mutation Siting. Different sets of related mutations are considered to be sited in various organs or systems of the body, because they either alter the anatomy of those bodily structures, or because they contain a high concentration of S-cells.

S-CELLS

S-cells are found in all mutants. These are strange cells which are formed from undifferentiated stem cells, but which do not reproduce and serve no discernible

anatomical function. Anamorphologists believe that these are a by-product of the mutation process, but have not yet pinpointed the mechanism that produces them. Some speculate that the secret of the SME can be found by better understanding the origins of S-cells. Others suggest that S-cells are responsible in some way for the slightly lower incidence of cancer in mutants, or name them as a likely vector for SEDS infection.

Another theory, credited more by crazy people and comic book writers than by anamorphologists, claims that S-cells contain the latent potential for a second, even more staggering SME. When that day comes, the hidden powers of the S-cells will unlock themselves, transforming mutants into creatures no longer recognizable as humans. These theories tend toward the apocalyptic, envisioning that the new species will manifest as either angelic beings of light, or grotesque demon-like monsters.

At any rate, S-cells are found throughout every mutant's body, but cluster in larger numbers in the systems where their powers are sited.

POWER COMPLEXES

The Quade team has identified twenty-three groups of mutant powers, each of them referred to as a complex. Individual complexes are named for the organs or systems their mutant powers modify, giving you the Alimentary Complex, the Epidermal Complex, and so on. Although some controversy still attends some of the Quade team's classifications, the generally accepted power complexes, and their constituent abilities, are as follows:

Alimentary Complex: Radiation Immunity, Radiation Projection, Toxin Immunity (Ingested.)

Amygdalic Complex: Command Amphibians & Reptiles, Induce Aggression, Induce Fear.

Auditory Complex: Hearing, Sonar, Sonic Blast.

Circulatory: Absorption, Fangs, Plasma Deficiency, Possession, Command Insects, Blood Spray.

Epidermal: Armor, Blade Immunity, Entangling Hair, Quills, Wall Crawling, Webbing.

Hippocampal: Memory Alteration, Detect Influence, Precision Memory, Suppress Influence, Technopathy, Telepathy, Translation. (Sited in the hippocampus, part of the brain below the temporal lobes.)

Hypothalamic: Emotion Control, Empathy, Enter Dreams, Nondescript, Observe Dreams, Sexual Chemistry. (The hypothalamus is the portion of the brain connecting the endocrine and nervous systems.)

Intestinal: Analytic Taste, Suppress Explosion, Secrete Acid, Self-Detonation, Spit Acid, Venom (Bite), Venom (Spit), Venom (Stinger.)

Lymphatic: Cure Disease, Disease Immunity, SEDS Carrier, Spread Pathogen, Plant Communication, Plant Control.

Muscular: Flight, Healing, Heat Blast, Regeneration, Strength.

Nucleus Accumbens Complex: Endorphin Control (Others), Endorphin Control (Self), Induce Mental Disorder, Pain Immunity. (The nucleus accumbens is a collection of neurons in the brain believed to control pleasure and reward, and to play a role in addictive behaviors.)

Nervous: Gravity Control, High Energy Dispersal, Lightning, Lightning Decisions, Reflexes, Speed.

Orbitofrontal Cortical Complex: Threat Calculus, Psionic Blast, Read Minds. (This complex is sited in the brain region associated with decision-making.)

Olfactory: Command Mammals, Environmental Awareness, Olfactory Center, Tracking

Optical: Alter Form, Impersonate, Invisibility, Light Blast, Light Control. Microvision, Night Vision, Telescopic Vision, Thermal Vision, X-Ray Vision.

Parahippocampal Gyrus: Autism, Earth Control, Force Field, Magnetism, Spatial Awareness, Telekinesis, Teleportation. (This brain region was once considered

a site of memory storage and retrieval, but the siting of these peculiar mutant powers there has called this into question.)

Renal: Fire Control, Fire Immunity, Fire Projection, Spontaneous Combustion.

Respiratory: Command Birds, Deplete Oxygen, Toxin Immunity (Gaseous), Wind Control.

Salivary: Analytic Taste, Secrete Acid, Spit Acid, Venom (Bite.)

Skeletal: Arthritis, Concussion Beam, Kinetic Energy Dispersal, Limb Extension, Natural Weaponry.

Somasensory: Disintegration, Ice Blast, Phase, Reduce Temperature, Touch, Transmutation.

Throat: Command Fish, Gills, Swimming, Water Blast, Water Manipulation.

Apart from the known proximity of powers on the Quade Diagram, there appears to be no limit to the number of complexes a single mutant's powers belong to. As the diagram shows, the complexes are usually connected by correlated, as opposed to connected, powers.



DEFECTS AND GENETICS MARKERS

Lucius Quade identifies two types of defects arising from genetic mutations: anatomical and psychosocial. (These correspond to the abilities which require Health as their resistance ability, and those which require Stability.) Anamorphologists have located genetic markers corresponding to all of the anatomical mutations, but none for any of the psychosocial defects. This seems to imply that the psychosocial defects are not mutations, per se, but are instead proclivities that arise from the experience of using the powers to which they are connected or correlated.

DNA ANALYSIS

The presence of mutant genes can be detected via DNA analysis. The information that may be gathered from any quantity of biological material depends on two factors: the time devoted to testing, and the quality of the sample. Reasons for poor sample quality include degradation, in which the DNA has decomposed, and contamination, where it is mixed with other substances. Mixed samples containing DNA from multiple sources is a common type of contamination; well-established techniques exist to separate them.

The easiest information to extract from a sample is the presence of S-cells, which confirms that a sample comes from a mutant source. This can be gleaned even from samples of such poor quality that they can no longer be used to for a positive identification.



PCD TESTS

More difficult to extract are the genetic markers corresponding to particular power complexes. If successful, these tests tell you which complex or complexes the individual's powers belong to. They're called PCD tests, which is short for Power Complex Detection. PCD tests require either many hours of painstaking work, or a sample of impeccable quality.

PCID TESTS

Even more challenging is the Power Identification Centrifuge test, or PIC, which tells you exactly which powers the subject possesses. It requires a perfect sample and many hours of painstaking prep work. Some technicians claim to be able to take a sample from a subject suffering the symptoms that foretell the onset of a new power, and identify which power will manifest at the end of the process.

Characters can access this information directly by using their own Forensic Anthropology abilities, with access to HCIU laboratory facilities; or they can send evidence out for testing by staff technicians. As always, each approach has its drawbacks. You get it faster if you do it yourself; generally in a day if not within hours. (This is the same unrealistically quick pacing you see in forensics-heavy procedural shows.) However,

sustained lab work prevents you from being out in the field, actively moving the case forward by interviewing witnesses and gathering further evidence. Leaving it to the specialists allows you to continue to pound the pavement for additional clues but leaves you at the mercy of their perpetual backlog.

ORGAN GRAFTING

Some mutant powers have proven to be transmissible via transplantation. This sometimes occurs when the biological material in which the power is sited (see above) is successfully transplanted into a new host. The phenomenon was originally discovered accidentally, when organs or tissues from donors of unrevealed heightened status were used in medical procedures. In recent years, a covert industry has sprung up to conduct transplants purely for the purpose of inducing mutant powers. Whether necessary or elective, these surgeries carry considerable risk. The chances of tissue rejection increase significantly when mutant genes are present in transplanted biological materials. Even when the transplant takes, there is only a small chance that the power sited in the material will be transmitted to its user.

It always takes some time for a heightened power to manifest after a transplant. The shortest documented interval is twenty-eight days; the longest is 1,469 days. Typically the recipient gains a single power from the site complex corresponding to the type of tissue involved. (In other words, a lung transplant recipient receives one power from the respiratory complex, a bone graft patient gets one from the skeletal complex, and so on.) The first power may be a defect, though it manifests in incipient stage.

After the first power manifestation, the subject may or may not continue to manifest additional powers. If further powers appear, they usually do so under stress conditions. Intervals between additional power manifestations cluster in the four-to-six week range. However, edge cases have been reported when the interval has been either much shorter or quite a bit longer than that.

Later powers will be traceable to the original power on the Quade Diagram, but do not necessarily belong to the same complex as the original power. A patient might get Fangs, a power from the circulatory complex, from a bone marrow transplant, and then, many weeks later, develop Disease Immunity as her next power, even though it is from the adjacent Lymphatic complex.

The power complexes available from various organs/tissues, along with their chances of rejection and power transmission, are as follows:

Organ/ Tissue	Complex	Rejection Rate	Power Acquisition Rate
Bone marrow	Circulatory	78%	12%
Skin	Epidermal	34%	7%
Intestine	Intestinal	68%	14%
Muscle	Muscular	57%	6%
Cornea	Optical	24%	17%
Liver	Renal	45%	3%
Lungs	Respiratory	87%	10%
Bone graft	Skeletal	28%	11%

Information on transplants is not presented with the idea that HCIU officers will have received their mutant abilities in this way, but as background detail on the science of mutation that may figure into their investigations.

ENERGY RESIDUES

The new investigative ability Energy Residue Analysis allows forensic scientists to examine items damaged by blast powers and use them to identify the power used, and sometimes other relevant information as well. Think of it as a less definitive version of ballistics, but for blast powers. What the discipline can tell you about a scene varies by blast power type.

Concussion Beam: An energy residue expert can, on a visual examination of an object, determine whether it was smashed by a concussion beam, or by some other force.

Users of this power tend to project their force invisible force beams in a telltale manner. The edges of the beam may be blunt or sharp, and of slightly varying widths. As a result, you can take two items of the same material and same approximate mass and shape damaged by two concussion beams, and compare them to see if they were broken by the same individual. For example, you could examine the remains of two doors and compare the cracks and splinters. If the two doors were broken by the same person's concussion beam, you'll find close matches in both. You can also use

stresses, fractures and splinters to rule out a person for whom you have a known sample of concussion beam damage as the individual who caused damage to another object.

It is very difficult to deliberately contort one's concussion beam to remove its signature shape, which exists on a microscopic level. Suspects may be compelled by court order to use their concussion beams to destroy like objects under laboratory conditions.

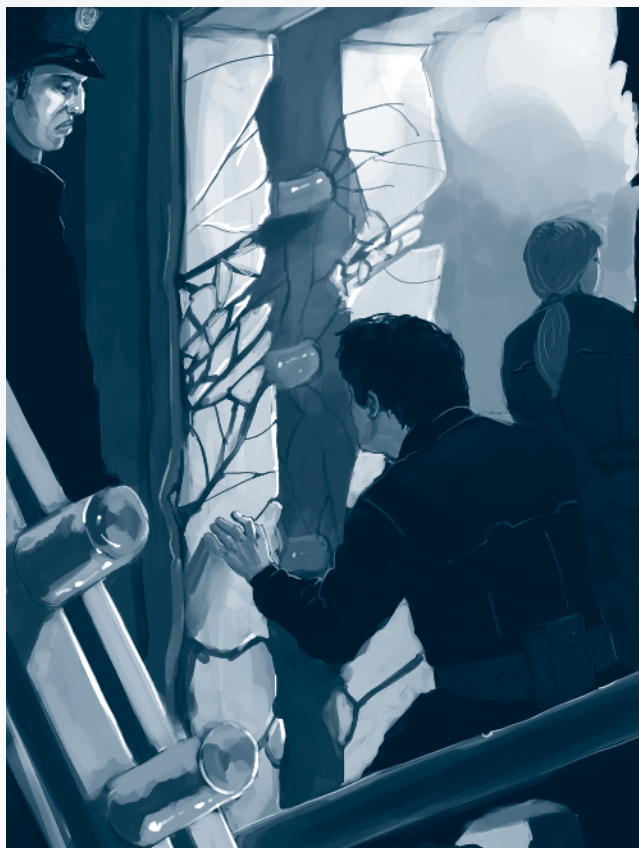
Victims struck by concussion beams tend to exhibit distinctive bruising patterns. To get a good match, it is necessary to take high-resolution photographs of the bruises within a few hours of an attack. These can be compared to photographs from other concussion beam attacks for similarities or differences. Some forensic laboratories hire individuals with the Regeneration ability to submit themselves to court-mandated concussion beam attacks by suspects under lab conditions. They then heal their injuries after photographs are taken for comparative purposes. This is a highly paid job, usually undertaken on a fee-for-service basis.

Concussion beam analysis is considered strongly circumstantial but lacks the absolute certitude associated with DNA or fingerprint evidence. Successfully explaining it to a lay jury requires a skillful courtroom manner.

Fire Projection: Different users tend to shape their fire blasts in distinctive ways, but because fire tends to spread and consume objects it touches, these are harder to detect than in the case of concussion beams. It is also very difficult to locate a fire blast's original point of impact in a mass of charred material. Certain materials, plastics in particular, serve as ideal media for these telltale impact signatures, so criminalists examining burnt scenes for evidence of mutant activity often gravitate to them first.

Flesh is not a good medium for holding evidence of distinctive blast signatures: burnt flesh immediately bubbles and sloughs off. However it is usually possible to distinguish between the victim of a fire blast and someone burned by some other source.

An ERA can, through microscopic examination, distinguish materials damaged directly by fire projection, and those which burst into flame due to close proximity to a heat blast.



Heat Blast: Heat blasts, which damage objects by proximity of heat rather than impact, leave little useful evidence. It is possible to distinguish objects damaged by heat blasts from other sources of extreme heat and from fire projection. Heat blasts do not leave identifiable signatures which can be traced to particular individuals.

Ice Blast: Just as no two snowflakes are alike, each ice blast can be traced to the mutant who generated it—provided that the ice crystals can be found before they melt, and kept frozen long enough to take quality microscopic photographs for comparison purposes. The residue analyst examines the shape and size of the constituent water crystals left behind by any ice blast attack. These are as unique, and therefore traceable to an individual, as fingerprints. Analysts use small ice chests, the size of drink coolers, but with battery-powered refrigeration capabilities, to collect ice evidence. These are not standard equipment in an analyst's vehicle, but must be signed out of the lab's properties locker. You may, on a successful Preparedness test, be deemed to have a cooler conveniently on hand when you need one.

Light Blast: Light blasts leave no distinctive traces on

unliving matter. However, the injuries they inflict on human flesh, which resemble severe sunburns, can exhibit telltale microscopic patterns along the edges of the wounds. These are distorted when the damaged skin begins to flake off, so in the case of a surviving victim it is necessary to acquire high-resolution close-ups of the wounds within approximately three hours of the injury. Light blast wounds degrade less quickly post-mortem, and can yield useful information up to twelve hours after the time of injury. In cases where the victim dies sometime after incurring the injuries, degradation to the injury pattern occurs quickly for the time between injury and death, and then slows.

The rate of degradation can aid in determining an approximate time of death for victims of fatal light blast attacks.

Lightning: Lightning damage is the hardest of the blasts to identify. If it has a distinguishing characteristic, it lies in the bizarre multiplicity of damage effects it leaves behind. Lightning strikes tend to leap from their original targets to other metal objects, including pipes and power lines, doing collateral damage to them. So you might find a victim of a lightning strike lying in the middle of a room, with black scorch marks surrounding nearby electrical sockets, wires or junctures. These secondary electrical arcs may blow apart drywall, shatter mirrors, or melt plastics and resins. The key to distinguishing natural lightning from a blast attack is one of geometry. Natural lightning travels unpredictably but comes from the sky; mutant attacks tend to be made vertically from a position of 1–1.5m off the ground. Neither flesh nor inanimate materials retain distinctive damage patterns enabling the analyst to trace an attack to an individual mutant.

Radiation Projection: Radiation projection leaves an ineradicable and dangerous energy residue. ERA training includes a thorough grounding in radiation safety protocols. Any scene where radiation is believed to be present must be sealed off, and entered only by personnel wearing anti-radiation suits. Residue analysts and others examining the scene must shower thoroughly afterwards and properly dispose of all contaminated materials.

Through the use of a detection device known as a scintillation counter, the analyst can detect not only the presence of radiation, but telltale energy signatures which can be used to identify it as the product of a heightened ability, and to point toward the identity of the mutant responsible for it.

Researchers at the forensic department of the Quade Institute have identified five known scintillation patterns generated by mutant powers, labeling them the Zero Point, the SD, the RPI, the RT, and the RSR. The Zero Point is generated by mutants who have only the Radiation Projection power, and none other. SD is generated by mutants who possess both Radiation Projection and Self-Detonation. RSR appears when the mutant possesses those two powers, plus Suppress Explosion. The RPI pattern appears when the generating mutant possesses Radiation Projection and Radiation Immunity. When the mutant has both Radiation Projection and Transmutation, the RT pattern is found. A mutant with several of the above combinations will leave residue that oscillates between them. For example, an individual capable of Radiation Projection and Self-Detonation and Transmutation will leave a trace that alternates between the SD and RT patterns. However, a mutant whose residues generates an RSR pattern never also registers as an SD.

In short, a scintillation test gives you either a complete or partial profile of the perpetrator's mutant abilities. Although they can be used as circumstantial evidence in court, they are best used to rule out suspects.

Psionic Blast: When examined by a brain scan, the living victim of a psionic blast attack shows a distinctive pattern of brain damage that can be tied to a particular perpetrator with an 87.3% accuracy rate. Patterns of damage are much harder to detect in a dead brain, the parts of which must be examined manually. In the case of a victim killed by a psionic blast (or who dies by other means after suffering one), the ERA can only testify that one set of fatal injuries is consistent with other fatal injuries known to have been caused by the same psi-blaster. Juries generally consider such testimony as circumstantial rather than directly probative evidence.

Water Blast: If the water from such a blast evaporates or leaches away before crime scene evidence can be collected, no distinctive patterns tying the perpetrator to the offense can be found. However, if you're lucky enough to collect an uncontaminated sample of the water generated by a water blast, it will contain blood and skin cells from the blaster, in trace quantities which can be isolated with the aid of a centrifuge (or detected with Microvision.)

ASSORTED FORENSIC ANAMORPHOLOGY

Though analysis of blast power effects is the most cohesive and fruitful branch of forensic anamorphology, researchers continue to develop tests for the presence of other mutant abilities.

BLOOD TESTING

Blood tests can confirm that a victim has been infected by the Spread Pathogen power. The pathogen mutates slightly as it travels from the original host to secondary victims. DNA analysis reveals its generation, and can tell whether a victim was infected by a mutant with the power, or from another infected person.

Blood tests can also identify SEDS Carriers and sufferers of the Plasma Deficiency defect.

BOTANICAL ENZYME TESTING

When subjected to the Plant Control power, photosynthetic plants produce a previously unknown enzyme dubbed diastellozine. This substance remains in their leaves and stem structures for up to thirty-six hours. A plant sample harvested during this interval can be crushed up with a mortar and pestle and submerged in a chemical compound which turns red when exposed to diastellozine. The depth of the red hue suggests the length of time that has passed since the Plant Control power was employed, with a slight pinkish haze indicating thirty or more hours, and a deep purplish-crimson pointing toward a very recent use.

Only plants containing chlorophyll yield this evidence.

CELLULAR PLASTICITY BIOPSY

A sample of tissue is taken from the scar tissue of a living patient and examined under a microscope for an abnormal cell structure and level of malleability. If it displays these signs, it is apparent that the wound was subject to the Healing power.

A mutant with the Microvision power and the Forensic Anthropology ability can perform this test noninvasively, merely by peering intently at a subject's scar tissue for about a minute.

This technique does not work on tissue that has Regenerated; it returns to its original state, leaving no trace of the previous wound.

FOLLICULAR EXPANSION CHECK

Use of the Entangling Hair power inevitably leaves behind strands of hair which can be examined under a microscope (or with the Microvision power.) The hair is sliced with a razor; if it reveals microscopic fibers beneath its outer sheath, the hair is revealed as having prehensile qualities.

DNA can't be extracted from hair. Hairs pulled out by their roots still have skin cells attached to their roots, and DNA can be gleaned from that. However, few hairs that fall out during the use of Entangling Hair are pulled out by the roots. These will be found only where the subject used the power in the course of a vigorous or violent fight.

FORENSIC DENTISTRY

The puncture wounds left by Fangs typically appear as part of a larger bite mark. Like any bite wound, photographs or casts of these injuries can be compared to casts of a suspect's teeth. Photographs are used with living victims; wound casts are made during autopsies.

MAGNETIC FIELD VIEWER

This simple device takes the form of a piece of thick card stock around a pane of green cellophane. It can be used to detect malformations in an object's magnetic field, indicating that it was recently subjected to the Magnetism power. The field distortions remain for a number of hours equal to the mutant's Magnetism rating.

Samples of sand or soil may also be viewed to detect the recent use of the Earth Control power. These field distortions are weaker and last for about fifteen minutes per rating point.

A MFV filter placed on a camera lens allows the investigator to document these readings as photographic evidence.

MATERIALS SEM

To determine whether a piece of metal or other elemental sample has been Transmuted to its present state, technicians employ a scanning electron microscope, or SEM.

A similar technique can determine whether a sample of powdery residue constitutes the remains of an object destroyed by the Disintegration power, and what material it used to be made of.



DEVISING NOVEL FORENSICS TESTS

GMs may permit characters to devise their own new forensic tests to establish facts about the use of mutant powers in the commission of crimes. To do so, they must:

- possess the technical investigative ability they'd need to perform the test, if it already existed
- devise a rationale for how the procedure works which rises at least to the level of pseudo-scientific plausibility given in the descriptions of the standard tests
- make a 3-point spend of the technical investigative ability in question

GMs may disallow tests which would allow the group to leapfrog over several scenes to reach a boringly easy solution to the mystery at hand. Perhaps the character can later perfect the attempted technique, even though it was unsuccessful in the case that inspired it.

Pioneering new techniques may lead to sub-plot scenes in which the character is given technical awards, pressured to produce scientific papers, wooed by the Quade Institute to retire to academia, or encounters skulduggery while attending forensic conferences.

Prosecutors will be especially leery when asked to lay charges based on an unproven technique. New science is always difficult to introduce in court. It may be much easier to make a discovery than to round up the peer reviewers and expert witnesses necessary to have it considered admissible at all.

Characters with Microvision and the Chemistry ability can perform these tests without equipment.

SECRETION ANALYSIS

Acids produced by the Secrete Acid and Spit Acid powers include only highly degraded trace elements of DNA. (In the words of your first year Forensic Anamorphology instructor, "It's acid! What do you expect?") However, the exact chemical composition of acids varies between individuals according to blood type. An Acid Analysis test can therefore identify the secretor's blood type.

Mutant acids are extremely corrosive and must be handled carefully during the evidence collection process.

Mutant venoms can be tested to see which of the three types they fall into: Venom (Bite), Venom (Stinger), or Venom (Spit.)

DNA can be extracted from bite venom drawn from a victim's bloodstream and then processed to separate it out for identification. It is present in pure bite venom but impossible to extract until it binds onto a victim's blood cells.

Spit venom can, like acid, be used to identify the mutant's blood type.

Stinger venom does not yield DNA samples at all.

SETULE ANALYSIS

To search a wall or other surface for signs that someone has traveled along it using the Wall Crawling power, apply a length of clear evidence tape (like packing tape, but with specially manufactured glues that do not degrade the gathered samples) along it. Under a microscope, search the tape for tiny hairs, which are in turn covered with even smaller hairs called setules. Each ends in a triangular tip. These tiny hairs enable mutants to scale walls.

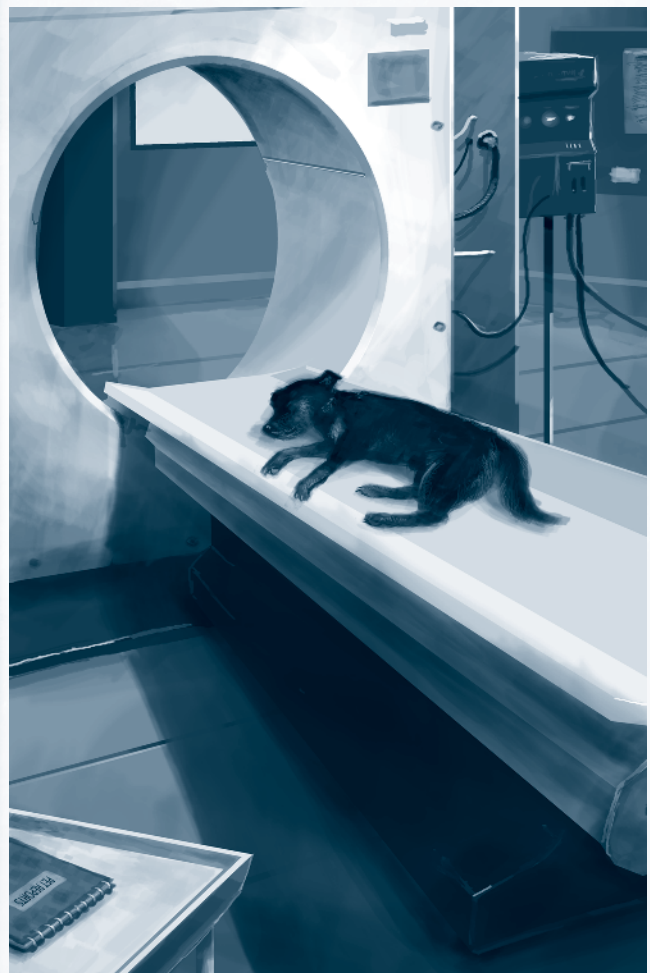
Only a few setule-bearing hairs are discarded with any given climb. Because they fall out on their own, samples gathered in this way never include attached skin cells and can't be used in DNA extraction.

VETERINARY PET IMAGING

A positron emission tomography (PET) scanner is used to study the brains of living vertebrate animals. Their metabolic functions and changes in blood flow in response to stimuli are recorded and compared to the responses of control creatures under the same conditions. If metabolic responses are sluggish or scrambled, it is apparent that the creature in question

was recently affected by the Command Birds, Command Fish, Command Mammals or Command Reptiles & Amphibians powers. To perform the test adequately, the technician must be able to consult a control recording for the same species of creature. Compilation of the necessary database is only partially complete. Common animals, especially urban ones like dogs, cats, raccoons, pigeons, and squirrels, are well represented. Whether an exotic species appears is a matter of chance.

Although several researchers are working to find one, there is as of yet no equivalent test for the Command Insects power.



WOUND PATTERN ANALYSIS

During post-mortem examination, medical examiners can make casts of wounds left by Natural Weaponry. Each natural weapon is as unique as a tooth, possessing distinctive grooves and edges. Medical examiners can also determine the angle of injury and the relative positions of attacker and victim when the

wounds were inflicted. These extrapolations allow them to confirm or debunk, for example, claims of self-defense.



QUICK REFERENCE: ASSORTED TESTS, BY POWER

Power Or Defect	Test
Command Amphibians & Reptiles	Veterinary PET Imaging
Command Birds	Veterinary PET Imaging
Command Fish	Veterinary PET Imaging
Command Mammals	Veterinary PET Imaging
Disintegration	Materials SEM
Earth Control	Magnetic Field Viewer
Entangling Hair	Follicular Expansion Check
Fangs	Forensic Dentistry
Healing	Cellular Plasticity Biopsy
Magnetism	Magnetic Field Viewer
Natural Weaponry	Wound Pattern Analysis
Plant Control	Botanical Enzyme Test
Plasma Deficiency	Blood Testing
Secrete Acid	Secretion Analysis
SEDS Carrier	Blood Testing
Spit Acid	Secretion Analysis
Spread Pathogen	Blood Testing
Transmutation	Materials SEM
Venom (Bite)	Secretion Analysis
Venom (Spit)	Secretion Analysis
Venom (Stinger)	Secretion Analysis
Wall Crawling	Setule Analysis



THE HEIGHTENED AND THE LAW

The criminal justice system reacted with surprising speed, and even more surprising common sense, to the dawn of a mutant age. Armed with appropriate legislation, judges and prosecutors are prepared for whatever legal conundrums await in this strange new era.

ARTICLE 18

In most instances, the possession of mutant powers is considered a private matter—though of course you're subject to criminal or civil penalties if you use them to commit bad acts. However, a few powers are deemed so inherently dangerous to the general populace, or pose such a threat to national security, that it is a crime merely to possess them secretly, even if you never use them.

The classic Article 18 power is Radiation Projection, which poses a severe long-term health hazard whenever it is used. Other powers falling under the law's public safety provisions are Self-Detonation and Spread Pathogen.

The following powers are considered Article 18 for national security reasons—that is, they scare the bejesus out of counter-espionage officials. They are Invisibility, Technopathy, Teleportation, Phase, and Read Minds.

Legislation to add other powers to the list, most notably Possession, is currently bogged down in committee.

At present, those charged with Article 18 violations are still permitted jury trials. Jury nullification is common in cases where ordinary people who mind their own business and have never used their powers for good or ill are charged with possessing the second ability set. Juries are not so sanguine about irradiators, exploders and disease spreaders.

National security officials are consequently trying to change the law to disallow jury trials. They're also lobbying to expand the list of powers covered by Article 18 radically, to considerable pushback by mutant rights organizations.

If you possess any of the named powers and wish to avoid an Article 18 charge, all you have to do is file a form with the federal government, naming your power and providing personal information. You must continually update your record in the national database whenever you change residences or workplaces—or even travel within the country. You must also call a hotline every time you use your power, scheduling a debriefing with a Homeland Security official within seven days. In practice, the DHS staffers assigned to Article 18 compliance duty are overworked and undermotivated, and allow harmless-seeming citizens to file pro forma reports of their mutant activities. Mutants with Radiation Projection and Self-Detonation are assigned the most gung-ho case officers, and are monitored with something bordering on vigilance.

HCIU officers are sometimes called on to investigate unlawful use of Article 18 powers. Using any of these powers in the commission of a crime is an offense unto itself, in addition to the underlying offense.

In the case of powers monitored for national security purposes, Article 18 forms serve as a recruiting tool. Mutants with these powers are often hired as operatives by intelligence agencies. Cops investigating these persons may find that their shadowy minders have thrown up procedural roadblocks to keep them at bay.

PROOF OF HEIGHTENED STATUS

Many issues at trial hinge on the question of whether an individual possesses mutant powers, and which ones he wields.

"I'd have to be able to fly through the air to do what they say I did," doesn't work as a defense in a world where everyone knows full well that people *can* fly through the air. The prosecution must be able to establish that the defendant does possess Flight powers, but this is like proving that he has a good singing voice or knows the rules of chess. The inherent possibility of the claim is no longer in doubt.

Witnesses may be called upon to prove that they possess certain powers, for example when they're testifying to things they perceived with heightened senses or mental powers.

PCID tests (p. 117) administered by accredited labs are considered proof of one's mutant power status.

Because defense attorneys are never required to prove anything, but must only cast doubt on the case against them, defendants claiming not to have the powers ascribed to them by the prosecution are not required to submit PCID test results. However, savvy lawyers produce them whenever possible. They know that, even if instructed otherwise, juries will ask themselves why this simple proof hasn't been provided to them.

Some heightened rights activists regard PCID tests as a discriminatory invasion of privacy and refuse to submit to them, even to clear their names. Most HCIU officers regard this argument as a dodge.

PROBABLE CAUSE

Just as police can obtain court orders to force rape suspects to provide DNA samples, persons of interest to the HCIU can be required to submit to testing for mutant powers. Officers receive permission to force such invasions of privacy only by securing warrants. Acting through prosecutors, officers must prove probable cause to a judge. To show probable cause, investigators must establish that their suspicions are founded on solid evidence, and that there is no other way of getting the information they need to proceed with their investigation.

Because the PCID test may establish an individual

belongs to a stigmatized group, most judges place great weight on the privacy side of the scale in determining whether probable cause exists to force a test. Officers must provide solid reasons to believe that the particular person they're seeking to test committed a serious crime, and that certain knowledge of their mutant status is required to proceed with charges. They can't, for example, have everyone with access to a crime scene tested to see if they spit venom or can wield a heat blast.

All individuals who are remanded to custody awaiting trial, or sentenced to prison terms, are invariably given PCID tests as part of their admittance procedure. These tests are administered across the board, whether or not officials suspect that the inmate is a mutant. They warn prison authorities of the need to take special incarceration measures (see below.) Results of these tests remain confidential until the inmate is convicted of a crime, at which time they become part of his rap sheet and enter police databases nationwide. Until then, prosecutors are not, barring a contrary order by the judge in the case, permitted access to prison PCID tests. Judges will also disallow testimony intended to introduce such evidence via a back door. For example, a prosecutor who visits prison to explore a plea arrangement with a defendant and his lawyer and sees that he's incarcerated in the Heightened Inmates Wing can't, as a way of backhandedly showing that his PCID test confirmed him as a mutant, ask a witness to describe the circumstances of his incarceration.

HCIU officers often rely on mutant profile information on rap sheets when investigating cases. This information may be introduced in subsequent trials only when the judge decides that its probative value outweighs the risk that it will prejudice jury members against him.

HCIU offices relying on less-than-recent PCID results in their investigations should remember that they will not include any new powers that manifested after the test was taken.

Even more invasive than PCID tests are court-approved mental eavesdropping efforts, in which an HCIU officer or asset uses the Read Minds power to glean information directly from a subject's brain. These are subjected to an even greater judicial scrutiny than wiretap warrants. They are typically permitted only for brief periods of time, and only when all other avenues of investigation have been exhausted. Typically applicants must also establish an ongoing threat to the public posed by the subject of the warrant, as in the case of violent gang

leaders or serial killers. Mind-reading warrants are rarely doled out just to prove who previously committed a single crime which is unlikely to be repeated, like a domestic killing. Neither rule or practice requires that the subject of a mind reading warrant be a mutant; they are most often deployed against high-ranking organized crime figures or suspected terrorists, regardless of their genetic status.

It is well-known among cops and district attorneys that the standards required for probable cause vary widely between judges. Some are skeptical hard cases, anxious to preserve privacy rights against ever-expanding state power. Others are pushovers for the prosecution who sign any search warrant put in front of them. (In other words, GMs can easily justify why a warrant might, for plot purposes, be available in one case and not in the next, even under very similar circumstances.)



INCARCERATION

In a practice many heightened rights activists find discriminatory, mutant prisoners are segregated in all but the smallest prison facilities. Mutant prisoners who would otherwise be housed in local jails are shipped to larger prisons more equipped to handle them.

Sections of prisons reserved for mutant inmates are most often called Heightened Inmates Wing, or HIWs. These were established out of fear that mutant inmates would terrorize and dominate other prisoners.

Activists argue that this outcome, even if it happened, would not vary significantly from the status quo, where the toughest and best-connected inmates tyrannize the others.

Mutant prisoners are divided into three groups, according to the security threat their powers pose.

So-called *access-approved* prisoners are permitted to interact with their fellow mutant prisoners, sharing cells, recreational and work facilities. They have powers which are deemed to pose a minimal threat to themselves, other inmates, and corrections officers.

Access-denied prisoners are kept in isolation, because their powers are considered a threat to others. However, their powers are not considered likely to aid in escape from this ultra-secure wing of the facility. These include Blood Spray, Entangling Hair, Fangs, Flight, Induce Aggression, Induce Fear, Induce Mental Disorder, Natural Weaponry, Secrete Acid, Webbing, Strength, Quills, and Venom (all types),

Prisoners in the ominous-sounding *induced-quiescence* class are kept sedated around the clock, and fed through tubes. Those nearing the ends of their sentences are given involuntary physiotherapy, much of it machine-aided, so that their muscles won't have completely atrophied by the time they're released. (An earlier version of induced-quiescence incarceration included no such benefit, but was ruled a form of cruel and unusual punishment

by the courts.) Powers in the induced-quiescence category include all blasts as well as Alter Form, Deplete Oxygen, Disintegration, Earth Control, Force Field, Illusion, Gravity Control, Impersonate, Invisibility, Light Control, Limb Extension, Magnetism, Phase, Possession, Read Minds, Self-Detonation, Sexual Chemistry, Spontaneous Combustion, Spread Pathogen, Telekinesis, Teleportation, Toxin Immunity (Gaseous), Transmutation, Wall-Crawling, Water Manipulation, and X-Ray Vision.

Unlike their comic book counterparts, incarcerated mutants are not constantly escaping to wreak further havoc on society. Corrections officials do such a good job of keeping them behind bars that they are less likely to engage in successful prison breaks than non-mutant inmates.



DORPHING

When it became known that certain mutants could induce a heroin-like high, it took about five seconds for addicts worldwide to start tracking them down, sweaty fistfuls of cash in hand. Endorphin Control (Others) offered the dooper's dream—a safe, reliable, intense and—most of all—legal high. The practice of receiving recreational jolts of the Endorphin Control (Others) power became known as dorphing.

Proponents of the worldwide war on drugs reacted to this phenomenon with horror, viewing it as the thin edge of the wedge that would eventually lead to the legitimization of all drug use. They fed hysterical stories to an eager media, demonizing mutants with Endorphin

powers and portraying the practice as wildly unsafe. That this required blatant manipulation of the facts fazed anti-drug campaigners not one whit. Dorphing is in fact safer than intravenous drug use by several orders of magnitude, offering zero risk of blood-borne infection or overdose. However, the propaganda campaign was a huge success: most people believe that dorphers face a high risk of cerebral hemorrhage every time they, to use the dorpher parlance, take a jolt. In response to the outcry of anxious parents, legislators quickly enacted stiff criminal penalties for abuse of this power, both for the mutant and the recipient. The formal names of the charges are Administration Of a Restricted Intoxicant and Willful Metabolization of a Restricted Intoxicant.

In practice, however, prosecutions for either crime are rarely mounted, as the crimes are nearly impossible to prove. There is no physical evidence and no smuggling network. Even if you videotape a mutant administering a jolt, there is no certain proof that the power was used or the subject's brain chemistry temporarily altered. Attempts to have undercover narcotics officers pose as dorphers permit an entrapment defense.

From the perspective of most cops, all anti-dorphing laws achieve is to push the activity underground, where it intermingles with various other criminal enterprises. HCIU investigators, who are as a rule uninterested in vice or narcotics offenses, see them mostly as leverage to use against dorpher witnesses. Although everyone knows that convictions are rare, no user wants the hassle of even an inconclusive brush with the system.

HCIU officers are more interested in the crimes that surround dorphing than in the act itself. Dorphing is highly addictive, inspiring users to commit various crimes to fund their expensive habits. Users tend to become emotionally fixated on the people who sell them their jolts (known as fixers), sometimes committing crimes of passion to ensure their access to them. In a crime analogous to pimping, criminal syndicates have been known to kidnap and coerce law-abiding mutants unfortunate enough to possess the power into acting as fixers.

A subculture within the drug culture practices sdorphing, in which an addict forms a permanent submissive bond with a mutant, who gets him high in exchange for engaging in various degrading acts. In the public's mind, ordinary dorphing is often conflated with the kinkier practice of sdorphing.

THE FISH: THE BUDDY-UP

Guthrie was trying to seem composed but couldn't stop working his spidery fingers. His fingertips danced across the metal surface of the interrogation room table. Stan Guthrie was a slight, stooped man, his hair flecked with gray. His clothing echoed what Stagg had been wearing on his last, fatal swim: a worn, drab windbreaker, T-shirt, jeans, and sneakers.

Lomax took a seat beside him. So far, he'd only made partial eye contact with Lomax, and had shut down completely around Cece. She'd decamped to the other side of the one way mirror, to observe the interview alongside Lieutenant Stapleton and the latest hire from the district attorney's office. Lomax pulled out a chair next to him and sat down. Guthrie was about two fluttering heartbeats from asking to leave or lawyering up. Since had nothing to hold him on, Lomax would have to try the buddy-up and hope it stuck.

"Listen, I realize it's kinda intimidating in here," he said, "and I'm sorry if my partner rattled you a bit."

"No, no, it's okay," Guthrie mumbled.

Lomax's enormous shoulder muscles rippled into his best version of an apologetic shrug. "She's kind of the cold shoulder type. Except when she's suddenly flipping out on you. What can I say? I keep hoping for a reassignment, but you know. Quotas."

Behind the glass, the new prosecutor wrinkled her pert nose in sisterly offense—until she saw Detective Chu's contented smirk.

Guthrie directed a frightened glance at the door, as if imagining her return. "And what does she...you know...do?"

Lomax grimaced. "Lightning bolts. Very scary. Don't worry. I'll keep her away from you—but I need you to throw me a bone, okay?"

Guthrie nodded, almost puppyish.

"I gotta admit, we're kinda stuck here. What would Stagg be doing down near the river?"

"Gosh, I don't know."

"That was a long ways from his house. Closer to your apartment though, right?"

"Uh, yeah, I guess."

"So the two of you didn't hang out there together some afternoons? Get fries from your favorite truck?"

"Sometimes. But not recently."

Lomax lowered his voice. "I know you're just doing this out of nervousness and you don't mean anything by it, but you're introducing a contradiction."

"What?"

"A contradiction. Of the closed-circuit TV footage we have of you two near the pier," Lomax lied. "It looks worse for you if you don't admit it."

"I saw him there that day but I would never do anything to..."

"Of course not. You were his oldest friend, right? All the way back to what, high school? Margaret says you were the one who introduced him to comic books."

"Yeah, sure."

Lomax stood, moving his chair with a deliberately jarring scrape. "And after he got his powers, you were the one convinced him to market himself to Big Time Comics."

"Well yeah but it was this agent guy he knew from selling insurance who got him in the door."

"Must've sucked. The two of you, comics fans since you were kids, and it's him who gets the powers. Not you."

Guthrie twitched. "Them's the genetic breaks, I guess."

Lomax let a pause hang in the air.

"Besides," Guthrie finally said, "all he got were water powers. Water heroes are always the lamest."

Lomax reached for a folder on the table, opening it to produce Guthrie's script. "Not like the hero of this comic book. He had spider powers. Otherwise he was a lot like you. Shy, retiring type. Who never gets the girl."

"No, no, the character in that script is totally fictional. And anyway, it totally sucks. Who gave you this?"

"Carl Brueggen, from Big Time Comics. The guy who called this script... let's see, what did he say?" Lomax quoted from an email printout. "Painfully derivative. Trite. A waste of the reader's time. Shows a complete ignorance of the comics medium. That must have hurt."

"Kinda..."

"Your one shot at writing comics. Your lifelong dream. And of all the editors at the comic book company Mike could have put you onto, he forwards your script to Carl Brueggen."

Guthrie was trembling.

"You didn't blame Brueggen for your humiliation. Brueggen is who he is. You blamed Mike, who should have known he was sending your dreams straight to the shredder. After you'd spent years begging him to put in a word for you. It was the final straw. So you slugged him and tossed him in the drink."

Stan shook his head, like a terrier in need of a rat.

"Even if I did it, which I didn't, Mike could breathe underwater."

On the other side of the glass, Cecilia said, "He's our guy."

Lieutenant Stapleton always scratched when he was thinking. "I like him for it, too."

The assistant D.A crossed her arms. "Then get me some evidence."

A CHANGED WORLD

When it first became apparent that significant numbers of people had spontaneously gained inhuman powers, a wave of apocalyptic panic swept the world. Commentators predicted a new dark age, in which superhuman gangs would rove the earth, laying waste to civilization and enslaving the unheightened populace. People flocked to stores to stock up on water and non-perishable foods. Abandoned backyard fallout shelters were rebuilt.

Then the hysteria gradually dissipated. A few murders were committed by mutated suspects. Mutants with pre-existing criminal backgrounds went on sprees of looting and destruction. However, the widely predicted consolidation of mutants into a single tyrannical political entity never materialized. Mutant powers proved as prevalent among cops and national guardsmen as among violent criminals. The body politic breathed easier, aware that, even in a new world of mutant abilities, decent, law-abiding people vastly outnumbered the psychopaths and bullies.

Instead the SME changed the world in subtler ways. Few people allowed the sudden acquisition of mutant powers to alter their sense of identity. Most individuals who discovered that they were immune to radiation or could elongate their limbs did nothing much about it. Most went on being accountants, truck drivers, office managers, or whatever they were before the SME. If they didn't keep their powers completely secret, they limited them to the occasional impromptu demonstration at backyard barbecues and family reunions. A handful sought out more lucrative occupations centered around their new abilities, or tried to leverage them into show business careers.

Only a few occupations are sufficiently remunerative to lure mutants in large numbers. Empathy can earn one a lucrative career in the marketing industry, as an highly tuned meter of consumer reactions during focus groups. Their clients include not only manufacturers

and marketers, but political operatives testing responses to new slogans and candidates. People with the Transmutation power can, if they want it, find employment producing quantities of desired metals for industrial use. Limb Extension is surprisingly prevalent among buskers.



SPORTS

Perhaps the most dramatic ethical crisis surrounding the use of mutant powers in everyday life occurred in sports. After initial resistance, both the NBA and major league baseball permitted the use of certain powers during play. The NFL briefly experimented with a similarly permissive attitude, but, after several

deaths on the field resulted from tackles by super-strong players, has retreated to its original no-mutants policy. Mutant athletes continue to be barred from the Olympics, but several court cases threaten to overturn the IOC's prohibitions on the grounds that they are discriminatory.

Needless to say, pro wrestling quickly embraced mutant powers in all their permutations. Matches are still quasi-scripted, with predetermined results and soap opera storylines, but now allow the combatants to use every power this side of radiation projection in the ring. Mutant wrestlers sweat to put on a good show while shielding their screaming audiences from stray lightning bolts and blood sprays.

MEDICINE

Mutants with Healing or Cure Disease are highly sought after by hospitals and private clinics. A small handful of them go to the trouble of gaining medical degrees. Most instead wait to perform their miracles under prescription, essentially acting as walking, talking pieces of medical equipment. The existence of these powers has provided oncologists, surgeons and other expert doctors with additional and highly effective treatment options, but has hardly exiled them to the unemployment line. Seriously ill patients still outnumber mutant healers by a wide margin, so access to their services is rationed either by need (in nations with socialized medicine) or (in the United States) by the patient's ability to pay. Even under national health care schemes, most practicing mutant healers are sufficiently well rewarded financially and socially to ensure their participation in the system. A few rogues, however, practice underground mutant medicine, secretly and illegally selling their services to high-paying patients lower down on the official priority list. The limited availability of guaranteed cures for otherwise untreatable illnesses has intensified the health care debate in the US. The deep-pocketed lobby group AHMA (American Heightened Medical Association) vigorously fights attempts to regulate its membership, misleadingly painting the health systems of other industrialized countries as indentured servitude for medical mutants.

Cure Disease is infinitely more valued than Healing, as many more people face death from life-threatening illness than from injury. Healers hankering for illicit rewards make their services available to criminals who've suffered gunshot and knife wounds in the course of their illegal activities—strictly on the down-low, of course.



TECHNOLOGY

The rate of technological change in the ten years since the SME has been incremental rather than transformative. Consumer electronics have become smaller and less expensive. Computer processing power and storage capacity have increased enormously—only to be used up by programs that hog the new resources and file sizes that fill the larger media. Vehicle engines have become smaller and slightly more energy efficient, though not enough to relax worldwide upward pressure on fossil fuel prices. Revolutionary fuel cell technology and economical biofuel extraction are said to be five to ten years in the future—the same time frame experts have been giving for years.

Some have argued that the SME, or rather the boom in anamorphological studies that followed it, has retarded scientific advances in other areas. In her book *The Stunted Future* economist Miller Rudd lays out the case that the rush to fund this new, sexy field has denied crucial grant money to countless projects of great potential benefit to mankind. Critics have, however, noted her tendentious use of statistics and ties to the anti-mutant Neutral Purity League.

In forensic science, it is true that most innovations relate to the reconstruction of events involving mutant powers. In other areas, police lab equipment has advanced to the point where the fanciful technologies shown in the old *CSI* television shows has now in many cases become available in real life.

THE ARTS

Established celebrities in the film and entertainment world showed a great reluctance to go public with any mutant powers they may have developed in the wake of the SME. Actors feared being typecast as mutants, or required to use their powers in dangerous ways on movie sets. It took a new wave of celebs to dare to proclaim their genetic status openly, using the novelty of their mutant abilities to seize the public spotlight.

Many of these were type-B mutants with dramatic physical enhancements but no extraordinary powers.

Today's roster of internationally-known mutant celebrities includes:

Suavely rugged action movie hero Sam Martinez, best known for shoot 'em up flicks *Full Bleed* and *Re-Friggin'-Lentless*. The wisecracking Martinez openly displays the Armor and Blade Immunity abilities. Rumor has it that he also possesses the somewhat creepier Quills power, but keeps them retracted at all times, to avoid an unseemly reduction of his sex appeal.

Pop star Crystal Shatter (born Krista Lee Betton in Berryville, Arkansas) uses her Type-B ability to lend her skin a metallic sheen in various hues. Her sexually aggressive persona and impeccably produced pop singles have combined to make her an omnipresent fixture on magazine covers and concert stages, comparable to Cher or Madonna in their respective heydays.

Unlikely celebrity Victoria Royster rose to fame on the first all-mutant installment of the revamped reality TV show *Surveillance House*. A shy, easily flustered homemaker from Presho, South Dakota, Royster won the hearts of a nervous nation by displaying a complete and disarming normalcy despite her ability to turn invisible at will. She became an iconic figure representing all the ordinary people with mutant powers, who carried on with their calm, decent lives after discovering their extraordinary abilities. Victoria now hosts a popular afternoon talk show in the Oprah format, and endorses a wide variety of packaged goods, from toilet cleansers to washing machines.

On screen, Hollywood celebrated the heightened long before any of its established actors crept timidly out of the closet. Action movie audiences learned to crave fantastic stunts shot for real, without aid of CGI or wires. On movie sets, mutants now dominate the stunt profession. They play not only mutants with obvious powers, but use their abilities to perform stunts in which supposedly normal characters crash cars, fall from great heights, or tumble through plate glass. Now that any injury can be quickly repaired by an on-set mutant with Healing, safety standards have plummeted. (The same trend can be seen in many other high-reward, high-risk industries.)

Since the embrace of these trailblazers by a sensation-hungry public, many older movie and TV stars stepped

forward to admit that they could levitate toasters or frolic in their groupies' dreams. Determining which real-life tabloid figures gained mutant powers in the SME is left as an exercise for individual GMs.

Mutant creators have made their mark on the more rarefied planes of the art world. Several contemporary dance companies consist entirely of mutants. Their interpretative choreography incorporates powers such as Flight, Limb Extension, Gravity Control, Telekinesis and Webbing.

Performance art is increasingly dominated by mutants. The best known practitioner is Jean Iboshi, whose internally-generated light displays have won her a coveted so-called "genius grant" from the MacArthur Foundation.

Author Deena Tynan regularly tops the best-seller list with her series of detective novels featuring mutant private eye Jimmy Setzer. A TV show based on the books, "Setzer", is now in its second season. Smart alec cops sometimes refer to their HCIU colleagues by yelling out, "Hey, Setzer!"

POLITICS

Just as it was before the SME, most voters in industrial democracies concern themselves primarily with national security and the state of the economy. However, mutant rights issues continue to generate controversy. In every democracy, advocates for greater monitoring and control of mutant activities have aligned themselves with the party, usually on the right, most concerned with projecting an image of toughness on internal security matters. Those who fight against apparently discriminatory measures have aligned themselves with the party associated with cultural liberties.

Neither side enjoys a monopoly on moral rectitude. To restrict a person's rights due to a mutation he has no control over seems unfair or draconian, depending on how extreme the truncation of his liberties. But many powers do threaten public safety or national security if completely unchecked.

As both mutants and cops, the HCIU detectives stand in the middle of this ideological divide. Cops believe in authority and tend to see civil libertarians as protectors of criminals. If your play group is like most, they'll treat the privacy of suspects and witnesses with a cavalier disregard. On the other hand, they're members, albeit

relatively high-status ones, of a group still subject to widespread fear and prejudice. Every day a politician appears on cable news to propose new restrictions on the nation's mutant population.

Probably because mutation cuts across all class and identity boundaries, anti-mutant measures have yet to win the approval of more than a hard-line fringe. However, mutant rights crusaders are often viewed as annoying troublemakers. Most people, including many of the closeted heightened, basically want the issue to go away.

Mutant politicians have made gains at the local level, where they can draw on concentrated populations of the gene-expressive. There is, as of yet, no mutant occupying statewide office in the US. In many democracies, a single token mutant functionary serves as a cabinet minister—always in a junior portfolio.

TIMELINE

The following is a brief overview of events since the SME. Because the date of the SME floats depending on when you start your game, we represent years with the formula PY+X, where PY is the current year when you start playing, and X is the number of years out from that. So if you're playing in 2009, and an event is said to take place in PY+3, it happens in 2012. The present day of the game is PY+10, which in this example would be 2019.

Many of the events are local to Mutant City, the real-life city of your choice where the action of your series occurs. The ### is a placeholder indicating a customizable local reference; see p. 140.

Jan 12, PY: First ghost flu symptoms reported.

Jan 16, PY: Apex of ghost flu panic. Worldwide pandemic feared. Riots break out in dozens of cities, mostly in the third world.

Jan 18, PY: Panic abates as world populations realize that the flu appears to be non-fatal.

Jan 23, PY: All symptoms end simultaneously. The unnatural suddenness of the epidemic's end fuels a new, less demonstrative wave of paranoia.

April 2, PY: First power manifestation occurs when Tammy Graves takes flight during a softball game in Slocum, Texas.

April 3, PY: Three new manifestations are caught on videotape and reach the attention of the international media. Roman Shevchenko of Bradavka, Ukraine, is hit by a truck—and passes through it, unharmed. In a quarantine unit in, Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, hospital orderly Yasiin Muhinda lays hands on the sufferer of an Ebola-like virus, healing him instantly. Adriana Mori, a bored tour guide at an Etruscan burial site in Cerveteri, Italy, apparently causes a cloud of flies to form into a moving, three-dimensional representation of actor Brad Pitt.

April 4, PY: Online video hosting sites are flooded with footage of hundreds of people manifesting strange powers. These appear on news cable channels, fuelling another worldwide panic.

April 5, PY: Thousands of people are now manifesting mutant powers.

April 12, PY: In the absence of disasters, panic subsides, and attention returns to other local or international news stories.

May 30, PY: Mutant City experiences its first mutant-related homicide, when unemployed construction worker Don David French enters into a drunken argument with step-brother Jack Guest over the validity of an impending baseball record. French hits Guest in the chest with a lightning bolt, electrocuting him.

June 13, PY: Mutant City's first large scale mutant crime occurs when six heightened individuals, all of them boasting lengthy criminal records, botch a bank robbery, which devolves into a hostage situation. Self-styled costumed heroes calling themselves the Blue Team attempt a raid on the bank, leading to the maiming of a hostage and the severe beating of several Blue Team members, including leader Eugene "Thunder Squall" Pavnicki. The incident is finally defused by police hostage team negotiator, Eric Krose.

June 17, PY: The militant anti-mutant organization Human Integrity Campaign forms during a meeting in Mutant City, attended by concerned citizens and apostate neo-Nazis from around the country.

June 28, PY+1: The Blue Team is involved in another humiliating incident. Mutant youths assault anti-mutant goons, or barheads, in the neighborhood that will later become known as Helixtown. Blue Team members intervene, and are turned on and beaten

by both sides. Eugene "Thunder Squall" Pavnicki is hospitalized with a concussion.

July 13, PY+1: The Blue Team announces a change in focus from active crimefighting to "outreach": that is, dressing up and doing personal appearances.

Aug 18, PY+1: Lucius Quade, professor at Mutant City's most prestigious science university coins term "anamorphology" to describe study of mutant powers, an area he has already been researching.

Oct 28, PY+1: Venture capitalist Galen Birch holds a press conference to announce his mutant status. He calls for all mutants to reveal themselves, and "stand without shame as harbingers of a new era."

Jan 13, PY+2: Quade publishes paper unveiling preliminary version of his famous diagram.

Apr 13, PY+2: Radical Genetic Action Front founded in Seattle, WA.

Aug 18, PY+2: Lucius Quade announces foundation of department of Anamorphological Studies at ###.

May 6, PY+2: Mainstream political lobbying group the Heightened Information Alliance is founded during invitation-only conclave in Mutant City. Attendees include Lucius Quade, Galen Birch, and Brian Schmiederer.

Aug 18, PY+3: With key funder Galen Birch, Lucius Quade breaks ground on site of his new independent research foundation, the Quade Institute.

Last weekend before Labor Day, PY+3: First annual CapeCon, a SF media con with heavy goob fandom track, debuts at the ### convention center.

Sept 9, PY+3: The ### Park Riot. A large Human Integrity Campaign rally turns into a deadly riot when protesters are attacked by a team of masked, blast-wielding assailants. The perpetrators disappear in the chaos after 18 people are killed. Even more deaths are averted by police lieutenant Ellis Deakins, who calms the crowd and averts a stampede.

Sept 10, PY+3: Ellis Deakins becomes a media hero.

Sept 12, PY+3: Homicide detectives establish that the heightened perpetrators of the ### Park killings were foreign mercenaries hired by leaders of the Human

Integrity Campaign to foment anti-mutant outrage.

Sept 14, PY+3: First media reference to gentrifying downtown neighborhood with high mutant population as "Helixtown."

Nov 2, PY+3: Separatist organization Continental Nation Of Mutants is founded in Mutant City.

Nov 12, PY+3: First issue of scientific journal *Proceedings of the Quade Institute* publishes finalized Quade Diagram.

2nd weekend in May, PY+4: Quade Institute hosts first annual Symposium Of Anamorphological Research (SOAR.) Participants in panel discussion "Faith and Mutation" form the Ecumenical Working Group, an organization devoted to reconciling mutant status with various Christian denominations.

Sept 25, PY+4: Continental Nation Of Mutants activist Eddie "The Machine" Florence presides over grand opening of the local chapter's Freedom Hall.

Nov 3, PY+4: Brian Schmiederer elected as municipal councilor for downtown ward including Helixtown.

Apr 29, PY+4: Leaders of the Ecumenical Working Group announce its dissolution in favor of a new, mutant-oriented religious faith, the Eighth-Day Church.

May 1, PY+5: Trial of Human Integrity Campaign leaders for the ### Park Riot concludes. They are convicted of murder and sentenced to (depending on where you locate Mutant City) either death or life imprisonment.

May 2, PY+5: In Quebec City, flamboyant Catholic heretic turned Eighth Day Church pastor Gilles Tremblay experiences an ecstatic vision of an alien invasion, and the mutant counter-insurgency that ultimately defeats it.

July 18, PY+5: Ellis Deakins tapped as police commissioner.

Sept 9, PY+5: Deakins announces formation of first HCIU unit, commanded by Lieutenant Eric Krose.

Sept 12, PY+5: From the ashes of the disgraced Human Integrity Campaign, lower-level leaders launch the Neutral Parity League.

Nov 19, PY+5: Gilles Tremblay and entourage move to Mutant City.

Apr 28, PY+6: In Philadelphia, PA, author and activist Davon Riddle publishes *Heliopolis Awaits*, the manifesto of the Heliopolitan movement, which hopes to establish a homeland for mutants in northern Somalia.

May 2, PY+6: Gilles Tremblay announces plans for Bulwark Of God cathedral in Mutant City's old church district.

Oct 1, PY+6: Davon Riddle moves to Mutant City, where he establishes worldwide structure for his movement, declaring himself its Chief Delegate In Exile.

HEIGHTENED SUB-CULTURES

Just as attitudes among non-mutants toward the gene-expressive fall on a wide spectrum from envy to indifference to hatred, mutants themselves evince a widely varying set of views on their own condition. These are reflected in the various sub-cultures and political aggregations to which they belong.

Goobs take inspiration from the sixty years of costumed hero comics, TV shows and movies that preceded the SME. They give themselves heroic nicknames, wear costumes, and attempt to promote themselves in the media. Goobs gather at events called conventions, where they sign autographs and promote their various product lines. Some attempt to engage in vigilante justice, a phenomenon that has grown steadily less common after a spate of accidental deaths during the early years of the mutant era. Costumed heroes, the so-called villains they were chasing, and innocent bystanders were hurt or killed in a series of highly publicized incidents. Now most mutants who want to fight crime join the force, and the only costumes they don are police blues. Although the occasional criminal adopts a colorful nickname and sinister-looking mask to frighten people into submission, the vast majority of goobs see themselves as good guys—or at least as inspiring representations of same. Just as some *Star Trek* fans bridle at the word "Trekkie", preferring instead the vastly more complimentary "Trekker", dedicated members of the goob sub-community consider that term a slur. They want to be called costumed personalities, or cospers for short.



Straighteners regard all mutant powers, not just the defects, as diseases, which they hope to cure. They raise funds for research toward a permanent end for their condition. As a stopgap measure, they participate in twelve-step type programs meant to suppress any urges they may feel to actually use their powers. Some straighteners ally with anti-mutant groups, like the NPL. Others fight the Neutral Parity League and its ilk, arguing that they perpetuate discrimination against people with a humiliating disease. The former group, called **cleansers**, believes that a cure for mutations, when it comes, should be administered to everyone, whether they like it or not. The latter group, known as **electivists**, espouses the hypothetical cure only for those who want it.

Expressivists are mutants (and friendly non-mutants) who advocate full civil rights for the genetically altered. The mainstream mutant rights group is the **Heightened Information Alliance (HIA)**. This middle-of-the-road lobbying outfit avoids making waves and favors incremental legislative solutions to anti-mutant discrimination in public and private life. They take plenty of flack from the boisterous **GEF**, or **Genetic**

Action Front, a loud and confrontational group who prefer non-violent civil disobedience, including demonstrations and site occupations, as their main way of demanding immediate fair treatment for their people.

In the public mind, the radical expressivists of the GEF are often confused with **separatists**. In fact, these radical groups regularly clash. Where expressivists want better treatment for mutants within society, separatists advocate the formation of an all-mutant state. The two main separatist organizations are the **Heliopolans**, who advocate an exodus to northern Somalia, which will be taken over by mutants and renamed Heliopolis, and the **Continental Nation of Mutants (CNM)**, who merely want to create all-mutant neighborhoods in each major city, to be run autonomously from any municipal, state or federal authority. Although both disclaim terrorism as a tactic, many of their leaders have long rap sheets for both violent protest and organized criminal activity. CNM members are known for adopting colorful nicknames inspired by their super powers, giving them a surprising commonality with goobs. Although the two separatist groups include representatives of all colors and creeds, many of their top leaders cut their teeth in ethnic or racial autonomy movements, including the Nation Of Islam, MEChA, and AIM, before acquiring superpowers and setting aside their old allegiances.

Over the past decade, some mutants have developed their own religious denomination, the **Eighth-Day Church**, abbreviated as **8DC**. Followers are known as **eighters**, for short. Originally strictly Christian in its theology, the 8DC has evolved into an ecumenical movement in which various major religions are blended with a message of God's special mission for His mutant children. Believers hold that the SME was a revised act of creation—some even use the analogy of a firmware update—to prepare mankind for a coming period of calamity. It is the duty of eighters to shepherd the entire species through the imminent crisis. Competing prophets Bonita Moroyiannis and Gilles Tremblay offer conflicting visions on what this disaster might be. Moroyiannis, a Greek citizen, predicts an environmental cataclysm brought on by global climate change, while Tremblay, a Quebecker now resident in Mutant City, foretells an alien invasion. Each is surrounded by a small corps of zealots who continually denounce the other leader. Most eighters take a wait-and-see approach, planning to rescue mankind from whichever apocalypse rears its head.

Some mutants make an effort to intermarry only with other gene-expressives, in the hope of producing a new generation of heightened with even greater or more varied powers than are currently known. They are called **strainers**, after their desire to refine the mutant strain. Strainers appear within the eighter and separatist communities, but also include many heightened with no particular ideological ambitions. So far no child born of parents who were mutants at the time of conception has shown any heightened powers whatsoever—but then, they'd all be ten years old at most, and powers in children tend to manifest during puberty. Strainers predict a new wave of world-changing mutations in a few years, when the children of mutant matches develop their powers. Anamorphologists see no solid evidence for these claims.

Most mutants are apolitical; they may pay some attention to the political endorsements of the HIA, but in general try to keep their mutant status from interfering with their everyday lives. They prefer to define their identities by their ties to other interests and communities. There are mutant Republicans, mutant Democrats, mutant Scientologists, mutant Seventh-Day Adventists, mutant environmental activists, and so on.



SLANG AND JARGON

anamorphology: the scientific study of mutant powers and their genetic origins

Anna May: a category-B mutant with hyper-enlarged irises

barhead: member of the thuggish youth wing of the Neutral Parity League

chrome: term for mutants, possibly derived from "chromosome"; considered a slur

cleanser: a straightener (q.v.) who advocates a cure for all mutants, administered involuntarily if necessary

cosper: a less popular synonym for goob (see below), preferred by sensitive members of that community

DNA Standard (DNAS): bureaucratic term for the 99% of the population without evident mutant powers

dorphing: act of getting high with the aid of a mutant with Endorphin Control (Others)

eighter: member of the Eighth-Day Church (p. 136)

electivist: a straightener (q.v.) who pursues a cure to mutations only for those, like themselves, who seek it

ERA: forensic/cop acronym for a forensic scientist trained in Energy Residue Analysis. As in, "Hey, get the ERA to take a look at this."

expressivist: a supporter of equal rights for mutants

gene-expressive: bureaucratic/politically correct term for the heightened. Not much used outside of official documents and earnest round-table discussions.

gene-neutral: bureaucratic/politically correct term for those without mutations.

goob: a mutant who takes inspiration from old comic books, wearing a distinctive costume, adopting a colorful nickname, and possibly engaging in vigilante crimefighting

HC: short for Heightened Crime Investigation Unit, used by cops

HIW: short for Heightened Inmates Wing, the segregated section of a prison facility reserved for

mutant prisoners

jolt: a hit of endorphins from the Endorphin Control (Others) power, undertaken voluntarily and recreationally. As in "I went jolting last night," or "I was taking a jolt when the cops busted in."

liker: term for the heightened, used by non-mutants. It derives from a reference to the DNA double helix. If you're a fervent mutants rights activist, you probably consider this an outright slur. Otherwise, you likely think of it as mildly impolite, or use it yourself. The term is well entrenched among cops, mutant and norms alike.

norm: term for non-mutants, used by many mutants. Anti-mutant bigots treat it as an outrageous insult.

PCD: Power Complex Detection, a DNA test that determines which of the Quade Complexes the sample donor's mutant powers derive from

PIC: Power Identification Centrifuge testing, a DNA test that identifies which mutant abilities the sample donor possesses

Power Complex: groups of related mutant powers.

pregs, the: the sweats, hot flashes and nausea that accompany onset of a new mutant power. See p. 103.

pure: term for non-mutant population, preferred by some non-mutants

sdorph: (pronounced *suh-DORF*; sometimes spelled s-dorph) addict dependent on a mutant with Endorphin Control (Others) who gets him high in exchange for entering into a submissive or otherwise exploitative relationship

separatist: a mutant who seeks to create politically autonomous communities for the heightened, either in neighborhoods in various cities, or in the hypothetical African nation of Heliopolis

spazmo: term for mutants, particularly those with defects. Considered a slur.

straightener: mutant who seeks a cure for his condition, and/or tries not to use his powers

Stan Guthrie ran down rain-slicked sidewalks. It was the middle of the night, and he was blocks away from his apartment. He never should have stepped foot outside his door, but he needed to clear his head. He'd been pacing like a rat in there. Now she was following him. The crazy cop with the lightning powers.

He came to a paved lot, fenced off in anticipation of a new building start. There was a break in the chain link, so he ducked on through, then pressed himself against the wall of the adjoining condominium complex. Panting shallowly, hoping his breathing wouldn't give him away, he made himself still. Detective Chu stopped halfway down the fence. Then a wind came up and rattled the fence at the spot where the hole was. She spotted him and clambered through the broken chain-link. Stan tried to bolt, but couldn't move his feet. They felt like they were super-glued to the pavement.

Detective Chu came closer, shining her flashlight in his face. "Is there a problem here, sir?"

"You know it's me!" Stan cried. "You leave me alone. This is harassment!"

"Just keeping a friendly eye on Mike's friends, Stan. There's a murderer out there. You never know who he's gonna hit next."

"You think I'm stupid!" Stan struggled to move, but succeeded only in tiring himself further. He felt the loose folds of his clothes pulled downward, as if the force of gravity at his feet had doubled.

She drew closer. "No, Stan, I think you're smart. You figured out how to drown a man with gills. And you're going to get away with it. How do you think that makes me feel?"

"This is just a job to you. Why should you care?"

"I had to tell Margaret Stagg that her husband was dead. I sat on the couch with her as she sobbed."

"Don't come any closer!"

A crackling nimbus of electricity appeared around Cecilia's hands.

Guthrie screamed, loosing a stream of ropy material from his forearms. It flew onto Cecilia like a cocoon, gluing her into place. The electrical fields around her hands disappeared, as the webbing stuck the detective's hands to her sides.

"I warned you to get back!" Guthrie yowled.

He felt his arms seized and pulled behind his back. With a metallic click, cold handcuffs snapped tight around his wrists. Lomax made himself visible, stepped around him, and said, "You're under arrest." After reeling off Guthrie's legal rights, he pulled out a pocket knife, and freed Cece from the webbing.

"You can't get me for murder," Guthrie spat, "so you're trying to charge me with assaulting a police officer. But it won't fly—I was provoked."

"Provoked into giving the evidence we needed, you mean." Cecilia withdrew a plastic jar from her bag and began to gather samples of the webbing, pulling them from her jacket. "All we needed to charge you was proof that you're a webslinger, Stan. We suspected you had it, because your script featured a thinly veiled version of you, spinning webs. Because that's how you drown a man with who can breathe underwater. You hit him on the head to make sure he's dazed. Then you secrete small quantities of webbing to use as an adhesive, and glue your victim's gill flaps shut. You toss him in the

river, where he now has no way to extract oxygen from the water. Secreted webbing is insoluble for a certain period, after which it resolves into a goo—which would have completely dissolved in the water, leaving no trace for us to find. Like I said: very smart. And very premeditated.”

A still-struggling Guthrie lunged suddenly forward as she deactivated the high-gravity field she’d created at his feet. Lomax caught him, saving him from a nasty fall to the pavement.

“Aw, come on, Cece,” he said. “Isn’t a first degree murder charge kind of excessive? He could have thought it up in a flash of anger, when he realized how Mike had thoughtlessly steered him to Big Time Comics’ meanest editor.”

“Yes!” Guthrie exclaimed. “That was it! A flash of anger—I did it in a flash of anger.”

Lomax thrust a notebook and pen into his hands. “Write that down quick, Stan.” He created a light beam from his fingertip to illuminate the paper as Stan scribbled down his confession.

Lomax and Chu exchanged grins. Another day, another clearance.

BUILDING MUTANT CITY

This chapter provides material you can customize to create your own urban locale for your Mutant City Blues series. It includes prominent figures, particularly in the police hierarchy and people connected, for good or ill, with the mutant community. Also detailed are various institutions and locations that may crop up during the team's investigations.

Although you could set your Mutant City Blues series in a fictional American metropolis, as you see in certain comic books, we instead recommend placing it in an actual city you and your players are very familiar with. Doing so reinforces the game's sense of social realism, underlining the idea that this is the real world after ten years of adjustment to widespread super powers.

With that in mind, this chapter is presented not as a conventional gazetteer, but as a series of people, organizations and institutions to situate in the city of your choice. Entries for locations begin with suggestions on which sorts of neighborhoods to place them in.

This section does include some default assumptions which you may have to alter, depending on which place you choose to make into Mutant City. Our approach to the law and police department structure is that seen in American procedural dramas. To place it in another country, you'll want to alter certain details. The job titles and organizational charts of the police department and prosecutor's office differ by country. You'll need to adjust your legalese to suit your local criminal code. To better evoke your designated city, the ethnicities and proper names of certain characters might also require changes. For example, for a game set in London, you might want to swap out the Hispanic characters for people of Indian, Caribbean, or Arabic descent. If the politics of your chosen city is dominated by particular communities or interest groups, make sure that they're represented among your cast of supporting characters. Almost any character presented here can be changed

fairly easily to represent the distinctive constituencies of your chosen city.



LOCAL PLACEHOLDERS

Whenever possible we avoid references to specific places in favor of generic descriptions. Occasionally, though, we'll use a placeholder (###) to indicate that you should fill in the name of an appropriate location, institution, or other entity from your city of choice. For example, if you're running a game set in New York City and see a reference to the ### Park riots, you'll know to refer to this in your own game as the Central Park Riots. If you're running it in Toronto, you might instead refer to the incident as the Queen's Park Riots; for London, the Hyde Park Riots, and so on.

THE QUADE INSTITUTE

Location: research district or university campus

Physical Description: A gleaming post-modern minaret of glass and black steel, the Quade Institute looms above the city as a symbol of progress and aesthetically pleasing strangeness. Ten floors of labs and office space occupy its central cube, with administrative and support facilities appearing in the twelve-story tower thrusting it up into the city skyline. A ground-level complex of shops and cafes serves as a base to the rest of the structure's pedestal.

The high ceilings and chrome fixtures of the labs themselves are designed to impress researchers and donors. They are temples to science, projecting an air of hushed excitement and efficiency. Administrative

offices comfort the money people with their oak paneling and lush leather furnishings. Researcher's offices strive for modernistic utilitarianism but, since they're occupied by scientists, tend to be messy and overstuffed with loose paper.

The Institution: The Quade Institute has established itself as the world's foremost anamorphological research center. Attracting scientists from all over the world, its staff is a picture of internationalism.

Of particular interest to HCIU detectives is its Department of Forensic Anamorphology, whose cutting-edge labs and pioneering techniques may provide more advanced evidence analysis than that offered by the police labs. To working detectives, their labs offer temptation and disappointment in equal measure: investigators know that prosecutors hate new science, which is very difficult to introduce into evidence. As expert witnesses, Quade Institute scientists are considered a mixed blessing: although juries love their credentials, few of them are good at communicating scientific information to a lay audience.

The Institute also houses a department of social science, the Quade Center For Public Policy. Though unaffiliated with any political organization, it serves as a specialized think tank advancing the general cause of mutant rights.

LUCIUS QUADE

"Fear is the enemy, and knowledge is the sword we use to conquer it."

Celebrity scientist Lucius Quade is a striking, middle-aged, thrice-divorced African-American. Quade dove into SME research earlier than other geneticists, and has dominated the field ever since. Online futures markets peg him as the leading candidate for next year's Nobel Prize in medicine. He's a constant presence not only in Mutant City, but on the national scene, as a regular fixture on cable news and televised political round tables. Though avowedly apolitical, his pleas for tolerance on behalf of the heightened have made him a bogeyman of reactionary pundits.

In his public persona, Quade is an animated raconteur, who wraps thorny concepts of science and social policy in down-to-earth language and a twinkling sense of humor. In private, he can seem distracted and abrupt. He's always in motion, usually racing to some meeting he's already late for while he checks his messages and

fields entreaties from a train of anxious assistants. Though often seen at cultural and fundraising events with his dazzling and much younger wife, Lily, rumor has it that Quade remains a persistent womanizer. His celebrity and charisma give him ample opportunity to stray. Police officers detailed to his bodyguard report having to constantly peel attractive women off him.

Quade's goals are to advance the field of anamorphology and to expand his empire at the Quade Institute. He fights for mutant rights but views the more militant activists for the cause as naïve hotheads whose attention-seeking efforts do more harm than good.

Although persistent rumors claim that Quade himself has been gifted with mutant powers, perhaps of Cognition, his consistent reply to all such inquiries is, "If only I were so lucky."

General Abilities: Athletics 2, Health 6, Mechanics 4, Medic 4, Scuffling 2, Stability 12.

Mutant Powers: none



SARITA SANDHU

"This technique is too unproven to hold up in court, but just between you, me, and the electron microscope, I think I've got your man."

Attractive and personable, Dr. Sarita Sandhu is the public face of the Quade Institute's Forensic Anamorphology Department. Before switching her focus to pure research, she served for several years as a criminalist for the Los Angeles Police Department, where she learned to like cops and identify with the prosecution. HCIU detectives draw on her expertise when their own lab techs draw a blank. Although a credible presence on the witness stand, her evidence is invariably in too preliminary a stage to be admissible in court. As such, she can point detectives in the right direction, but without satisfying their need for evidence they can base charges on.

Sarita is single and used to charmingly deflecting the flirtations of male detectives.

General Abilities: Athletics 4, Health 8, Mechanics 3, Medic 4, Stability 10.

Mutant Powers: none

ELENI ROBERTS

"I understand the sentiment, but if you read the literature you'll find that similar proposals have always failed in the past."

Head of the Quade Center For Public Policy, Professor Eleni Roberts is a frequent participant in symposia and talking heads gabfests, where she offers sober, sane and somewhat boring analysis of mutant issues. Married to the CEO of a major telecom firm, she acts as the center of a social circle consisting of wealthy mutants. Although her own gene-expressive status is no secret, she discreetly de-emphasizes it. Her demeanor is patrician and polished, more stylish society lady than rumpled professor. In addition to fundraising for the Institute and the Heightened Information Alliance, she is also active in various environmental causes.

General Abilities: Athletics 2, Fleeing 8, Health 5, Stability 12.

Mutant Powers: Environmental Awareness 8, Hearing 6, Olfactory Center 4.

BIRCH TOWERS

Location: financial district

Physical Description: A crudely looming skyscraper with gold-colored ornamentation, vaulting upwards in a triumphant V-shape. A hundred and eight stories high, the Birch Towers house extensive office space, including the headquarters or branch facilities of several multinational corporations. Its cathedral-like entryway boasts a breathtaking fountain and enormous murals and sculptures by top contemporary artists. Birch Towers is also home to several exclusive restaurants. The top five floors comprise the palatial resident of billionaire mutant Galen Birch.

GALEN BIRCH

"Without ambitious men, we'd all still be living in caves."

Venture capitalist Galen Birch is famous as the world's richest (admitted) mutant. His rise from a humble working class background to staggering wealth is detailed in his best-selling book *Birched!* Though he made his first millions managing a high-risk hedge fund, he now invests in emerging technologies, with an emphasis on communications and biotech. Through his charitable research foundation, The Whitebark Group, he serves as a major funder of the Quade Institute. He sits on that organization's board, as well as that of the Heightened Information Alliance (p. 154), to which he is also a major donor.

Birch, in his late fifties, is a serial marrier of models, and is currently embroiled in acrimonious divorce proceedings with his fifth wife, Svetlana. Ordinarily a pudgy, somewhat unattractive man, he disconcerts interviewers and negotiating partners by occasionally transforming himself into a tall, broad-shouldered fellow boasting a full head of wavy hair, a lantern jaw, and a wide, gleaming grin. Birch refers to this persona as his "avatar" or "true self." This projected image is not entirely consistent. Some days he looks a little like Kirk Douglas; at other times he recalls Burt Lancaster. As it is produced with his Illusion power, he can only adopt it while dealing with small groups. Illusion is a mind-affecting power, so it registers only in person: he still appears as his usual lumpy self in photographs or on television.

Galen's priorities, in rough order of importance, are: personal aggrandizement, the advancement of mutant rights, amassing wealth faster than his rivals, and

enjoying life's luxuries.

General Abilities: Athletics 8, Driving 8, Health 8, Stability 8, Surveillance 8

Mutant Powers: Illusion 24

BETULA SECURITY CONSULTANTS

The city's largest and best-known private security firm is headquartered in Birch Towers. Though founded by Galen Birch, he is now a minority shareholder. One of the city's dominant financial companies, ###, owns a majority interest.

Betula advertises itself as the ideal security firm for a post-mutant world. Run and staffed almost exclusively by mutants, it offers a lucrative profession to individuals lucky enough to have expressed combat-ready powers. Betula puts applicants through extensive physical training, rejecting otherwise unimpressive specimens who just happen to be able to shoot fire or shrug off bullets. They provide bodyguard, site security and rapid response services to the city government, as well as its top corporations and richest private individuals. Their sleek, streamlined vans and discreetly paramilitary uniforms are such a common sight around the city that they've become almost invisible.

The firm features prominently in the fantasies of conspiracy theorists and crazy people. After a few well-publicized stumbles in the Galen Birch era, it has posted a surprisingly good incident record under the new owners who bought out the bulk of his shares. Wannabe cops and soldiers are thoroughly screened out during a lengthy probation period. Without powers of arrest or detention, its personnel can't rely on the intimidating power of the law to secure cooperation. Betula trains its people to ramp down confrontations with calming words and body language. Its personnel respond in a purely defensive capacity. If a person or site they're guarding comes under attack, they fight back. They do not pursue attackers or intruders when they flee or disengage, nor do they conduct investigations of suspects. Betula keeps a tiny staff of investigators on hand, but only for self-policing purposes, or to perform security evaluations of sites or individuals they're guarding.

Betula's livelihood depends on excellent cooperation with the police. Its personnel are required to be fully forthcoming in response to any police inquiry. Former cops, including ex-HCIU, are found throughout its staff

and management. The biggest problem PCs will find in dealing with them is their habit of crowing about how much better they have it than the poor overworked, underpaid saps still working for the force.

REG TAYLOR

"Sorry it took a while to get here. I was hanging out on my boat. You guys do have boats, right? Oh wait, sorry, you still work for the department, don't you?"

Ex-HCIU detective Reg Taylor serves as liaison between Betula and the police force. His official title is Vice President In Charge Of Special Communications. The PCs, who are presumed to have been working for the HCIU for a while, know him from his days on the squad. He was a kidder then, and he's a kidder now. His latest riff centers around his cushy new lifestyle now that he's making the big corporate bucks. He seems to have aged in reverse by about ten years since making the leap: he sports a fuller head of hair, fewer lines around the eyes, and straighter, whiter teeth. Reg can't help flaunting his gold cuff-links, Rolex watch, or top-of-the-line new mobile phone. But he does it with enough of a shit-eating grin to get away with it.

Deep down, he still yearns to nail the bad guys, so he'll be as cooperative as possible when his old colleagues come around seeking information. He's the one who provides security camera footage and makes sure that Betula personnel talk openly to the cops. Occasionally he asks for a favor in return, asking that the detectives tread discreetly among the firm's important clients.

On very rare occasions, if the detectives can convince him that the guy they're going after is a complete and total scumbag, Reg may be prevailed upon to use his shape-shifting powers on their behalf—"Purely on an extra-curricular basis, you understand."

Reg loves sports and always tries to rope his buddies into making ill-considered wagers on an upcoming game. He himself shows a weird weakness for betting on the eighth horse in any race, no matter what the odds. Taylor belongs to the Eighth Day Church. He's low-key about his beliefs and thinks that Gilles Tremblay (q.v.) is a nutjob of enormous proportions.

General Abilities: Athletics 8, Driving 8, Filch 8, Health 8, Infiltration 8, Scuffling 8, Shooting 8, Stability 8, Surveillance 8.

Mutant Powers: Alter Form 8, Impersonate 8.

THE BULWARK OF GOD

Location: downtown, near other historic churches

Physical description: This impressive cathedral was purchased from the local Anglican Diocese, which found it too expensive to maintain. It has since been extensively refitted in keeping with the pseudoscientific iconography of the Eighth Day Church (see p.136). The new metal-clad structure combines post-modernist lines with the imposing authority of medieval Gothic cathedrals. Tapestries behind the altar vividly depict a future war between super-humans and aliens. They jarringly combine the aesthetics of the Bayeux Tapestry with Topp's original Mars Attacks bubblegum cards. Their aliens and ships are more inspired by H. R. Giger than 1950's pulp covers, though.

Everybody says that its flamboyant founder, Gilles Tremblay, installed various fortress-like facilities, including an impregnable fallout shelter, in the building when he remodeled it. They're there to make the church a defensive strong point when the aliens invade, or so the story goes. Supposedly, its spires have even been outfitted with emplacements for machine- and anti-aircraft guns, which can be assembled with parts from the vault on a few hour's notice.

The Institution: The Bulwark Of God is a congregation of the Eighth Day Church, regarded as a loose cannon by more conservative followers of that new faith. It draws a large congregation to Tremblay's showy, emotionally potent church services. The cathedral supports an impressive network of social outreach charities, including soup kitchens, addiction counseling, and women's shelters. Tremblay also aggressively funds combat training for church members and other volunteers, to which both mutants and DNAses may apply. Although this project is regarded as sinister by many people, including most cops, he says that he's merely preparing for the sadly inevitable war against the saucer people.

The cathedral is a frequent target of attacks by zealots of all stripes. They include anti-mutant types as well as various religious fanatics, including members of rival sect within the Eighth Day church, which predicts an environmental collapse instead of an alien attack.

GILLES TREMBLAY

"At the day of reckoning, we will be reformed, in a crucible of alien fire."

Gilles Tremblay was a pipe-fitter from rural Quebec when, in the wake of the SME, he developed the power to heal others, and to mend his own rent flesh. After a few years as a well-paid healer, he started his own heretical Catholic cult, proclaiming himself a saint. When the Eighth Day church arose, he switched affiliations, aligning himself with its predictions of a an unspecified future disaster which would be averted by its worshipers. Four years ago, during an election to choose the church's next Moderator, Tremblay announced that he had received an ecstatic vision of a terrible alien invasion. Although he lost the election to a more moderate figure, he has gone on to build a cult of personality around himself, within the church. Church leaders have deftly acknowledged the possibility of Tremblay's claims without fully endorsing them, preventing a schism.

Tremblay moved to Mutant City to further develop his empire, establishing the Bulwark Of God as its temporal outpost.

In person, he is a short, squat man whose wild hair wreathes his head like a crazy halo. He speaks in a charismatically intense manner, most often about himself.

General Abilities: Athletics 8, Driving 4, Filch 4, Health 7, Infiltration 4, Mechanics 6, Medic 4, Preparedness 8, Scuffling 8, Shooting 12, Stability 12, Surveillance 8.

Mutant Powers: Healing 12, Regeneration 6, Transmutation 4

Defect: Megalomania

CITY HALL

Location: use the existing city hall for your chosen location

The Institution: The SME has done little to change the structure and function of municipal government. City Hall has, however, beefed up its security measures, in part by hiring Betula Security to guard its facilities and key personnel.

MAYOR MANUEL NARANJO

"Don't worry, friends—Mayor Manny is here for you!"

Manuel Naranjo, known to friend and foe alike as Manny, is a bundle of energy and model of civic boosterism. A self-made man, he parlayed his family's neighborhood furniture store into a city-wide chain of mid-priced stores. His successful election was due in large part to his high recognition factor as the star of his own television advertising. Manny loves to glad-hand and preside at high-profile events. As a politician, he's a consummate balancer of competing community interests. He hates it when a big criminal case hits the headlines, especially if it makes the city look dangerous to tourists and investors. Naranjo's fiercely protective staffers, many of whom came up with him in the Hispanic Business Association, are quick to lean on police headquarters when an alarming case seems to be dragging on too long.

Naranjo considers the heightened an overly vocal community who lack the sheer numbers at the voting booth to justify sustained attention. Rather than addressing their deeper concerns, he placates them, hoping they'll shut up.

General Abilities: Athletics 2, Driving 2, Health 6, Stability 12.

Mutant Powers: none

COUNCILLOR BRIAN SCHMIEDERER

"Okay, first thing we should do is set up a task force to deal with this, with plenty of community consultation. And then we'll draw up a feasibility study and—wow, this'll be great!"

The only mutant city councilor is Brian Schmiederer, whose ward includes a funky downtown neighborhood with high concentrations of the heightened, gays, and

artists. Schmiederer is an energetic, idealistic guy who's always coming up with new ideas—some of them good but unworkable, others just plain kooky. His constituents love him, thanks to his charm and tireless appearances at community events.

He's an advocate of a careful public relations approach to heightened affairs. Schmiederer advises the mutant community to keep their cool, project a non-threatening image, and show understanding toward those who fear them. Radical mutants rights activists take as many shots at him as do the anti-mutant crowd.

With his oversized glasses, skinny frame, and over-reliance on polo shirts, he resembles a young Elvis Costello gone preppie. He mentions his mutant powers in his campaign literature and can occasionally be seen to use his Translation ability when communicating with constituents. Brian lives with his partner of seven years, a city fireman named Greg Carlos.

General Abilities: Athletics 5, Fleeing 8, Health 7, Stability 8.

Mutant Powers: Empathy 8, Translation 8.

POLICE HEADQUARTERS

Location: use the existing police HQ for your chosen city.

POLICE COMMISSIONER ELLIS DEAKINS

"Fine work, detective. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm late for a function..."

Ellis Deakins rose to fame in the first year of the SME, as the commanding officer at the scene of the ### Park Riot. Deakins' calm authority helped to quell the riot and was widely credited with preventing a stampede that could have resulted in hundreds of deaths. Lionized in the media, he rose quickly through the ranks and was easily confirmed as police commissioner five years ago. Looked to as a source of calm in an often turbulent time, Deakins appears regularly on the TV news. Lately his high approval rating has aroused the ire of the mayor's staff, who see him as stealing the boss' media limelight.

Deakins is a volunteer at his church, a staple of charity fundraising throughout the city, and a devoted husband

and father of six. All but one of his children are cops or headed for police careers. His newfound connections to the upper echelons of society have led him to occasionally exert pressure on his watch commanders on behalf of the wealthy and privileged.

During the riot, he saved anti-mutant protesters, but later participated in the investigation that revealed the protest leaders as having hired the heightened killers. This even-handedness led to a reputation as a trustworthy broker between communities when disputes arise.

Cop house rumors have it that Deakins owes his ### Park heroism to a secret weapon: one or more officers with the Emotion Control or Endorphin Control (Others) powers, who discreetly calmed the crowd by influencing its most volatile members.

General Abilities: Athletics 4, Driving 4, Health 6, Infiltration 4, Scuffling 4, Shooting 5,

Stability 12.

CHIEF OF DETECTIVES DENNIS SHOCKLEY

"Detective, if you know what's good for you and your career, you'll retract what you just said, turn an about-face, and never address me again. I trust I make myself clear."

A skilled bureaucratic infighter, Dennis Shockley ensures his survival in a difficult post by balancing two sometimes-incompatible forces. His overall performance is judged by the clearance rates of his various detective squads, including the HCIU. Focusing on the goal of higher percentages with a shark-like intensity, he's never reluctant to chew out his watch commanders when the numbers start to slip. On the other hand, he understands on a visceral level the importance of cultivating personal relationships with the police commissioner and mayor's office. When they call him to demand quick results, or to press the department to alter its behavior toward an important constituency, he follows through without qualm. When Shockley takes an interest in a quick clearance—or demands that a case be buried—the detectives hear about it, fast, from their watch commander.

In person, Shockley maintains a stiff, stern, unapproachable posture. The motor pools and evidence lockers of the city's police force are full of formerly

touted detectives who crossed him, and remain in career purgatory because of it.

General Abilities: Athletics 5, Driving 4, Health 6, Infiltration 2, Scuffling 4, Shooting 8, Stability 8, Surveillance 4.

Mutant Powers: None

HCIU HQ

Location: The HCIU offices are housed in on the top floor of an urban precinct house. Their level of decay matches the current prevailing situation in your city. If police offices are always well-maintained and appointed, the PCs enjoy positive working conditions. They may examine evidence displays on fancy touch-screen plasmas and scoop up information on their sweet new laptops, via super-fast broadband connections. If not, they're stuck in unpleasant surroundings and are forced to deal with cramped quarters, obsolete computer and phone equipment, and perpetually failing plumbing.

Their section of the building includes at least two interrogation rooms, a large shared office space, and an office for each of the four watch commanders. HCIU space includes a private set of lockers, a shower, and a small dark room featuring a single army-surplus cot. Detectives take power naps to keep their brains semi-functional during long shifts.

Holding cells are on the building's lower level, in the area of the building reserved for uniformed patrol officers. Detectives don't have much cause to venture into uni territory, except to pass through the central foyer where the desk sergeant monitors people traveling in and out of the station house.

LIEUTENANT ERIC KROSE

"I want this case closed fast, and closed right."

Former hostage negotiator Eric Krose is the only HCIU watch commander who's held the post since the unit's initial formation. He currently enjoys an exemplary clearance rate and by no means intends it to slip. Krose maintains an air of easy authority. Despite his occasional terse outbursts when his detectives get bogged down in a case, he's a supportive commander ready to go to the wall for his men if necessary. Unfortunately, he can't afford to antagonize the chief

of detectives, having stood up to his political demands a few times too many. A straight shooter, Krose is willing to see the rules bent only so far, and then only when underhanded tactics clearly serve a greater good. Although in his fifties, he continues to cut a dashing figure around the office, with his craggy jaw and marathoner's physique.

A mahogany-framed picture of his beautiful, wheelchair-bound wife and three coltish teenage daughters takes pride of place on Krose's desk.

Though not himself a mutant, Krose has come to identify with the heightened. He constantly reminds his people, super-powered and DNAs alike, that they're there to defend the 99% of decent, law-abiding mutants, and not just to lock up the minority of creeps.

General Abilities: Athletics 10, Driving 6, Health 8, Infiltration 4, Mechanics 2, Medic 2, Scuffling 6, Shooting 6, Stability 10, Surveillance 6.

Mutant Powers: None

LIEUTENANT NINA PERREAU

"Every second you're out on that street, you're being judged, detective—and don't you forget it."

The newest addition to the ranks of HCIU watch commanders is Lt. Nina Perreau, who received a lateral promotion to the post after a mixed performance as head of the Fraud squad. As both a woman and an African-American, Perreau's career has been dogged by locker room whispers that she's a mediocrity who owes her promotions to her minority status. Perhaps as a result, Perreau, a short and slightly matronly woman, commands with a noticeable chip on her shoulder. She's quick to chew out subordinates at the slightest hint of disrespect. From her point of view, she takes flack for minor missteps that would be forgiven in any other commander. She's especially tough on any squad members who happen to be visible minorities as well as mutants, on the grounds that they have to be twice as good as the male Caucasian officers they're competing with. Her perception of herself as a victim of subtle institutional prejudice inspires her to push hard on cases with a mutant-rights angle. On normal days, her main goal in life is to exceed Eric Krose's clearance rate.

Perreau is a divorced mother of two. Her son Andrew

is an intern at the city's busiest hospital, and her daughter Patrice pursues an MBA at a top university.

General Abilities: Athletics 3, Driving 2, Health 6, Infiltration 3, Medic 2, Scuffling 4, Shooting 6,

Stability 12, Surveillance 6.

Mutant Powers: none



LIEUTENANT HOYT HAIGH

"People have good reason for thinkin' we're freaks."

From his donut-eating physique and rumpled clothing to his gruff, stolid demeanor, Hoyt Haigh appears every inch the old school cop.

He had been a desk sergeant for many years when, while defusing a squad room brawl, he revealed his mutant powers. Haigh had disintegrated the floorboards beneath a mammoth, PCP-addled perp gone berserk, safely lodging him in the resulting hole

until his colleagues could get their tasers out. Three years ago, when heightened rights activists protested the lack of gene-expressive individuals in the HCIU command structure, the chief of detectives elevated Haigh from his happy obscurity to the heartburn-rich environment of the unit.

Haigh seems content with the lowest clearance rate of all the unit watch commanders. Opinion in the unit is divided as to whether he thinks himself untouchable, or is hoping to get busted back down to his comparatively stress-free former position. At any rate, the screw-ups and loose cannons on the squad tend to gravitate toward him. Whenever the PCs have a problem with a fellow unit member, it's probably with one of Haigh's detectives. Persistent rumors have it that Haigh ran with dirty cops early in his career, when he served in the vice squad.

If it weren't for his own genetic status, Haigh would be considered an anti-mutant bigot. He routinely refers to the heightened as lixers, spazmos, and chromes. His contempt for goobs is especially ill-concealed. Then again, his discomfort level with women, blacks, Asians and Hispanics isn't exactly hidden, either.

Seemingly ashamed of his genetic status, he never uses his Disintegration power when he doesn't have to, and has so far kept his other mutant abilities secret.

Haigh is twice-divorced and lives with a long-term partner, Monica Landford, who he continually derides as a nagging pain in the ass.

General Abilities: Athletics 2, Driving 6, Filch 4, Health 5, Infiltration 2, Mechanics 4, Preparedness 5, Scuffling 8, Shooting 4, Stability 4, Surveillance 6.

Mutant Powers: Disintegration 16, Transmutation 4, Healing 4

LIEUTENANT SEAN BEVAN

"The mayor's office wants this to go away quietly. So that's what's going to happen."

The youngest watch commander in the squad is Sean Bevan, an adroit political maneuverer tipped for a sterling career in the department's higher reaches. The oldest son of a widowed supermarket cashier, Bevan worked three jobs to put himself through the

police academy. He ingratiated himself to the mayor by working tirelessly for his first election campaign, and won a cushy job as the mayor's driver soon after joining the force. Bevan parlayed his connections to a series of plum assignments, finally securing his present post at the HCIU. The most media-conscious of the watch commanders, Bevan sees to it that his boyishly handsome face is splashed across the front pages whenever a high-profile case hits his desk. Observers of department politics can't quite decide whether he's angling for a job as police brass, or aiming for electoral office. Although Bevan's clearance rate is not as high as Krose's, he's the one the politicians go to when they need something handled quietly, or with media savvy. Bevan's network of contacts at all levels of the city's power structure enables him to pull strings for his detectives. However, he's strictly a quid pro quo kind of guy. When he does a favor for you, he makes sure you understand that one day he'll come to collect on it.

Bevan's interest in mutant affairs is limited to their high media profile. As far as he's concerned, the HCIU is a stepping stone, not a cause or crusade. On camera, he supports mutant rights precisely to the extent that mainstream public opinion allows.

Bevan is married to his childhood sweetheart, who is currently expecting their first child. Demure and poised, she seems well cast for the role of political wife.

General Abilities: Athletics 10, Driving 8, Health 10, Infiltration 2, Scuffling 4, Shooting 12,

Stability 12.

Mutant Powers: None

SERGEANT MIKE NADLER

"Hang on, kid. There's only one of me."

When detectives need the assistance of uniformed officers, they go through the station's desk sergeant, Mike Nadler¹. With his broad shoulders, world-weary bearing, and shrewdly suspicious sense of character, he fits the role of patrolman herder to a T.

Nadler never has enough men to go around, and responds to all requests for assistance with beleaguered sighs. After letting the detectives know

1. If you want to be strictly realistic about it, you'll create at least two additional desk sergeants, varying their appearance by shift. But who wants to remember that many desk sergeants?

how badly they're imposing on him, he always manages to get the job done—though perhaps more slowly than impatient investigators would like. Nadler is required to be responsive to the watch commanders but does not answer to them. He outranks the detectives but is not in their chain of command. The sergeant, a father of five and grandfather of six, refers to any detective under the age of fifty as “kid.” He bristles visibly when he overhears a uniformed officer make disparaging remarks about mutants. Although he doesn't broadcast the fact, his eldest granddaughter recently developed the ability to walk through walls.

General Abilities: Athletics 4, Driving 6, Health 5, Infiltration 4, Mechanics 4, Medic 2, Scuffling 8, Shooting 4, Stability 13, Surveillance 4.

Mutant Powers: None

MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE

Location: Depending on your chosen location, autopsies in criminal cases may take place in a standalone facility, in a department of a hospital, or at the forensic services headquarters (see below.) For narrative convenience you may wish to depart from reality and fold the medical examiner's facility and forensic services into a single institution, as is often done in TV procedurals.

Some jurisdictions use the term “coroner” instead of “medical examiner.”

MADS JENSEN

“This poor fellow—how he must have suffered in his final moments.”

The city's chief medical examiner is a mournful Dane who has never lost the ability to empathize with his subjects as people. He verbally reconstructs their final moments in sympathetic and overly vivid detail. However, he can't help himself from becoming giddily excited by the opportunity to dissect subjects bearing obvious mutant physiology.

A recovering alcoholic, Jensen speaks in twelve-step aphorisms. A dedicated fan of rock music with a particular interest in Nordic death metal, Jensen bonds with any squad member who shows signs of being a record buff.

(Depending on the size of the jurisdiction, the chief medical examiner may actually perform autopsies, or might be an administrator who hasn't touched a corpse in years. For larger jurisdictions, make Jensen a staff pathologist.)

General Abilities: Athletics 4, Health 6, Mechanics 4, Medic 12, Stability 6, Surveillance 4.

Mutant Powers: None

POLICE FORENSIC SERVICES

Location: Research the police forensics lab of your chosen police department; it is probably an visually uninspiring structure tucked away in an industrial zone.

The Institution: Decide whether you want your crime lab to be a futuristic, gleaming facility seen in many TV procedural shows, or the drably utilitarian set-up found in reality. For the sake of dramatic continuity, depart from strict realism by allowing the lab techs to get results to the detectives within hours or days, as opposed to the weeks or months most understaffed and underfunded labs are capable of. Also allow HCU detectives to use the equipment to perform their own tests, which would be forbidden in real life.

Forensic services include:

- **Artist reconstruction services.** These include suspect sketches, sculpted facial reconstructions from skulls, and aged portraits of individuals who have been missing or wanted for a long time since their last known photographs. (These functions can be performed by characters with ratings of at least 2 in both Art History and Forensic Anthropology.)
- **Ballistics testing.**
- **Data retrieval.**
- **Document analysis.**
- **Fingerprint identification**
- **Photo lab.**
- **Physical evidence analysis.**
- **Plan drawing.** This department creates floor plans and 3D computer models of crime scenes. (These functions can be performed by characters with the Architecture ability.)

SHELDON FITTON

"I'm just not sure about the nose."

Reconstructive artist Sheldon Fitton is a middle-aged man with a friendly manner who seems utterly untouched by the grim subject matter of his work. He lives in the suburbs, coaches a kid's softball team, and is a master at the barbecue, eager to swap marinade recipes.

General Abilities: Athletics 2, Driving 2, Health 6, Mechanics 4, Medic 2, Stability 12.

Mutant Powers: none

LEONARD NORTHRUP

"This is a hollow-point bullet all right, but one intended for increased accuracy in target shooting, not to do greater damage on impact with flesh. Not the ammunition I'd choose if I were premeditating murder."

No one loves guns and ammos with greater fervor than the alarmingly intense Leonard Northrup. Balding, mustachioed and extravagantly muscled for a man pushing sixty, Leonard is a down-the-line law-and-order man and lifetime member of the country's leading gun owner's movement. He assumes that all cops share his reflexively right-wing views, which he wears on his sleeve—literally, as a series of patriotic tattoos, from back in the day when only sailors, soldiers and longshoremen sported ink.

General Abilities: Athletics 8, Driving 4, Health 10, Mechanics 6, Medic 4, Preparedness 4, Scuffling 6, Shooting 18, Stability 6.

Mutant Powers: None

MARIYA ZOLOTUKHIN

"There is no data which can be erased so that I may not find it."

The lab's data retrieval expert is a dour young Russian whose small talk consists mostly of minor complaints about her day, especially the difficulty of the work detectives have assigned to her. Although quite beautiful, she makes no effort to look good, and responds to flirtations with a sense of impatient nausea. What she lacks in personal sparkle she makes

up for with miraculous feats of computer wizardry. She is highly secretive about her mutant status, especially around others of her kind.

General Abilities: Athletics 2, Health 6, Mechanics 6, Preparedness 4, Stability 5.

Mutant Powers: Armor 4, Blade Immunity 6, Entangling Hair 6.

CHIEKO RENAN

"It's your lucky day, detectives: the paper bears a specialty watermark."

In her spare time, document analysis expert Chieko Renan practices origami and writes unpublished mystery novels about a plucky document analyst who solves crimes the poor stupid police detectives are too dumb to understand. Although her work is top-notch, she will, if not interrupted, bombard the team with completely absurd theories of the crime they're investigating. She's a slightly plump woman in her thirties who owns many pairs of cute eyeglasses. Her somewhat unusual name reflects her Japanese-French heritage.

General Abilities: Health 5, Mechanics 3, Stability 8.

Mutant Powers: None

ED "THE TED" RILEY

"Sorry, dudes. The print is too blurred to get more than a four-point match."

Fingerprint and evidence analysis guru Ed Riley wears loud Hawaiian shirts under his lab coats, used to be a championship video game player, and is trying to lose eighty pounds before his wedding, scheduled for two years from now. As a young man he learned to hide his brilliant intellect behind a curtain of nerd humor and surfer-speak. He refers to himself as "The Ted" and encourages others to do likewise.

General Abilities: Athletics 3, Health 3, Mechanics 12, Stability 10.

Mutant Powers: None

LUCY BELLAVER

"It's amazing how much this FBI software can enhance a simple JPEG, isn't it?"

Photographic technician Lucy Bellaver is a former nun who decided to pursue the Lord's work by helping to protect the meek from the predatory. Although she's renounced her vows, she remains celibate, living alone in a small downtown apartment. From the way she talks, Detectives may mistakenly believe that she's shackled up with somebody named Martin. This is the name of her beloved pet, an African grey parrot.

General Abilities: Health 6, Mechanics 4, Preparedness 4, Stability 12.

Mutant Powers: None

HENRY GLASS

"I compared the measurements we took at the scene and the original plans and found a six-foot discrepancy. If I were you, I'd go back and check for a secret compartment, right about—here."

Failed architect Henry Glass works for the plan drawing department. Though brilliant at his job, detectives have to be careful to keep him on topic, or he'll launch into a critique of the visionless idiots who built whatever structure he's drawing or reconstructing. He has to check himself from treating the detectives like all the lackey architecture students who used to work for him back before his firm went bankrupt. Glass is in his mid-forties, wears thick-framed glasses, and surrounds himself with objects of severe modernist design.

General Abilities: Health 5, Mechanics 2, Stability 7.

Mutant Powers: None

PROTESTERS AND ACTIVISTS

When a case takes on political overtones—as it often does in Mutant City—detectives may find themselves dealing with the town's rich tapestry of activists, community leaders, and pot-stirrers.

NEUTRAL PARITY LEAGUE

The Neutral Parity League upholds the supposedly downtrodden rights of the 99% of the population without mutant powers. It is the successor organization to the Human Integrity Campaign, which was revealed to have hired murderous mutants to disrupt their own rally, leading to the ### Park Riot. Present leaders of the League disclaim affiliation with the violent methods of the HIC, but carry on its vehement rhetoric. ("Neutral" refers to the DNA-neutral status of its membership, not its attitude.)

Though open to so-called "pures" of all races and creeds, the NPL borrows stylistically from ultra-right nativist groups from around the world. The NPL's feared youth wing marks itself by displaying a distinctive tattoo on the back of the neck or shaved head. The tattoo depicts a grotesque caricature of a mutant, surrounded by a red circle with a bar through it. Aside from this single tattoo, they disavow all piercings and body modifications, as a tribute to the untrammelled purity of their flesh. They are known colloquially as barheads. Although they use the term themselves, they reserve the right to treat it as a slur (and therefore cause for a fight) when uttered by outsiders.

CONRAD PRIESTLEY

The NPL's political leader is Conrad Priestley, a gray-faced, badly dressed man who lives by himself in an apartment full of political tracts and semi-feral cats. Perhaps because the lingering smell of feline urine is imperceptible on television, he is an oddly compelling guest on shows where persons of extreme views scream at each other. In his younger days, Priestley was expelled from the University Of ### for vandalism. Before the SME he self-published works of Holocaust revisionism, but now welcomes the comradeship of his Jewish pure brethren against the mutant threat.

General Abilities: Athletics 4, Health 4, Stability 8.

Mutant Powers: None

RICHARD WAYNE JASON

The wiry and vicious Richard Wayne Jason serves as leader of the NPL's youth wing, when he's not doing time in prison for assault. He favors the use of all three names to give himself that serial killer vibe, even though his own crimes have never gone beyond bone-breaking. He's short tempered and easily goaded. While in jail, he hangs out with his buddies in the Aryan Nation.

General Abilities: Athletics 12, Filch 12, Health 12, Infiltration 8, Mechanics 6, Medic 6, Preparedness 6, Scuffling 12, Stability 3.

Mutant Powers: None

THE RACKS

Where there are NPL thugs, their rivals, the Racks, are never far behind, tire irons and bicycle chains in hand. (The name conflates the phrase "righteous activists.") They're a loosely affiliated network of anti-bigotry youth activists who welcome heightened members and enjoy busting heads in furtherance of a righteous cause. The Racks combine a flair for inclusive rhetoric with an aggressive taste for violence. In several incidents, mutant members have badly harmed NPLers and bystanders, increasing anti-heightened tensions throughout the city.

ADONI GUERRA

The Racks are headed by the charismatic lunkhead Adoni Guerra, a former political science major at the University of ### who dropped out to pursue his vocation of ass-kicking full time. He lives in a squat with the inner circle of the Racks and makes his meager living from a variety of street hustles, including occasional forays into minor league drug dealing. He handles inquisitive cops by cheerfully talking their ears off until they get tired of him and leave him alone. Guerra is currently on probation for torching Conrad Priestley's car.

General Abilities: Athletics 12, Driving 4, Filch 8, Health 12, Infiltration 6, Mechanics 4, Medic 4, Scuffling 12, Stability 6, Surveillance 4.

Mutant Powers: Fire Immunity 4, Spontaneous Combustion 8, Toxin Immunity (Ingested) 4

Defect: Trance Susceptible (incipient)

THE MUTANT COMMUNITY

The city includes notable exponents of most major mutant movements, many of whom are quick to insert themselves into high-profile HCIU cases as a way of gaining publicity for themselves.

Local mutants tend to cluster in Helixtown, a once-shabby downtown neighborhood now in the midst of a gentrification process.

CAPECON ENTERPRISES

Headquartered throughout the year in modest offices in an converted warehouse shared by various boutiques and small web design firms, CapeCon Enterprises rises phoenix-like, once every August, to stage CapeCon, the biggest science fiction, comic book and mutant fandom event in the country. The rest of the year, this not-for-profit organization serves as an informal hub for the Mutant City's goob population. Some fans complain that its membership has grown ossified and insular over the years. Its core membership is composed of ex-members of Blue Team, a group of mutant vigilantes who dropped out of active crime-fighting after finding themselves on the receiving end of several vicious thrashings. Logistical snafus abound at its convention, but that doesn't stop the fans from coming. In addition to its iconic event, CapeCon stages readings and appearances throughout the year.

BETSY "STEELTRAP" SPERLING

"I probably shouldn't reveal this, but when he was a guest at the '04 show, he was hoovering up the Peruvian marching powder like tomorrow wasn't coming."

Betsy Sperling is not the official high commander of CapeCon Enterprises: that honor goes to Blue Team founder Eugene "Thunder Squall" Pavnicki. However, while Eugene swans around posing for photo ops and doing interviews, Executive Administrator Betsy Sperling takes charge of all the organizational heavy lifting. Having insinuated herself into her present role from an initial position as a queen bee volunteer, she now jealously guards her secrets and prerogatives. Notorious for keeping no records except in her head, Betsy has all of the show's details at her sharp-

tongued command. If something happened to her, the show would collapse into utter disaster—a fact she’s always ready to remind you of, if you happen to forget. She incessantly complains of the burdens placed on her, while viciously resisting any effort to pry even the smallest responsibility from her hands. An incorrigible gossip, Betsy can be relied upon to gather—and freely dispense—the secret poop on any notable member of the goob community. A middle-aged woman with long, limp blond hair, Betsy keeps trying to lose weight, but is always thwarted by omnipresent snack food when the stress of convention season descends.

Betsy has used her Memory Alteration power precisely once, to erase a fellow committee member’s recollection of an embarrassing gaffe she made during a show. She has regretted this ever since, and sworn never to deploy it again.

General Abilities: Driving 4, Athletics 4, Health 4, Medic 4, Preparedness 8, Stability 12.

Mutant Powers: Memory Alteration 12, Precision Memory 12.

Defect: Megalomania (incipient)

CNM FREEDOM HALL

The Continental Nation Of Mutants (p. 136) congregates in an extensively remodeled private community center which it calls a Freedom Hall, as it does in any major city. Its amenities include a gym, pool, seminar rooms, day care facilities, and a small theater suitable for meetings, theatrical productions, or film screenings. The walls are festooned with fliers, banners and posters promoting the group’s separatist agenda. It advocates the conversion of Helixtown into an autonomous zone, run by and for its mutant populace. Some might argue that its hotheads and ideologues are drawn to this goal precisely because it is impossible—it allows them to maintain their stance of moral superiority without ever having to run anything bigger than the Freedom Hall itself. In the meantime, however, many of its younger members pursue the more modest goal of making non-mutant residents of this rapidly gentrifying neighborhood feel unwelcome. Their harassment techniques range from verbal catcalls to late night assaults. The more moderate adults who run the hall concentrate on their boycott of non-mutant businesses.



EDDIE “THE MACHINE” FLORENCE

“Each species should rule its own affairs—you in 90% of the world, us in our one. Where’s the hatred in that, my friend?”

The leader of the Mutant City Freedom Hall (official title: Chapter Chairperson) is the outwardly gregarious Eddie Florence, a second-generation veteran of black activist organizations who has turned his mutant status into a new cause. His smiling, backslapping public manner belies his unsparing dedication to the separatist cause. Florence plays the media expertly, putting a benign face on the CNM for broad consumption, while winding up the hard core with incendiary rhetoric behind closed doors.

General Abilities: Athletics 4, Health 6, Infiltration 4, Mechanics 4, Scuffling 4, Shooting 8, Stability 6, Surveillance 2.

Mutant Powers: Anticipate Others 8, Cognition 4, Technopathy 12.



GENETIC ACTION FRONT

The local chapter of the Genetic Action Front (p. 135) is headquartered in a dilapidated former car wash on the margins of Helixtown, where it begins to fade into an industrial zone. After repeated attacks by vandals, it has been heavily fortified and tricked out with the latest in surveillance gear. GEF slogans cover its ever-changing exterior coat of murals by mutant graffiti artists. Its common area provides a twenty-four hour refuge for the community's malcontents, street people, and scruffy idealists.

SHARON BRYSON

"We have the power! No one can put us down!"

Sharon Bryson heads the local GEF chapter. Unapologetically loud and boisterous, she ping-pongs between joyous abandon and self-righteous anger. Sharon rocks a classic punk-anarchist-dyke look, typified by a bright pink mohawk and sleeveless leopard-print sweatshirt. Her most shameful secret is her seven-figure trust fund.

General Abilities: Athletics 6, Filch 4, Health 6, Infiltration 10, Mechanics 6, Medic 2, Preparedness 6, Scuffling 10, Shooting 4, Stability 5, Surveillance 3.

Mutant Powers: Lightning Decisions 2, Telepathy 10, Speed 12.

Defect: Attention Deficit Disorder (stage one)

HEIGHTENED INFORMATION ALLIANCE

The city's mainstream mutants rights organization (p. 135) naturally places its national headquarters in the heart of Helixtown. It takes up the lower level of a posh new condominium complex catering to the most prosperous of the gene-expressive community. The HIC's well-appointed offices hum with modern efficiency, as its dozens of staff members busy themselves with press releases, grant proposals, and white paper presentations. Brian Schmiederer's constituency office is right across the street, and he is a frequent fixture here.

JANICE SARALEGUI

"I bet this problem has a simple solution if we all sit down and put our minds to it."

Executive Director Janice Saralegui is a veteran of various non-profit organizations, having headed an affordable housing lobbying group, an arts fundraising foundation, and a cancer research charity. She did not come out as a mutant until applying for her present position, a fact that continues to rankle more radical expressive rights activists. Janice, a vivacious, slightly pear-shaped woman in her early fifties, practices a relaxed management style, earning her the loyalty of her devoted staff. She regularly rubs elbows with Lucius Quade, Galen Birch, and other of the city's leading lights, mutant and otherwise.

General Abilities: Athletics 4, Health 6, Medic 2, Stability 12.

Mutant Powers: Touch 3

TEMPLE OF HELIOPOLIS

The Heliopolans (p. 136) have built a gleaming golden spire, combining architectural elements of mosque and synagogue in a gaudy post-modern style. It rises above the main drag of Helixtown, much to the chagrin



RELATIONS BETWEEN GROUPS

To assume that the various mutant activist groups work together when their goals intersect is to display a vast naïveté about the nature of political factionalism. Each organization sees its specific agenda as the only way forward for mutantkind. Groups drawing the attention and energy of other mutants away from them are not only counterproductive—they're usually regarded as a worse threat than any force in mainstream society. The opinions of the various radical leaders toward one another are summed up in the following table.

	Sharon Bryson	Eddie Florence	Davon Riddle	Janice Saralegui
Sharon Bryson	—	Doesn't want to overthrow the oppressor—wants to <i>become</i> the oppressor	A spooky creep	A tool of The Man
Eddie Florence	A spoiled brat, raised on privilege	—	A dangerous fantasist devoted to an impossible cause	A tool of The Man
Davon Riddle	Unworthy of consideration	There's a knife behind his smile	—	A tool of the inferior species
Janice Saralegui	She needs a mother figure	He's trouble, but you can strike a deal with him	Let him continue to marginalize himself	—

of the local community association, which fought against it on the grounds that it's out of keeping with the neighborhood. Of course, the ultimate goal of the Heliopolans is to leave the neighborhood forever, in favor of their hypothetical future mutant nation in Africa. The temple's interior is surprisingly modest and austere. Intimidating guards, all members of the group, stand watch to keep outsiders away. Officers of the organization are called Delegates in Exile, or D.E.'s.

The group's followers preach the virtues of their imagined nation on street corners throughout Helixtown. They also tithe their income to the national building fund. Though skeptics accuse temple leader Davon Riddle of embezzling the money, it is in fact all accounted for, gathering interest in lucrative hedge fund investments.

DAVON RIDDLE

"I have granted you audience. Now speak."

Reclusive in the extreme, Heliopolitan CDE (Chief Delegate in Exile) Davon Riddle rarely meets with outsiders, and never with non-mutants. Surprisingly young, Riddle is intense and withdrawn. He says little, dropping his scarce pronouncements like bombs. Although the Heliopolans are putatively secular, he adopts the manner of a prophet, wearing his hooded sweatshirt like a monk's robe.

General Abilities: Athletics 8, Health 12, Scuffling 8, Shooting 4, Stability 12.

Mutant Powers: Fire Immunity 12, Spontaneous Combustion 12

TIPS FOR GMS

Cases in *Mutant City Blues* emulate the structure of police procedural TV shows (or novels) but with the added element of socially realistic super powers.

To more closely evoke the spirit of most police procedurals, add sub-plots (see p. 166) featuring the personal stories of the HCIU investigators, including their struggles with their SME defects, if any.

CASES

Each mystery in a *Mutant City Blues* series should in some way hinge on the mutant experience, highlighting the setting's unique element. If a scenario could be done as a standard police procedural in the real world, there's no point presenting it in this world. This is not to say that every single case has to be a murder investigation in which the killer turns out to be a mutant. Mutants can be murdered by normals. Normals can commit crimes, disguising the scenes so they seem to have been committed by mutants. Cases can reflect the impact of the mutants and mutations on politics, sports, business, or culture. They might turn on the forensics of super powers, or require the use of a particular mutant investigative ability.

STRUCTURE

The following case structure provides a solid starting point for police procedurals in general, including *Mutant City Blues*.

INTRODUCTION

Backstory: Provides a brief account of the case at hand. If this was a television episode, this would be the description that appears in the TV listings.

The Crime: A few lines describing the initial crime that causes the HCIU to be assigned to the case.

The Suspects: A bullet-pointed rundown of the

various innocent parties who might appear on the players' suspect list.

The Twist: (optional) In some cases, identifying the perpetrator simply sets up an additional obstacle for the detectives to overcome. This might be a hostage situation, a new crime committed by someone else, or a difficult courtroom situation.

The Culprit(s): This entry briefly tells you who committed the crime, and why.

SCENES

Arrange scenes in whatever order makes sense to you. Group them by category, as given below, or in likely order of occurrence. You may find it easier to allow the PCs to set the pace and direction of the investigation if you list them by category, allowing them to find their own connections between scenes. Players who fear railroading may accept this approach more easily.

Interviews and Interrogations: This type of scene revolves around interactions with suspects and witnesses, relying chiefly on Interpersonal abilities.

Physical Evidence: This category consists of scenes, including the initial crime scene, where the chief activity is the accumulation of physical evidence, mostly with Technical abilities.

Information Gathering: In this type of scene, players hit the books, using their Academic abilities to increase their understanding of the people and events associated with the crime.

Action: These are scenes, including chases, apprehensions, standoffs, and super-powered battles, where the heroes are tested in the use of their General abilities. These sequences provide the case's narrative unpredictability: although the PCs

are guaranteed to succeed in information gathering, they can easily fail here.

Drama: These are scenes of character development and conflict. In practice, many of these will be entirely improvised, deriving from player-suggested Sub-Plots. However, on occasion you'll want to introduce dramatic sequences arising from the case itself, which can apply to any character, or which are tailored specifically to one PC. In the latter instance, make sure you have contingency plans in case that player doesn't show up for a crucial session!

Wrap-Up: This suggests one possible satisfactory conclusion to the case, just to make sure that you have one. Don't force the players toward it. If they steer the plot toward another suitable ending, embrace it, adjusting as necessary. For example, you might conceive of the ending as occurring during a shoot-out with police, but the players might interact so adroitly with the culprit that a dramatic confession scene suddenly seems more appropriate.



NEW GUMSHOE RULE: LEVERAGED CLUES

A staple element of police procedural shows is the crucial fact which, when presented to a previously resistant witness or suspect, causes him to break down and suddenly supply the information or confession the detectives seek. This is represented in GUMSHOE by the **leveraged** clue. This is a piece of information which is only available from the combined use of an interpersonal ability, and the mention of another, previously gathered clue. The cited clue is called a **prerequisite** clue, and is by definition a sub-category of core clue. Leveraged clues have always been implicit in the system. Now we have an explicit term for them. The sample scenario in this book hinges on a leveraged clue. This rule applies to all GUMSHOE games.

ON CONCEITS

A conceit is a literary device necessary to satisfying storytelling. It is often a departure from strict realism, which the audience must simply accept in order to enjoy the story.

Procedural TV shows are rife with conceits. In one very common example, the detectives have access to incredibly sophisticated equipment. Their forensic departments are never hampered by budget constraints or bureaucratic snafus. The long backlogs for lab work that plague real-world cops are never an issue in the typical TV cop show. Having characters wait for months for lab results, or see their cases derailed by shoddy low-bid contract work, would reflect the reality of contemporary police work. It would also stop the story dead—the teleplay equivalent of failing to get a core clue into the characters' hands. Therefore, except in rare shows like *The Wire*, which takes institutional breakdown as one of its major themes, you simply don't see this happen.

Another standard example, seen on almost every show, is the *conceit of primacy*. The main characters, even when established as ordinary, workaday law enforcement officers, appear to be assigned to every major case their agency is confronted with. Cases which in real life would be handled by giant task forces are routinely closed by our familiar cast of hero cops. In the course of a year, they work about two dozen hugely important cases, getting themselves into multiple gun fights, disciplinary procedures, and sundry high-drama scrapes. Over one season they see considerably more action than a real-life top detective would face in an entire career. As viewers, we accept this. We want our main characters to navigate a new story each week, instead of sitting around doing paperwork. The conceit of primacy is so universal that we scarcely question it.

Another nearly universal procedural conceit is that of *chronological unity*. In the *Law and Order* franchise, entire cases unfold from commission of crime to completion of sentencing in what seems like a few weeks. Here the writers fudge questions of timing to collapse what in the real world might take several years into one discrete episode.

Perhaps the best example of a conceit, because it departs so egregiously from reality in order to make the show's premise work, fuels the various versions of *CSI*. There, forensic scientists take the lead in investigations, going so far as to conduct interviews with witnesses. This contravenes a cardinal rule of evidence control.

In the real world, lab techs aren't allowed any contact whatsoever with suspects. This protocol protects their objectivity, allowing them to testify in court free of accusations that their personal feelings toward the defendant have colored their scientific conclusions. However, since the protagonists of the *CSI* shows are forensic scientists, the show's basic conceit allows them to do perform any task a regular cop character would get to do on a standard procedural show. This can be seen as an extreme example of the conceit of primacy.

GUMSHOE procedural series require their own conceits in order to keep the story moving in an entertaining manner. Like the *CSI* conceit, or chronological unity, they require the audience's complicity in looking the other way. Here GM and players handwave certain elements that break the rules of realism in order to keep the game running smoothly. Just as the aforementioned devices arise from the requirements of TV drama, GUMSHOE's conceits grapple with the limitations of a roleplaying session.

The major device you'll want to adopt, needed for all but the smallest groups, is the conceit of *elastic participation*. Roleplaying is traditionally a group effort; cop shows tend to focus on small teams of investigators. When an ensemble cast tackles a big case together, they split into partnerships to split up necessary tasks. The scriptwriters make sure that obstacles are always matched to the capabilities of the characters in a given scene. In a roleplaying game, where responsibility for the obstacles lies with the GM and task splitting is determined by the players, some additional fudging is required to match the two elements.

GUMSHOE works best when you assume that everyone is kind-of sort-of along for every scene—without squinting too hard at any resulting logic or staging absurdities. That way, the group continues to enjoy collective access to all of the investigative abilities needed to gather core clues. Perhaps even more importantly, the concerted minds of four to six untrained roleplayers are often needed to replicate the deductive skill of a single professional investigator.

Much of the time, you can collaborate with the group to come up with ways to conceal the breaking of the fourth wall that occurs when six people pile into an interrogation room or examine the same piece of physical evidence. Two-person teams can be dispatched to perform particular tasks, while keeping seamlessly in touch with the rest of the team. Assume,

for example, that suggestions given by players whose characters aren't present in a scene represent cell phone conversations. Team members might wear ear pieces so that the good and bad cop in the interrogation room can receive prompts from other PCs on the other side of the one-way mirror. A technical expert can lend his ability to another PC by watching a video feed on his laptop. When necessary, you can establish that an absent character with a specialized ability briefed the PC on the scene, telling him what to look for. In many cases, one detective can bag and tag evidence and let the technician look at it later. A suspect can be left to cool his heels while the investigator with the right interpersonal approach makes his way to the interview.

Most of the time, you can just let the group sort through the clues without constantly justifying the use of the elastic participation conceit. That's what a conceit does: it says, "Let's not worry about this annoying bit of realism."

Try to guide the group so that the splitting into teams trope occurs during non-investigative sequences. A stake-out that leads into a chase scene needn't occur under the assumption that everyone is "sort of there." By finding ways to break it every so often, you hide the conceit.

Enlist your players in maintaining it. Convey to them the justification given here. Explain that what at first seems to be a departure from police procedural practice is in fact an extension of the same principle, adapted to the needs of a roleplaying session.

[Elastic participation is not unique to investigative games. Most groups playing a classic dungeon delve campaign allow characters of absent players to be present to use minor, exotic abilities. At the same time, the characters are typically not treated as present when a big fight breaks out.]

You probably make regular use of other conceits, even if you don't use the term:

- *The conceit of climactic pacing:* The degree of spotlight time you give to a story branch depends on where it appears in the course of an episode. A scene that you might fill with complications if the players choose to engage with it in the early going is best disposed of in a few sentences if it would prevent you from placing the big finish near the end of a session.

You'll probably drop the complications entirely if the players only think to engage with the scene after the climax.

- In roleplaying, the *conceit of primacy* requires PCs to solve a scenario's central problems themselves, rather than expecting supporting characters to take risks for them. Only tasks which are meant to be accomplished offstage can be delegated effectively.

RUNNING THE GAME

An investigative story in any medium is, by its very nature, highly structured. The investigators learn of a mystery, then move through a series of scenes, each of which concludes in the acquisition of a clue which segues into the next scene. The story reaches its climax when the investigator discovers and reveals the answer to the mystery. It may or may not conclude, for extra punch, in a physical confrontation with the story's now revealed-antagonist.

Structure can be difficult to achieve in the roleplaying medium. Guide the players too little and they lose the thread, resulting in a loose and sloppy narrative that provides none of the neat, order-making pleasure the genre is meant to provide. Guide them too much and they feel that their freedom of action has been taken away from them, and that they're merely observers moving through a predetermined sequence of events. (As you probably know, this latter syndrome is known in roleplaying jargon as *railroading*.)

The trick to successfully running investigative scenarios is to strike the right balance between the two extremes. The exact balance is a matter of collective taste. Groups prone to flailing about may welcome a strong structure with clear goals, a straight narrative path and definite resolutions. Players who resolve questions of procedure with swift efficiency, or who prefer to focus on characterization over storyline, require a looser hand on the structural tiller.

PERCEPTION IS (NEARLY) ALL

Some groups are hyper-sensitive to issues of railroading. These concerns, which are absolutely legitimate, may be based on past bad experiences with controlling GMs who forced them to enact essentially passive roles in unalterable, preset storylines. If

members of the group are avid roleplaying theorists, they may respond out of a general ideological feeling that players ought to shape and drive the story, taking on responsibilities traditionally given to the GM.

The most important way to prevent players from feeling railroaded is to remain flexible and reactive to the choices the characters make. We'll discuss this a bit more in the next section.

However, nearly as crucial is avoiding the *appearance* of railroading.

Some players may feel that the GUMSHOE system's reliance on automatic successes inevitably leads to a railroaded result. In practice, this simply isn't so. The degree of narrative flexibility a GM exercises is entirely unrelated to the game's resolution mechanic (or relative lack of same.) Flexibility remains up to the GM, and your ability to improvise within the basic structure of the investigative story, as it does in nearly any set of roleplaying rules.

As proof of this, we cite a weird phenomenon that occurred during playtest. The groups that expressed the strongest misgivings about possible railroading were those whose GMs had done the most improvising.

This result can be partly attributed to variances in group tastes, but also suggests the enormous importance of maintaining the *perception* of free choice. When you're on a roll as a GM, you can create the perception of free choice even when players respond predictably to the scenario. On an off night, you can convey the impression of constricted options even you're improvising furiously to keep up with their completely unexpected choices.

Here are five ways to maintain the perception of narrative freedom:

- When using a prewritten adventure, paraphrase as much as possible. Avoid reading right from the scenario. Even if it's well-written, your narration, no matter how halting and tentative, will seem more spontaneous than canned text. Some GMs read too much of the scenario out loud because they have trouble extracting the necessary nuggets from a pre-written text. Judicious use of a highlighting pen can work wonders to zero in on the best details, which you can then weave into your own extemporaneous sentences.

- During scenes of character interaction, listen carefully to player dialog and respond accordingly. Riff with the players. This is more important than spewing the supporting characters' clues or talking points, even if that means altering the characterization from what you see on the page.
- Encourage players to flesh out minor details of the setting and situation. If they ask you what the weather is like, ask them what they want it to be. If they ask if such and such an item is present at a particular location, tell them that it is and ask them to describe it. On rare occasions the mystery plot will turn on these little details, and you'll have to pull back from this technique and stick to your clue trail. Otherwise, seek out opportunities for player input.
- Tailor characters and situations to the player characters. If a player portrays a sloppy, rumpled reporter, confront her with a neat-freak, press-hating authority figure. A character known to fall for sexy librarian types should meet successions of sexy librarians, and so on.
- Introduce story elements giving players opportunities to flesh out their characters' backstories. Weave old friends, acquaintances, mentors, colleagues and rivals into your supporting casts.

If you yourself are still worried that GUMSHOE encourages or requires railroading, take heart in this last result from playtest. Each group submitted an account of the events of the sample adventure that differed radically from everyone else's. In each case the wide variances of incident arose from disparate player choices. Just like it's supposed to.

ANY TRACK IS THE RIGHT TRACK

Although it may be, oddly enough, more important to maintain apparent than actual narrative freedom, we should still endeavor to provide the real thing to the maximum extent possible.

Fortunately, it's easier to provide freedom than it is to seem like you're providing it. Simply ensure that any clue, especially any core clue, is available not only to players using the ability specified in the scenario, but to *any player who provides a credible and entertaining*

alternate method of acquiring that clue. The scenario is a foundation to work from, which ensures that there is at least one way to move through the story. It should never be regarded as the only way to get to the resolution. A group of players will often come up with better ideas than the scenario writer ever could. Give yourself permission to go with them.

One slight exception pertains: this advice pertains only to clues available in the current scene. Allow players to leapfrog scenes by acquiring information they're meant to get later only when pacing permits. If you're early in a session when the threat of leapfrogging occurs, and you're not confident you can improvise enough new intervening scenes to make a full evening's entertainment, by all means block the players' efforts. If you're zooming toward evening's end, leapfrogging may prove a blessing — just be sure to squeeze in all of the necessary ancillary information the players might miss by skipping ahead.

Scenes in the middle of an investigation can often be juggled around with no ill effect to the storyline. When this is the case, it's always better to let the players dictate pacing than to force them back into the order of events envisioned by the scenario.

The scenario is only the blueprint. The building happens during play.

CALLING ON ABILITIES

The rules offer a number of way to call on abilities, depending on the situation. Choosing the right way to call on an ability is crucial to the forward momentum of your investigative plot. Make this choice according to the consequences of failure.

If the consequence of failure is that a character fails to get a piece of crucial information, success should be automatic provided that the character has the ability in question, and the player thinks to ask for it. (Even at that, you may need to improvise during play if no player steps up to claim the needed clue, bending the details of the scenario so that the same information can be garnered with a different ability, possibly by another player.)

If you have a piece of information that offers a fun sidelight on the action but is not essential to move through the story, you can make this available with a 1- or 2-point spend. Choose the cost of the spend according to the entertainment value of the information, not the

game-world difficulty of completing the task.

If an action's consequence of failure might be death or injury, by all means make it a test. If game world logic suggests that a supporting character will actively oppose the PC, make it a contest.

ENDING SCENES

In a novel or TV episode, writers can freely cut to the next scene when their characters have acquired all of the clues available in the current one. The characters might stick around for hours tying up loose ends and pursuing fruitless questions, but this doesn't happen on screen. We, the audience, are not forced to sit through such sequences.

This kind of concise editing isn't so easy in the roleplaying medium. Players don't know when they've got all the clues.

Here's a simple trick to gently steer them onwards, without unduly breaking the illusion of fictional reality:

Before play, take an index card and write on it, in big block letters, the word SCENE. As soon as the players have gleaned the core clue and most or all of the secondary clues in a scene, and the action begins to drag, hold up the card. When the players see this, they know to move on. (Of course, you have to explain the cue to them before play begins.) Easy, efficient, yet somehow not nearly as disruptive or jarring as a verbal instruction.



COMPENSATING FOR SPOTTY ATTENDANCE

Older gamers most likely to enjoy an investigative campaign are sadly prone to scheduling disruptions. If your group is typical, you may not be able to rely on any particular player showing up on a given night. To compensate for this, give each player a pool of free-floating investigative points, which they can spend to gain a clue in investigative abilities they don't have. When this occurs, explain it as the character remembering a fact or technique taught to them by their absent teammates. Adjust the quantity of points as needed for your group's requirements.



IMPRISONMENT AS PLOT DEVICE

Obstacles where the punishment for failure is imprisonment or other loss of freedom to maneuver should be introduced with caution. If the characters can gain information while captured, and will be presented with a fairly easy avenue of escape afterwards, then by all means include them. You can allow tests or contests to avoid such consequences.

However, plot turns in which characters are arrested by the authorities and cannot escape invariably bring game sessions to a screeching, thudding halt. Either allow the characters to avoid them with automatic successes on Interpersonal abilities, or build an escape hatch into your story. The team's superiors serve this purpose well. Assuming that the players are jailed in an industrialized democracy or Western ally, they can always get the characters sprung, after a suitable interval of nail-biting and discomfort.

Be wary of plot construction that demands characters accept captivity to gain crucial information. Many players would sooner have their characters fried with radiation bursts than accept even a brief sojourn in comparatively cushy confinement. Unfortunately, with this player type, you won't get very far by pointing out that getting captured is a genre staple. Their attitude is rooted in a deep-seated desire to maintain emotional control, and is not typically susceptible to argument.

SAMPLE PREMISES

This section presents ten ideas for you to flesh out into full-fledged cases. If your players have read this section, use them as models for your own original premises.

AN AIRTIGHT ALIBI

When fertility doctor Walid Ali is found dead of oxygen deprivation in his BMW, suspicion first falls on his building manager, Vladimir Umansky. Umansky has the Deplete Oxygen power and was embroiled in a nasty lawsuit with Ali. But when Umansky provides an unshakable alibi, the HCU must look elsewhere. Eventually their investigation leads them to Todd and Jessica Muldowney, a mutant couple who conceived with Ali's help. The couple are strainers, who married with the express intent of breeding better mutant babies, but discovered that their baby did not share the father's DNA—Ali had, through incompetence or spite, fertilized Jessica's egg with non-mutant sperm. Todd's power is Absorption; he used it to borrow Umansky's Deplete Oxygen ability, and then used it to kill the doctor. (You decide whether Umansky was in on the plot, or an unwilling victim of Muldowney's Absorption.)

DROP ZONE

A former HCU officer with the power of flight becomes a prime suspect for murder when his norm mistress, Grace Hamilton, is found splattered across a parking lot, dropped from a great height in an area with no nearby tall buildings. Is he guilty, or was he framed? What skeletons in the unit's closet can he threaten to reveal?

This case could tie into a prior subplot featuring the ex-cop, Joe Stilson, as an antagonist for one or more of the PCs. Or his key relationship could be to the dark past of the team's watch commander.

If this is a frame-up, it was committed by a perp once put away by Wilson, who did it by kidnapping Grace and dropping her from a glider (so that witnesses wouldn't report any plane sounds.)

EXTRA CRISPY

Tyler Baulch, a mutant known to have the Magnetism and Earth Control powers, uses a flame thrower to kill his hated brother-in-law, under the assumption that it will be taken for a Fire Projection attack. Anyone

looking at a Quade Diagram, he reasons, will know that he can't have done it, since his powers are too far away from Fire Projection on the genetic map.



MISCONGENIAL

A top surgeon's murder is traced to an incident in which he negligently transplanted mutant bone marrow into a young patient, Molly Morris, who then went on to develop Fangs and the Venom (Bite) power. The hit was commissioned by the girl's mother, distraught after revelations of Molly's unsavory mutant powers derailed her beauty pageant career.

NERVE ENDINGS

An international courier is found murdered in a hotel room and the HCU is called in when a plastic bag found at the scene is found to contain trace amounts of mutant DNA. Investigation takes the characters into the shadowy world of international organ smuggling. It turns out that the courier was bringing nerve tissue (the source of the DNA) harvested by the Chinese government from an executed political prisoner. The

tissue was purchased by a dot-com billionaire hoping to gain heightened Speed. The murderer is a relative of the involuntary donor who fled China during its post-SME crackdown.

PUPPY CHOW

Antiques dealer Douglas Charbot is found dead in his apartment, torn to pieces by his beloved golden retriever, Robbie. Who used Command Mammals to turn his beloved pet into the instrument of his murder?

SKINNED

The beating death of a category-B mutant member of the Racks seems at first to be the work of the Neutral Parity League's violent youth wing. Further investigation reveals that she was involved in a messy love triangle within her own gang. Although barheads administered the fatal blows, she was lured to her death by one of her own.

THAT LOOK IN YOUR EYES

Real estate mogul Osvaldo Perez is found at the scene of his wife's murder, babbling incoherently and covered with blood. Physical evidence suggests that he killed her, but his peculiar demeanor prompts homicide detectives to call in an HCIU expert in the EMAT protocol to check for signs of mental influence, which he indeed shows. The case is therefore transferred to the HCIU. The PCs eventually discover that:

The woman was seeing her yoga instructor, Jason Dillman, on the side.

She'd recently been pressuring him to remain in the relationship, despite his efforts to cool things off.

She might have been using his habit of seducing his wealthy female clientèle to blackmail him.

However, there's a twist. Osvaldo has set things up to get the pleasure of personally killing his unfaithful wife, while also framing the boyfriend for the crime. He learned that an undocumented worker in the employ of his construction firm had the Emotion Control power, and paid the man to get him good and furious right before the murder. This not only made the killing easier, but causes him to register to an EMAT practitioner as being under mutant influence. Perez is confident that the man fears deportation enough to

keep quiet about the arrangement.

THERE BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD

A member of another HCIU squad may have committed murder during a defect-induced haze. The PCs investigate the case, in the face of pressure from the other squads to "do the right thing" and find a patsy to blame. Meanwhile, in the session's subplot, the PC with the defect most likely to induce a similar blackout fears that his own condition is worsening.

WRATH

A SEDS researcher is killed, and his lab and files destroyed. Initial clues point to a disgruntled worker, then to industrial sabotage by a rival pharmaceutical firm. It finally transpires that the crime was committed by a fiercely radical new anti-mutant group which believes that the disease is God's way of correcting nature's mistakes. (Alternately, the anti-mutant types could be the apparent killers, and the pharmaceutical firm the real bad guys.)

INVESTIGATIVE POWERS

Unlike mundane investigative abilities, including those introduced in this book, you can't assume that the players will have access to any particular mutant investigative power. For this reason, mutant powers can never be the only way of getting core clues, unless you have informed your players they must have the clue. It is, however, perfectly acceptable for a mutant investigative power to be an alternate, perhaps more impressive, way of gleaning a core clue.

Mostly investigative mutant powers allow the characters to gather the same information they would with their normal abilities, but in a faster, cooler way.

MAINTAINING POWER CONSISTENCY

The world of *Mutant City Blues* is not one in which anything can happen. Mutant powers exist, but operate in a predictable fashion. The nature of the SME remains mysterious, but the interrelationships between the powers are well known.

This consistency of background is necessary so that the players know what is and isn't possible whenever they attempt to reconstruct events connected with a

crime scene. They know that an apparent locked-room mystery might be explained by a mutant with the Phase power, or that a suspect might have escaped by flying off the balcony. However, if a case rests on a witness' claim to see the future, they can safely dismiss him as crazy or deluded—this is as impossible in the game world as it is in ours.

Avoid diverging from the established pseudoscience of mutant powers when creating cases. Doing so undermines the setting's sense of reliable reality. If you do create exceptions to the way powers work, don't do it offhandedly, or to justify close up minor holes in your plotting. The existence of a character whose cluster of powers defies the Quade Diagram would be an incredibly big deal, as would one with a previously undocumented power. Should you include these elements in a case, make them central to it. Also, construct the mystery so that the players don't have to guess that you've cheated the setting details in order to solve it. Rather than forcing them to figure out that a suspect has a nonstandard power or cluster to understand what's going on, make that part of the premise, or allow them to discover it in some other way.

More satisfying still is to tease players with the prospect of a stunning new development in anamorphology, but resolve the story so that it turns out to be bogus, restoring the informational status quo. A mutant with an apparently undocumented power might, for example, be faking it to defraud the Quade Institute or falsely alibi himself.

If you see something about the state of mutant powers that you want to change, do it at the start of play. You might decide to introduce additional powers; if you do, place them on a modified Quade Diagram and give your players access to them during character creation.

Look out for plotting pitfalls when introducing new powers. We've omitted certain standard comic book powers, because they screw up mystery plots. Time travel and precognition are prime examples. Be equally cautious when modifying the capabilities of existing powers. Certain troublesome powers, like Read Minds and Phase, have been included, but limited in such a way as to minimize their mystery-wrecking potential.

TIMED RESULTS

The following structural technique applies to any GUMSHOE game where the characters have access to the services of a forensic lab, and rely on tests performed by others.

You can shape the pacing of a case with a **timed result**. This occurs when believability requires a suitable interval between the submission of evidence to forensic experts and the results of the testing they perform. In police procedurals, it is common for the direction of an investigation to be suddenly changed when the lab results come in. The scientific evidence may exonerate the current top suspect or point the investigators toward new witnesses or locations. Alternately, it can change the meaning of previously gleaned information, causing the investigators to conduct re-interview previous witnesses, or conduct closer searches of crime scenes.

A timed result can serve as a delayed-reaction core clue, directing the PCs to a new scene. These are useful devices in cases where the scenes can be connected in any order. If the PCs get bored or bogged down in one scene, they can receive a phone call from the lab techs calling them in to receive some much-needed exposition, which sends them in a new direction.

The arrival of a timed result can also change the players' interpretation of their current case notes without moving them to a new scene. They might dismiss a suspect's alibi, alter their timeline of events, or reject information provided them by a witness whose perceptions are revealed as unreliable.

News of a lab report requiring the team's attention can also be used to cut short a scene that the players won't abandon, even though they've already collected all available clues.

SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

Game statistics in GUMSHOE are, whenever possible, player-facing. When you as GM have the choice between making a determination based on a player test, or on a test made by you on behalf of a supporting character, always choose the player. For example, you may want to specify that there's a chance a harried relative of a kidnapping victim might eventually lose her patience with the HCIU and participate in a damaging press conference. Rather than having her make a Stability test to see when and if this happens, set it up so that a player makes a Reassurance spend to forestall her.

Likewise, if you want to have a supporting character steal something in a situation where the PCs are in no position to affect the outcome, simply decree that it happens. Don't bother testing the character's Filch ability. To do otherwise is to engage in false branching: you are creating unpredictability for yourself in a way that remains invisible to the players. They don't get a chance to alter the outcome, and thus gain no benefit from the uncertainty you've introduced.



It is always acceptable, however, to have supporting characters make tests to defend themselves during complex interactions in which the players are also rolling dice. Combat is an obvious example.

In the horror games *The Esoterrorists*, *Fear Itself* and *Trail of Cthulhu*, GMs are discouraged from having the supporting characters make Stability tests. If they go nuts, it should be a decision made in the scenario—or something the PCs can prevent with an ability test. *Mutant City Blues* treats Stability differently, as a defense against mental powers and the symptoms of defects. All supporting characters should therefore have Stability ratings.



RATINGS AS DIFFICULTY BENCHMARKS

You may want to use a supporting character's rating in a general ability as a benchmark for the Difficulty of a PC's test. Supporting character ratings translate into difficulties as follows:

Rating	Difficulty
1–7	4
8–12	5
13–16	6
17+	7

Detective Wills (played by Lynne) is in the room when Richard Wayne Jason, a supporting character, tries to take a pistol from a desk drawer surreptitiously. Rather than having the supporting character make a Filch test to succeed, you require a Surveillance test from Lynne, to see if Wills spots his attempt. Jason's Filch rating is 12, making this a Difficulty 5 Surveillance test.

This rule is appropriate to all GUMSHOE games.

Supporting characters do not gather clues during cases and do not need investigative abilities. Mutant investigative powers are an exception to the above principle, as a suspect or witness's ability to see through walls or read minds may constitute a plot point in a case. You may want to assign investigative abilities and ratings to academics, techies and police colleagues, even though they won't be using them, as a shorthand way of conveying their degree of expertise relative to the main characters. More often, it's easier to simply indicate this in your notes without assigning abilities or numbers. Don't bother to dole out abilities from a predetermined number of build points—just choose ratings and abilities as the plot and backstory require.

Most standard general abilities are suitable for supporting characters. Preparedness is questionable, but you might want to allow it for informative purposes even though the character never tests against it. For run-of-the-mill people, mutant and otherwise, you may want to include the Fleeing and Sense Trouble

general abilities from *Fear Itself*. For the very few characters more competent than trained, decorated police detectives, assign more than 60 points to general ability ratings. For ordinary folks, assign as few as seem appropriate.

Mutant powers needn't be built with the same number of points as the characters, either. The PCs represent the upper echelon of mutants, who have had their powers for a long time and use them on a regular basis as part of their jobs. People who don't make much use of their powers will have lower ratings, fewer powers, or both. A rare few individuals have honed their powers to an even greater extent than the PCs, and might be built on 48 or even 64 mutant power points, give or take a point here and there. Everyone's powers connect up on the Quade Diagram, though.

Note also any defects picked up during the power selection process. However, supporting characters shouldn't test Health or Stability to stave off worsening defect symptoms. Instead, simply decide, as part of your plot, when and if they succumb. You may want to indicate the stage of the defect as a benchmark of its current severity.



SUB-PLOTS

Your first *Mutant City Blues* episode should probably be devoted purely to the solving of a single case, with few if any peeks at the detectives' personal lives.

After that, most episodes include one or two sub-plots. These are secondary story threads centered around the problems of particular squad members. For inspiration, look to the ongoing dramatic sequences in most contemporary police procedural TV shows. Sub-plots flesh out the characters, making them seem more real by giving the group an ongoing emotional stake in their personal struggles. They also help to smooth out the pacing, giving uninvolved players time to think quietly about the ongoing mystery aspect while the spotlighted player engages in the subplot.

SOLICITING SUB-PLOTS

Ask players to prepare three suggestions for possible sub-plots involving their characters. Have them replace these as you use up their current suggestions. Sample suggestions appear in the "Sub-Plots" section of the "Tips For Players" chapter.

Although some sub-plots can be light, happy, or humorous, beware the risk-averse player who is only willing to allow awesome things to happen to his character. If a player only provides low-intensity situations, you have two choices. You can send suggestions back for revision, asking for more dramatic choices. Alternately, you can take the player's suggested positive developments and find a way to introduce tough dramatic choices into them. For example, if the player wins the lottery, he finds himself besieged by freeloaders and fundraisers for worthy causes. If a wealthy uncle appears out of nowhere to give him a Ferrari, the car might turn out to be stolen—or the real subplot only begins when the dear old gent is put in some kind of jeopardy.

INTRODUCING SUB-PLOTS

At the beginning of each session, decide which player will be the focus of the evening's main sub-plot. (Although you might find it preferable to plan further in advance than this, Murphy's Law dictates that any preparation you make with a particular player in mind will be thwarted by his last-minute inability to attend.)

When first starting, pick players who are stronger at conveying personality and furthering self-directed storylines, so they serve as examples for less confident members of the group. The eventual goal is to rotate sub-plot focus evenly between players, switching up the

order to retain a touch of unpredictability. Attendance vagaries will probably solve this problem for you. Keep a record of how many times players have been given sub-plot focus, so that no regular attendee gets more than one or two slots behind.

After choosing the subject of the evening's sub-plot, check to see if this character has any defects. If so, the sub-plot should revolve around that defect about half the time. In most instances this means a situation which could, depending on the player's choices, provoke a defect crisis. Mix this up by occasionally confronting the character with his defect in indirect ways. He may, for example, get a scare regarding his condition that proves to be some other minor medical problem. Or he might interact with another victim of the same defect, who suffers it at a worse stage of development.

If you're not focusing on a defect, pick one of the player's three suggestions to develop into a secondary story for the session. When possible, pick the one that evokes a similar theme to that explored by the main mystery. The sub-plot might parallel the case at hand, or contrast with it.

The main case of the evening is one in which a closeted mutant is murdered by her husband, who feared he was cheating on her—even though it turns out she was secretly visiting a quack doctor who promised to cure her mutant condition. You've decided that Lynne will be the focus of tonight's sub-plot. Of the three suggestions she provides you, the one that most closely mirrors the main story's theme of mistrust is one in which her character, Detective Wills, fears that her husband is stepping out on her.

While the rest of the group continues its pre-game chatting, quickly jot down ideas for three Directed Scenes which, respectively, introduce, develop, and conclude the secondary story.

You jot down the following scene ideas, which you'll flesh out in play:

- Finds evidence of cheating
- Confronts husband
- Resolution: reconciliation or split?

The outcome of sub-plots, especially those unrelated to a character's defects, should present the player with a dramatic choice to make, or a chance to succeed or fail, based on player decisions. Because investigative scenarios can seem linear, even when you're making

them up as you go along or are furiously improvising in response to player choices, sub-plots should be extremely open-ended—and, more importantly, *feel* that way. On the TV shows we're drawing from, personal sub-plots put the characters under pressure. Roleplayers sometimes feel trapped when put under the same degree of pressure fictional characters experience as a matter of course. Be aware of this, and structure these scenes in a way to make it clear that player choices decide their outcomes.

These scenes may occasionally include moments of danger and challenge, but they might just as well consist purely of roleplaying scenes, with nary a die roll in sight.

CONTINUING SUB-PLOTS

While some police shows wrap up their personal subplots in a single storyline, others continue them from week to week. To emulate this structure, focus on one sub-plot per episode, but also allow other characters with dangling plot threads from previous sessions to pursue their own personal goals between investigative scenes. Do this in response to player demand. If a player is content to focus on only the case during the current session, allow his ongoing personal struggles to drop off the radar, only to return later. You'll note that many episodic television shows do this as well, dropping and picking up sub-plots to give all members of the ensemble their contractually mandated time in the limelight.

SECONDARY CASES

Sub-plots needn't focus only on the detective's off-the-clock life. They can deal with work issues arising from past cases in the character's backstory. Although we only see the detectives' most interesting challenges dramatized over the course of a series, make clear that they are also working less interesting cases between scenes and episodes. They're also performing routine police work, from paperwork to court appearances.

Like any big-city detectives, HCIU members have too much on their plates and sometimes have to work multiple cases at once. A sub-plot can revolve around the investigation of a minor mutant crime. This may be of a humorous nature, offering comic relief from the grimmer primary case.

GMs may on occasion choose to drop in directed scenes involving minor cases for pacing reasons. You might want to lighten the mood, or give the players a break from a case that's got them stuck. A staple

directed scene of this nature is an interrogation with an amusingly sleazy and stupid suspect, who can be tricked into a confession in the space of a single scene.

Much of the advice given in the "HCIU Procedure" department pertains to the workaday world of grindingly ordinary police work, which will be represented more in secondary cases than in the dramatic and puzzling mysteries of your main storylines.



ACTION AND POWER USE

Mutant City Blues emphasizes procedural investigation in a world changed by the advent of superhuman powers more than it does the use of those powers themselves. Many scenarios resolve themselves perfectly well even if the characters never use their mutant powers. If you structure your mysteries so that they always climax in a super-powered action sequence in which the detectives apprehend the bad guys, the mysteries themselves will be easy to solve: the perp will always turn out to be a powerful mutant capable of taking on the whole team.

Although you should structure the occasional case this way, you'll also want to look for other ways for the players to bring their characters' powers into play. After having devoted time to picking out their favorite power combinations and learning what they can do, they'll expect to be able to spotlight them at least occasionally.

One way to put them through their paces is to introduce red herring action sequences. These are chase, fight or stunt scenes which turn out to be incidental to the main mystery. For example, the search for a witness may lead the team to a drug den full of cracked-out mutants. When they enter, its denizens fight back. They're not the main bad guys, but they can still serve as opponents in an exciting interlude, in which the unit's victory allows them to further their investigation.

Now and then you can resort to a teaser action sequence, in which the HCIU detectives have been enlisted to use their powers to counter some other police issue, from a hostage crisis to a standoff with rioters. A teaser sequence takes place at the beginning of a new scenario. At its conclusion, unit members stumble across the actual mystery. If they quell a riot, they may then, for example, find a murder victim left behind when the crowd disperses.

Sub-plots provide excellent opportunities for the characters to show off their mutant powers. Because you're tailoring them to particular characters, you can devise situations that call for the use of their specific super abilities.

TIPS FOR PLAYERS

The following player advice is specific to a *Mutant City Blues* series.

CHOOSING YOUR WATCH COMMANDER

In preparation for your first session, read the descriptions of the four HCIU watch commanders, starting on p. 146. At the top of the first session, before the first case begins, consult with the other players to arrive at a consensus choice for the watch commander who oversees your squad. This discussion occurs out of character; the actual detectives don't get to pick who they work for. The presumption of most series is that you and your team members have been working for your commander for a while and have histories together. You may also choose to spell out what these may be. However, if every player casts his character as the chosen commander's best friend, expect the GM to collaborate with you to throw some spanners into the works. For example, if one PC is the commander's protégé, the laws of dramatic tension decree that at least one other must be in his bad books for some reason.

The obvious default choice is Lt. Krose. He's a straight shooter who will back you up when you get into trouble, but expects good results.

If your group tends to get stuck and needs some pushing and pulling, you may want to pick the demanding Lt. Perreau, who can yell you back on track when you get lost in your pile of clues.

Groups who chafe at close supervision may prefer to work for the irascible but somewhat inattentive Lt. Haigh. He may also prove unusually tolerant when you step over the line a bit.

For a politically astute, well-connected commander, pick Lt. Bevan. He can exert pull on your behalf—but is ambitious, and will demand favors in return.

GMs may substitute their own watch commanders for the ones supplied in this book, especially when your group has run previous *Mutant City Blues* series.

SUB-PLOTS

Sub-plots are personal stories revolving around your character. After the first case, which will typically be an introductory scenario focusing purely on the game's procedural aspects, sub-plots will begin to come into play. Each player becomes the subject of a sub-plot every few cases.

Prepare three suggestions for sub-plots involving your character. Suggestions should be a phrase or sentence long—specific enough to give the GM inspiration, but sufficiently general to allow her to fill in the details. Pick situations which illuminate your character by confronting him or her with a challenging but telling personal conflict. Grim or emotive storylines are standard for the genre, but you can balance these out with positive developments. Even the occasional light or humorous sub-plot should present you with a challenge to overcome.

Treat the following suggestions, mostly drawn from stock police show situations, for inspiration—or swipe them outright:

- Become involved in mutant rights activism
- Bonds with troubled kid
- Burned by a reporter
- Confidential informant needs rescue from a sticky situation
- Confronted with evidence of a dirty cop
- Courted by strainer clinic as embryo/sperm donor

- Elderly neighbor gets mugged
- Former partner in trouble
- Goob tries to recruit me for his “super-team”
- Groomed as a media star
- Kids get hassled at school because I’m a mutant
- Moonlighting as a bodyguard
- New romance
- Old beef with watch commander resurfaces
- Perp I threw in the slammer comes back to threaten revenge
- Pressured to admit I’m gay
- Prosecutor pressures me to lie on the witness stand
- Pursued by groupie with a thing for mutant cops
- Relationship break-up
- Relationship threatened by pressures of the job
- Relative drawn into Gilles Tremblay’s secret army of anti-alien warriors

- Relative has a brush with the law
- Separatist mutants prove to be bad neighbors
- Someone rats me out to Internal Affairs
- Straightener researcher convinced my blood contains cure for mutant powers
- Troubled, long-lost relative comes back into my life
- When a scumbag defendant gets off on a shaky judicial ruling, I suspect corruption in the justice system
- Wooed to jump to the Quade Institute’s forensic anamorphology department

Sub-plots are supposed to be about you. If you want to involve another PC in your sub-plot idea, get the player’s assent first, collaborating as necessary so that both of you are equally happy with the suggestion’s possibilities.



INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUE

Although GUMSHOE never withholds a clue from you if you have an appropriate ability and look in the right place, you do still have to look. In police investigations, interviews with witnesses, experts and potential suspects provide the bulk of the information you'll need to clear your cases. If you fail to ask the right questions, you can miss crucial clues. You, the players, aren't trained in interview techniques, but your characters are. To help you take on their roles, a list of standard questions appears below. Most of them assume a murder investigation. Refer to them when you find yourself lost for direction in the middle of an interview sequence.

- Where were you between the hours of X and Y? [Where X and Y represent the time frame of the crime you're investigating.]
- [If an alibi is offered] Can anyone confirm this?
- Who stands to benefit from this crime?
- Do you know anyone who had reason to wish the victim harm?
- Was he receiving threats of any kind?
- Were you on good or bad terms with the victim?
- What sort of person was he?
- What was his family situation?
- Was he having problems in his family or relationship?
- What was his financial situation?
- Do you know anyone the victim would have confided in?

- What notable projects or activities was the victim involved in?
- Was the victim [or other figures in the case] a known mutant?
- Photocopy, cut out and laminate the reference card below for easy use in play.

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- Was the victim [or other figures in the case] a known mutant?
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Vary your tactics according to your sense of the witness' temperament and emotional state. If you can't get a read on your witness, ask the GM if Forensic Psychology provides you any useful hints into his or her character. These may suggest whether, for example, you're better off using Intimidation or Flattery to overcome a witness' reluctance.

FOOD CHAIN

Bookended by super-powered action sequences, this introductory scenario puts the squad on a ticking clock, as they try to stop a notorious and newly revived murder cult from adding any more victims to its kill list.

BACKSTORY

Six years ago, the city convulsed in terror to the depredations of a maniac killer calling himself the Anthrophage. In a series of crimes including two home invasions and at least one opportunistic solo kidnapping, the Anthrophage killed as many as eleven victims. He taunted police and mailed body parts to reporters. In several of these messages he claimed to have eaten portions of his victims' remains. Growing bolder, he eventually uploaded videos of himself to the Internet. Appearing in a mask, his voice electronically altered, he boasted of his crimes and heralded himself as the harbinger of a coming apocalypse.

The Anthrophage was finally apprehended while casing another home invasion. He turned out to be a gardener and aspiring musician named Waldo Maclagan. Convicted, and sentenced to maximum security prison, the Anthrophage spent the rest of his days in near-isolation. Three years ago Maclagan was murdered by a fellow inmate. One of the most nightmarish figures of the post-SME world had been consigned to history.

Or was he?

THE CRIME

The HCU are called to intervene in a hostage crisis in progress. Jared Whitten, a registered radiation projector and self-detonator with a history of mental problems, is holding a city bus full of passengers until a series of bizarre demands are met. It's up to the PCs to get Whitten off the bus and the passengers to safety.

Afterwards, Whitten claims that the Anthrophage is still at large, and tried to recruit him as an accomplice. Although this seems like another of his paranoid claims, Whitten does register on an EMAT Protocol as a victim of mental interference. The squad is then assigned to find out who scrambled Jared Whitten's mind.

THE INVESTIGATION

Mr. Forgettable quickly establishes that Whitten has fallen through society's cracks, and that, before going spectacularly crazy, he left no useful impression on anyone. In **Summer Of the Anthrophage**, the squad acquaints itself with the moldering case files of the city's worst serial killer. **Anatomy Of a Shank** takes them to the Kane Correctional Facility, a maximum security prison for enhanced criminals, where they fill themselves in on the humiliating final fate of Waldo Maclagan. **Such a Nice Boy** takes them to the lilac scented doorstep of Idelle Maclagan, the sweet old lady who brought Waldo into the world.

As the investigation continues, Jared Whitten's ramblings take on a disturbing ring of truth, as new murders, committed as if by the Anthrophage, rock the city. At the first scene, the killer scrawls the words **Sequel Time** on the walls, in the blood of his victim.

I Was a Different Person Then brings the squad into contact with Maclagan's old girlfriend. She can point them toward Maclagan's therapist, Dr. Calvin Steiner.

THE TWIST

The Anthrophage who was murdered in prison was not the real culprit, but a brain-scrambled dupe—the same role Jared Whitten was being groomed for.

THE CULPRIT

The real Anthrophage is Dr. Calvin Steiner, a psychotherapist specializing in mental disorders suffered by the enhanced, and himself a secret mutant. Using his memory alteration power, he's been breaking down the identities of vulnerable patients. Some, like Jared Whitten, become too unstable to make use of. Others he converts into utterly dependent followers. One, Louis Graff, has finally proven ready to take on the mantle of the Anthrophage, starting a new kill spree for Steiner's perverse and vicarious gratification.

Uncovering Steiner's secret leads the squad to a final battle with his cult of soul-damaged mutants, on the shores of a picturesque lake.

SCENES TERROR ON THE 70A

SCENE TYPE: INTRO / ACTION

The scenario begins with the squad converging on the scene of a hostage crisis.

If this is your first installment in a *Mutant City Blues* series, you might want to start by having the players in turn quickly describe their morning routines as they head to work, introducing the characters to you and to the rest of the group.

When they arrive on the scene, they find a major downtown intersection blocked off by police barricades. In the middle of the intersection, cutting diagonally across it, is a city transit bus. Sheets of newspaper cover the windows, placed there from the inside.

Around the bus the scene is one of escalating hysteria. News helicopters buzz overhead. Patrolman line the barricades, forcing back reporters, onlookers and worried relatives. Every so often a wave arises in the crowd, threatening to overturn the barriers. Officers shout into bullhorns, warning the throng to calm itself, to no appreciable effect. Workers from surrounding office towers hang from the windows. It seems as if every second person on the scene holds up a cameraphone or video recorder, determined to capture some catastrophic personal news footage.

The PCs struggle through the crowds to get to the barricade and flash their badges. (On a 1-point Cop Talk, Intimidation or Reassurance spend, a team member can induce the crowd to part impressively as they approach.)

A uniformed officer escorts the squad to the mobile command center, a semi-tractor truck converted into an armored police vehicle. Inside, uniformed communications officers man banks of surveillance and monitoring equipment as police brass in charge pace and sweat.

The mission leaders briskly introduce themselves. Officially heading the operation is hostage specialist Lauryn Pritchard. A harried, broad-shouldered woman, Pritchard continually fights to keep her wavy, chestnut-brown hair from escaping the confines of an ill-constructed bun. Her right hand for the crisis is Ken Swailes, a lieutenant from the force's tactical squad. A tall, long-faced African-American man, he keeps mopping his perspiring forehead with a series of pizza napkins appropriated from someone's half-eaten lunch.

Cop Talk tells the group that tensions between hostage negotiators and tactical squadders are standard fare in a situation like this. Should something go wrong, each will try to shift the blame to the other—unless a new crop of scapegoats happens along to satisfy both of their buck-passing needs.

By asking to spend a point of Cop Talk, any player can specify that his character already has a positive working relationship with either Pritchard or Swailes. In exchange for this, they'll get a slightly less hardboiled reception from the authority figure in question, and a fairer shake if something goes wrong.

Pritchard breaks the situation down as follows:

- They've been in cell phone communication with the hostage taker. He is agitated and incoherent.
- He identified himself as Jared Whitten, a self-employed handyman. Whitten is in the system as an Article 18 registrant, claiming both Self-Detonation and Radiation Projection powers. He has never been charged with a crime, including the use of either power.
- Whitten has made a bunch of crazy demands: that the government stop the fluoridation of carbonated beverages, that he be provided with a helicopter to take him to United Nations Headquarters, and that the television personalities who are trying to get him to kill be arrested and convicted for their offenses against mankind.



- During one heated phone exchange, he accused Pritchard of wanting to “dope him up and put him away.” This led her to conclude that he is a current or former mental patient.
- Whitten allowed an elderly woman with heart trouble and a couple of small children off the bus during the first hour of the crisis. Since then he has let no one out, including a diabetic man who needs his insulin.
- With every conversation, Whitten becomes increasingly agitated. He has now demanded to talk only to a member of the HCU.
- However, Pritchard doesn’t hold out much hope of a successful negotiation. They can talk to him if they want, but if they want to skip that step and move right to the stage where they use their super powers to get him out of that bus, that’s okay with her. Of course, they have to make sure that none of the passengers are harmed. As she says this, Swales nods in agreement. (**Cop Talk** suggests that this is unusual; negotiators don’t tend to side with the SWAT guys unless further talk seems completely doomed.)

If the PCs want to contact Whitten, they can use the number of a mobile he has confiscated from a passenger. Glance at the time when the player commences a call. Whitten remains friendly and semi-coherent for about a minute, or until he hears another voice—for example, of another player prompting the one on the line. A 1-point Reassurance spend calms him for another sixty seconds. After this time expires, Whitten becomes incoherent and threatening. He’s in the middle of a psychotic break, as caused by Dr. Steiner’s interference with his memories, and is unable to provide any useful information during this sequence. Instead, he raves about contaminants in consumer products, the role the United Nations plays in persecuting him, and about the people who live in his floorboards and try to fill his head with bad thoughts while he sleeps. Whitten will not speak to the group for more than five minutes (measured in real time.) He then gives the group a final deadline of thirty minutes before he blows up the bus.

This sequence challenges the PCs to use their mutant powers to end the crisis without harm to the hostages. If they don’t succeed, the scenario still proceeds (see sidebar, *What If He Blows Himself Up?*), but under a tragic pall.

Whitten sits in the center of the bus, and has arranged all of its passengers to serve as human shields. They’re arrayed tightly around him, forcing some of them to huddle in the aisles or between seats.

Possible ways to neutralize the crisis include:

- **X-Ray Vision** or other sensory powers allow the viewer to see through the newspapers and assist in the execution of various plans listed below.

- A well-placed *blast*, aided by a sensory power, could take him out without harm to others.

- **Emotion Control** can move him from anxious (his present state) to curious, at which point he becomes intrigued by an offer by the characters, no matter how absurd, allowing them to talk him down.

- **Endorphin Control** gives him a rush of positive feeling, washing away his homicidal impulses.

- **Induce Mental Disorder:** Whitten already suffers from depression (which correlates with his powers) on top of the other disorders Steiner’s mind-bending treatments have brought to the surface. If Induce Mental Disorder is used to induce depression, he lapses into an immediate catatonic state. He puts up no resistance as police restrain him and hostages flee.

- **Force Field** might prove useful—after somehow getting him away from his human shields.

- **Invisibility** could get a squad member inside the bus, perhaps while someone else makes a food or medicine delivery.

- **Phase** or **Teleportation** would also get a squad member in, though not without being noticed.

- **Wall Crawling** allows a character to clamber up the side of the bus.

- **Suppress Explosion** is tailor-made for this situation.

A plan doesn’t have to appear on the list above to have a good chance of working. Players are invariably better at coming up with ingenious schemes than scenario writers are at anticipating them.

Bear in mind that at the back of Whitten's addled mind, he doesn't want to hurt anyone. The hostage taking is a confused cry for help. As such, he hesitates for a round or two when surprised, using his self-detonation only if the PCs horribly fail to give him an out. He will not try to harm the hostages by any means other than self-detonation.

JARED WHITTEN

Athletics 4, Health 4*, Mechanics 4, Scuffling 4, Stability 2.

Powers: Radiation Projection 12, Self-Detonation 12.

* To keep him alive as a witness for the next scene, fudge any result that would put him at -12 Health or below. At worst, he winds up in a prison hospital.

EMAT HIT

SCENE TYPE: CORE

As neither Pritchard or Swales are experienced interviewers, the squad is detailed to extract a confession from the captured Whitten.

Police medic, Dr. Alexa David, briefs the team as before they talk to him. On a brief medical examination, it became clear that he suffered from several serious medical disorders, most likely including schizophrenia. Whitten, who by this point was entirely cooperative, gave her the name of Dr. Jillian Wortman, his doctor at a free clinic, who supplied his prescription. He is now voluntarily taking anti-psychotic medications and although far from fully recovered is much more lucid than he was on admittance. David avoided as much as possible discussing the charges against him, not wanting to taint the interview process.

If asked, she ventures the following:

- His medical history, as supplied by Dr. Wortman, suggests that depression is his underlying condition, and that the onset of schizophrenia is a fairly recent development.
- Although this is an unusual progression, anamorphological psychology is still in its infancy, so it's hard to say what this means.

Anamorphology, or a glance at the Quade Diagram, will show that Whitten's powers correlate with depression, not schizophrenia.

Whitten is kept in a secure wing of a police holding

facility. His cell is reinforced to withstand self-detonation, and lead-lined to prevent radiation contamination. It is wired to fill with sleeping gas at the touch of a button from a guard watching in a monitoring station. The PCs are permitted to enter his cell if they desire. Alternately, they can talk to him from an adjoining observation area. A window of shock-resistant super-plastic allows them to see him; a microphone and speaker system permits verbal communication. Although he still reveals the same information if they opt for the safety of the observation chamber, he becomes more open and friendly if they enter his space.



WHAT IF HE BLOWS HIMSELF UP?

If Whitten self-detonates during the bus sequence, he later reconstitutes himself. He reappears in the food court of a mall near the intersection. (Adjust as necessary depending on the geography of your chosen Mutant City intersection.) Heedless of apprehension, he returns to his apartment to retrieve a few precious possessions, including a scarf knitted for him by his late grandmother. If the PCs don't keep watch on his apartment, allow him to fall prey to whatever approach they use to search for him. This isn't the main point of the story, so cut it as short as you can while still giving the group a sense of challenge.

If Whitten dies in the first scene, the information given in the interview sequence is found after a search of his grubby basement apartment. He has left a series of video diaries, in which he rants at the camera and shows probable signs of mutant interference. (Without the face-to-face contact required by the full influence detection protocol, this does not rise to the level of legal evidence, but nonetheless leaves the user of Influence Detection with a strong hunch.)

The interrogators know that there's no question as to whether Whitten committed the crime or not. Their job, at least at first, is to determine whether he knew the difference between right and wrong at the time

of the incident. If so, he'll be assigned to the general prison population at Kane Correctional. If not, he'll be incarcerated for an indefinite period at a high security psychiatric facility, but might be released if he seems to have recovered from his mental illness. Whitten's defense attorney will probably try to prove he was not criminally responsible; it's up to the cops to do their adversarial part and make an argument that he was sane at the time.

Whitten is now regretful, listless, and depressed. He makes for a challenging interview because he tends, at least at first, to shrug and half-heartedly agree with whatever proposition the PCs put forth.

However, if they start to ask him for details of his life, it becomes apparent that he suffers from selective amnesia, and is unable to remember:

- most of his activities for the past year
- news and pop culture events of the same time frame
- why he fixated on the UN, beverage contamination, or television personalities influencing his mind
- what he hoped to accomplish by hijacking the bus. He remembers that he started out wanting to convey some very important fact to the authorities, but then everything got muddled and went bad on him, and he did the wrong thing.

Influence Detection shows that Whitten clearly suffers from some form of ongoing mutant mental interference. If the PCs used a mental power on him to get him out of the bus, traces of that influence register, too, but they do not represent the strongest hold on them.

Once the detectives find evidence of influence, **Cop Talk** tells them that they have a new crime to investigate. They have to find out who messed with Whitten's mind. In addition to a possible charge of unlawful mental interference, the culprit may be an accomplice to the hijacking, either directly or by negligence.

(pipe) Whitten has no recollection of being mentally influenced. If pressed on the matter, he becomes agitated, fervently denying the possibility—even though his amnesia prevents him from being sure about anything. Finally, however, he recalls something about “the dismembered woman. There's a dismembered

woman above his head.” Just as quickly the memory fades, and he is unable to bring it back into focus or explain its significance.

Whitten fearfully refuses to consent to any dream exploration. If a squad member goes ahead and illegally uses **observe dreams** on him anyway, the poor man's dreams are found to be empty and desolate. They take place in a completely depopulated urban wasteland. Whitten's dream self wanders aimlessly through windswept streets. Occasionally a figure appears in the horizon, only to disappear when the dream observer attempts to move toward it. On a 2-point observe dreams spend, a character attempting to concentrate on the diffuse figure sees it briefly reappear. It seems to be a woman, and to be sectioned off into several pieces. There is no blood and although she is in pieces she does not recall a dismembered corpse. As the dream figure is indistinct, the player gets no better visual description than this.

Read minds yields nothing but mental static and a series of confused, blurry images. A character trying to drill down to Whitten's buried memories feels the beginnings of a severe, stabbing headache. If the PC persists, he still gains no information, but must make a Difficulty 6 Stability test, or face a +2 to all Difficulties for mutant power use for the next 24 hours.

(core) **Forensic Psychology** allows a character to break through Whitten's mental confusion by inducing a quasi-hypnotic state of concentration. He then becomes agitated, yelping: “The Anthrophage! The real Anthrophage was never caught! He's still out there! Still out there! He tried to make me join him.”

Everyone in the squad knows this name: it's like saying Charles Manson, or Son of Sam. Details on the Anthrophage's reign of terror are found in the section “Summer Of the Anthrophage.”

If asked to elaborate, Whitten searches his memory, but can't recall. **Bullshit Detector** shows him to be honestly trying. “That's why I needed your help, but whenever I think about it, I get so confused. It all went blurry, and then I found myself on the bus, blaming fluoride and the United Nations.” He collapses in frustrated sobs and (provided the group has already gleaned the clues it needs) is unable to continue.



NEW CLUE TYPE:

PIPE CLUES

A clue which is important to the solution of the mystery, but which becomes significant much later in the scenario, is called a pipe clue. The name is a reference to screenwriting jargon, where the insertion of exposition that becomes relevant later in the narrative is referred to as “laying pipe.” The term likens the careful arrangement of narrative information to the work performed by a plumber in building a house.

Pipe clues create a sense of structural variety in a scenario, lessening the sense that the PCs are being led in a strictly linear manner from Scene A to Scene B to Scene C. When they work well, they give players a “eureka” moment, as they suddenly piece together disparate pieces of the puzzle. A possible risk with pipe clues lies in the possible weakness of player memories, especially over the course of a scenario broken into several sessions. The GM may occasionally have to prompt players to remember the first piece of a pipe clue when they encounter a later component.

Pipe clues can be used in any GUMSHOE setting.

MR. FORGETTABLE

SCENE TYPE: DEAD END

Checks into Whitten’s background yield nothing to move the investigation forward. Because this sequence deals with a series of fruitless leads, keep the pacing as brisk as possible without breaking the fictional illusion of the game. Signal the presence of dead ends by summarizing interactions, instead of playing them out in detail.

THE DOCTOR

By the time they get to her, Whitten’s clinic doctor, Dr. Jillian Wortman, is much less forthcoming than she was with the police medic. Having done her duty to him as a patient by making sure he was given the needed medication, she’s now insisting on the standard doctor-patient confidentiality.

Wortman works at a clearly overwhelmed inner-city walk-in clinic. **Bureaucracy**—specifically, a threat to eat into her already stretched patient time with a fight over search warrants—induces her to share a few details:

- She can’t give any of her clients the time they deserve and doesn’t know as much about Whitten as she would like. Jared was a scattered and difficult patient, suffering from memory loss as well as schizophrenia and depression. Sometimes he would fail to show up for appointments; at other times, he would arrive unexpectedly and demand immediate treatment.
- Wortman suspected that the depression was his original disorder, in keeping with his position on the mutant power matrix. His late-onset schizophrenia doesn’t fit the usual pattern and may have been induced.

He told her that his problems got really bad about a year before he showed up at the clinic. Whitten was either unwilling or unable to elaborate.

THE DHS

As a registered Article 18 mutant, Whitten was required to file regular reports on his whereabouts and activities to the federal Department of Heightened Services. **Bureaucracy** reveals that his case officer is Ben Napier, and that he is stationed at the local DHS branch in city’s downtown core.

The DHS office is the very incarnation of a dysfunctional government agency. Water leaks from the aged acoustical tile in the ceiling. Dispiriting brown wallpaper frays from the walls. Desk officers sit pallidly in front of their computers, radiating quiet desperation.

After getting the runaround from an officious receptionist, the group eventually discovers that Ben Napier has been placed on indefinite medical leave, and that his cases have been split between several other agents. Finally they’re ushered to the cubicle of Dianne Gongaware, a tall, reedlike young woman who affects an inappropriately perky manner and speaks in PR bromides. She’s inherited the Whitten file. Dianne tries to convince the squad that all is well with the department, and that they bear no responsibility for any disaster or near-disaster involving Whitten. A little **Flirting**, conducted by a male investigator, gets her to drop the official ass-covering and supply the real story—off the record, naturally.

- While suffering from work-related stress, Napier dropped the ball on Whitten and a number of other Article 18, claiming to be in regular touch with them when he had no idea what they were doing.
- There is a record in his file of Whitten being treated for depression, a well-known side effect of his particular powers. Unfortunately the name of the therapist is missing from Napier's files.

Napier has indicated nothing about delusions, schizophrenia, or any more serious mental problems. If he had, Whitten would have been red-flagged and his schedule of visitations increased. However, Napier would have been in charge of those visits, too, and would probably have falsified them, too.

THE APARTMENT

Whitten's Article 18 filing lists an out-of-date address, but the landlord at that building has forwarding information to him. This leads the group to an illegal basement apartment in a blue collar neighborhood. **Law** secures a search warrant.

Whitten's possessions are meager. His closet contains a limited array of jeans and checked work shirts.

His books are mostly home improvement manuals. A stack of unopened mail includes several welfare checks, subscription offers for sports magazines, and plenty of junk mail. He owns a small television, an old DVD player, and a handful of DVDs, mostly action movies.

Instead of an address book, he has a dresser drawer filled with business cards and old sticky notes. If the squad phones all of the numbers, they get a list of his former employers as a handyman, various vendors of building and home improvement supplies, and contractors. These people paint a general picture of him as a once diligent worker who always seemed slightly off. About a year ago he became completely unreliable.

One of the sticky notes includes a series of crossed-out phone numbers, ending with one number that isn't crossed out, and the word "Dad." This leads to Cole Whitten, Jared's father.



THE FATHER

A check of Cole Whitten's record reveals a series of charges for assault, being drunk and disorderly, disturbing the peace, and public urination, dating from his youth to the present.

Cole Whitten comes to the door of his crummy apartment in a t-shirt and track pants, drunk and smelling like beer and pizza. He's a surly, pot-bellied man who's been dreading the appearance of cops on his doorstep ever since he saw his worthless craphole of a son making a spectacle of himself on the news. Whitten is abusive and uncooperative until cowed by **Intimidation**.

Whitten has little information to offer them.

- His son has always been soft and pathetic, ever since his whore of a mother dropped him on his head when he was little.
- Then he went and shamed the family by becoming a freak. And not just any freak, but the kind that lets the damn government peek into your doings.

- His mother ran off to Florida with a carpet cleaner over a decade ago and is in touch with neither of them.
- Whitten was just a kid when the Anthrophage was on his rampage. Cole has never heard him talk about it.

SUMMER OF THE ANTHROPHAGE

SCENE TYPE: CORE

With Whitten's background yielding no connection to his mental influencer, the team is left with the reference to the Anthrophage. Any city cop will remember the terrifying summer in which the Anthrophage went on his killing spree. The PCs recall the broad outlines of the famous case, but can fill in the details by consulting the closed case file. These are given in the timeline format as seen on p.133.

(This is a lot of exposition to dump on the players all at once. You may want to photocopy this material, break it up into short snippets of two or three entries apiece, and then hand them out to the players to read to each other, as if bringing each other up to date on the old case files.)

May 2, PY+4: Short order cook Delma Black disappears after leaving work at the Eastern Diner in a mixed business/residential district near the city's downtown core.

May 5, PY+4: Landlady Roberta Warren complains to a tenant in her nearby building of strange smells emanating from her apartment. The tenant, Waldo Maclagan, responds rudely, but the smells soon cease and Warren thinks nothing further of it.

May 17, PY+4: Residents of 37 Aldwych Crescent, Mr. and Mrs. Julius Zadovsky, report prowler activity in their backyard. Police respond an hour later, find footprints in the garden, but no sign of an intruder. Aldwych Crescent is part of a swank residential neighborhood.

May 19, PY+4: Investment banker Morgan Cook, late to a dinner party at 37 Aldwych, calls police to report signs of a break-in. The Zadovskys and two other guests, Bill Thorley and Kika Bard, are missing. Blood spatter and evidence of concussion beam activity are found at the scene. The words END OF TIME are scrawled on a wall in a blood, along with a strange symbol like a

devouring happy face.

May 31, PY+4: Roberta Warren finds that Maclagan has abandoned his apartment, after leaving it spotlessly cleaned.

June 3, PY+4: A box delivered to the city's top-rated TV news broadcast contains the left hand of Julius Zadovsky, along with video of the torture-murder of Kika Bard.

June 7, PY+4: Jeweler Amandine Warren is accosted while jogging not far from Aldwych Crescent by a man in a van, who appears to be wearing a mask. She flees to a neighbor's yard; the van pursues but is stopped by a fence in front of 140 Northcote Rd.

June 12, PY+4: Courier Bernard Leichter goes missing while his delivery vehicle idles in front of an office tower.

June 14, PY+4: In a message uploaded to a video sharing site, a masked individual calling himself the Anthrophage claims responsibility for the murders of Julius and Deann Zadovksy, Bill Thorley, and Bernard Leichter. His voice is electronically distorted.

July 16, PY+4: A maid shows up for work at 140 Northcote Road (site of Amandine Warren's escape) to find the front door open and residents Bart (42), Colleen (36), Emily (12) and Caden Guest (7) all missing. Signs of concussion beam use are found at the scene. Again a message is scrawled on the wall (DOOM EVER CLOSER) along with the devouring happy face character.

July 28, PY+4: In a second Anthrophage video, the masked man claims to have eaten portions of his victims and proclaims himself the "harbinger of a new apocalypse." He calls on his fellow mutants to rise up and devour the non-enhanced.

July 29, PY+4: In three separate incidents, suspected mutants are attacked by mobs. In each case, instigators of the incident believed them to be the Anthrophage. All are subsequently cleared.

July – August: Atmosphere of fear breeds a string of violent incidents throughout the city. Businesses close early. Tourism plummets. Retired policeman are recalled to active duty to boost patrols.

Aug 9, PY+4: Real estate broker Joanna Painter is

reported missing by her husband Brennan after failing to return from a home showing.

Aug 12, PY+4: In a third video, the Anthrophage briefly tastes a plate of pasta, then says, "Mmm, tastes like real estate agent." He then announces that he intends to "move up the food chain to someone everyone has heard of."

Aug 17, PY+4: Enhanced bodyguards of Dr. Lucius Quade spot a masked prowler on the grounds of his estate. They give chase; he eludes them, but one of them, Annice "Ebony Avenger" Beedell, reads his mind, seeing a cinderblock building obscured by willow trees.

Aug 18, PY+4: A police sketch artist's rendition of the scene caught by Beedell is broadcast to the media.

Aug 19, PY+4: An incoherent, possibly intoxicated Anthrophage appears in a final video, denying that he ever consumed the flesh of his victims, and offering a year-long truce if police stop looking for him.

Aug 20, PY+4: An anonymous tip identifies the building in the sketch as occupying a small lot in a rural area twenty miles from the city. State and local police coordinate a raid on the property, apprehending Waldo Maclagan. He injures several officers with his concussion powers before being subdued by a water blast.

Aug 21, PY+4: Maclagan denies being the Anthrophage, despite the discovery of partial human remains on his property.

In the weeks that follow, forensic scientists match body parts found on his property to the Zadovskys, Bill Thorley, and three members of the Guest family.

Sept 17, PY+4: Maclagan requests a new interview with police, and confesses to the six murders that can be directly tied to him by forensic evidence. He does not confess to other disappearances clearly connected to those crimes.

Apr 4, PY+5: Maclagan is convicted of the killings mentioned in his confession and sentenced to life in prison without possibility of parole. The Painter, Black and Leichtner murders remain technically open but are no longer actively pursued. Maclagan begins his sentence at the Kane Correctional Facility, isolated from the general population.

Oct 23, PY+6: In a television interview with television reporter Tod Stahl, Maclagan recants his confession.

(core) **Feb 26, PY+7:** Maclagan is stabbed to death by fellow inmate Leonard Wayne Lennard.

Feb 28, PY+7: Lennard confesses to the murder, claiming that he won Maclagan's trust over a period of months, "until he knew everything about him," then got close enough to him to shank him with a melted tooth brush.

VINCE WOOD

The lead detective on the case is a now-retired officer named Vince Wood. He is not a mutant; the original case went down before the formation of the HCUU. Vince, your typical hardboiled veteran cop, now owns and operates an Irish-themed bar in out the suburbs. He's happy to chew the fat about an old case but gets prickly if he thinks that the squad is trying to reopen what he considers to be a righteous bust. He provides the following supplementary information in response to relevant questioning:

- Maclagan was never subjected to an EMAT protocol, on account of they didn't exist in those days.
- He did it, all right. His hut was filled with gruesome crap that turned even Wood's stomach, and Wood's no wilting lily when it comes to this stuff.
- Wood is also sure that he killed Painter, Black and Leichtner, even though they were never able to prove it. The disappearances all took place within Maclagan's hunting grounds, during the kill spree. In interviews, he got a funny look on his face when their names were mentioned.

ANATOMY OF A SHANKING SCENE TYPE: CORE

Lead-In: Reference to Leonard Wayne Lennard in Anthrophage case files. A bald, porcine mountain of a man, Leonard Wayne Lennard is able to convey menace even while shackled to an interview table. Although he takes obvious pleasure in revisiting his life's greatest moment of glory, he still wants something in exchange for his cooperation. **Negotiation** gets him to talk, in trade for slightly better privileges.

Initially Leonard claims to be a sympathizer of the Human Integrity Campaign, and to have been motivated by anti-mutant hatred. At the same time, though, he quizzes the squad members about their own powers, as if he thinks they're really cool. **Forensic Psychology** suggests that he wanted to be part of a big story.

In response to the right questions, Lennard reveals the following:

- Although Kane Correctional is known mostly for enhanced prisoners, it's also a maximum security unit for especially dangerous DNAs criminals. Lennard seems proud that he qualifies to be incarcerated with super-powered inmates.
- He's serving a life sentence for killing three members of a rival biker gang, armed only with an ashtray and a broken pool cue.
- Getting close to Maclagan took some doing. He was in the isolation wing, he was paranoid someone would kill him, and he was capable of firing concussion beams.
- Lennard, who was detailed to cleaning duty in the isolation wing, had to wage a lengthy campaign to befriend him.
- As Maclagan grew to trust him, Lennard tried to get him to recount his experiences as the Anthrophage. But the funny thing was that Waldo didn't seem to remember much of it. He talked about what he did as if it had happened to somebody else, or wasn't his idea.
- (core) The one thing Maclagan regretted about his murder spree was how he disappointed his poor mother. He told the cops and reporters that his mother had passed away, and nobody double-checked. Apparently she reverted to her maiden name and still lives in the old neighborhood. When Lennard shanked him, he was trying to find a way to arrange a visit without anyone finding out who she really was. If there's anybody Leonard Wayne Lennard hates, it's a got-dang mama's boy.

If you want to add a little extra mayhem here, Lennard can go berserk after revealing his information. Although shackled to an interview table, he snaps the metal cuffs like they're made of taffy and lunges for the

weakest-seeming squad member. He doesn't really expect to succeed in killing anybody; he just wants a little excitement in an otherwise boring day. However, he doesn't relent until forcibly rendered unconscious.

LEONARD WAYNE LENNARD

Athletics 12, Health 15, Scuffling 12, Stability 2.

SUCH A NICE BOY SCENE TYPE: CORE

Lead-in: Lennard's reference to Maclagan's mother

Research shows that Waldo Maclagan's mother's maiden name was Celeste Mosser. A Celeste Mosser is in the phone book.

Celeste answers the door to her modest but well-kept duplex wearing an apron and oven mitts. She's in the middle of baking apple cinnamon muffins and offers the squad members one each, if they're willing to wait.

She also offers to make tea, sitting them down in an old-fashioned living room crowded with flora-print chairs and sofas.

Celeste readily admits to being "poor Waldo's" mother. This is how she invariably refers to him. She wants to cooperate with them, but quickly breaks down into quiet tears as she discusses him. **Forensic Psychology** shows that the burden of pretending not to be his mother has worn on her over the years. **Reassurance** helps to restore her composure so she can go on answering questions:

- She's never understood what drove him to do the terrible things he did.
- Waldo was always such a nice boy. When he developed his monstrous powers, he promised to use them only for good.
- The only strange thing she remembers about his mental state, before all the awfulness happened, was this time when they went to a magic act together. There was a hypnotist on the bill, and after one look at Waldo, he picked him first to go up on stage. He put Waldo in a trance and convinced him that he was a cartoon character, and then made him act drunk. (**Anamorphology**, or a glance at the Quade

Diagram, shows that he was probably *trance susceptible*; the flaw lies near his documented concussion beam ability. If they know from Tamara Carrera that he was suspected of having spontaneous combustion and fire control, the conjecture becomes even tighter.)

- (core) He must have fallen in with a bad crowd. It's not a pleasant thing to say, but she always thought his last girlfriend, Marcie Blunt, had something to do with it. That girl didn't come from good people. Back when Waldo knew her, she was waitressing at a tavern called the Brown Bull.

SEQUEL TIME

SCENE TYPE: ANTAGONIST REACTION

At some point when pacing requires a raising of the stakes, but no later than after the Celeste Mosser interview, the squad is called to a fresh crime scene in the same posh neighborhood as the original Anthrophage killings.

The scene was discovered by a mail carrier (or, if pacing requires otherwise, a pizza deliverer). Finding the door to 78 Europa Drive wide open and a scene of obvious violence inside, he called police.

A check of mail and other personal effects inside the home reveal that it belongs to Linnette Rose, a wine importer.

A search of the premises turns up her PDA, blood-spattered and apparently kicked under a couch. It shows that she was meeting in her home office with shipping broker Corinna Giesler at the apparent time of the attack.

The remains of neither victim are present in the house.

Evidence Collection turns up traces of dissolving webbing on the walls. On a 1-point spend, correlation of the webbing positioning and blood spatter suggests that one of the victims was glued to the wall and tortured.

The words SEQUEL TIME are scrawled on the wall in blood. Also present is the devouring happy face character.



THE WARDEN

The squad may check in with the prison warden before seeing Lennard. Tamara Carrera is a short, stocky woman who projects an air of harried authority. She can tell them why Lennard is locked up and explain that he's among the DNAS population of the Kane Facility; see main text.

Carrera comes across as professional but guarded. **Cop Talk** shows that she sees no upside for her or the institution in their inquiries. Carrera gets prickly if the squad seems to suggest that she or her people were negligent in letting Lennard kill Maclagan. **Forensic Psychology** notes a discomfort around the squad members that's probably rooted in their genetic status. All of her dealings with the enhanced are with prisoners, and with difficult ones at that.

The warden had little direct contact with Waldo Maclagan and has only one useful point to make about him:

He was strongly suspected of causing the flesh on a guard's arm to spontaneously combust. Maclagan denied having this power. The flame doused almost immediately, leaving only a minor burn. The guard was later dismissed for abusing other prisoners.

Anamorphology, or a glance at the Quade Diagram, shows that the power necessary to do this, spontaneous combustion, and the one required to douse the flame, fire control, are both close to his documented concussion beam ability.

Having checked the files, the squad knows that this character was kept secret from the public while the Anthrophage case was still open. Since then, however, it has been revealed in the pages of several true crime books. The mere presence of the sign does not rule out a copycat killer.

Whether copycat or original, the apparent killer has

added a chilling twist to his wall display. Stuck to the wall in a mixture of webbing and dried blood is a news article detailing the squad's intervention in the bus hijacking.

Though there's no shortage of evidence, none of it leads anywhere. Pace follow-up sequences quickly, until the group concludes that the leads they were already following still represent their best bet to crack the case.

I WAS A DIFFERENT PERSON THEN

SCENE TYPE: CORE

Lead-in: Celeste Mosser mentions Marcie Blunt

Inquiries at the Brown Bull tavern lead to an old address and roommate of Marcie Blunt, who gives them her present address—a graduate dorm in the city's largest university.

Marcie Blunt is fearful of the police. A slim, pallid blond, she dresses in the shabby chic fashion of a young academic. Marcie managed to stay out of the original Anthrophage investigation and is terrified of being dragged down now that a copycat has hit the headlines. (She'll lack this motivation if the PCs have somehow managed to keep the new case out of the media.) Having straightened herself out in the wake of a rocky past, she doesn't want her reputation ruined by association with Waldo Mclagan. The squad can earn her cooperation with **Reassurance** (promising to keep the old relationship confidential) or **Intimidation** (threatening to spill the facts to her professors and fellow students.)

When her resistance is overcome, Marcie answers questions as follows:

- She was a different person when she was seeing Waldo Mclagan: drinking, drugging, hanging out with dealers and thieves.
- Waldo wasn't like that; he was a nice guy, the first nice guy who ever showed her any affection. He helped her see she could make something of herself.
- (core) However, his mutant powers really screwed him up inside. At her urging, he went to a therapist, Dr. Calvin Steiner.
- She knew Steiner through a cousin; he helped

her through a suicidal phase. (If the squad asks, her name was Annie Mueller; not that it matters.)

- Her cousin was not a mutant.
- She was completely shocked and hurt when Waldo broke up with her, shortly after he started seeing Dr. Steiner. Apparently Steiner thought she was a bad influence on him or something.
- Marcie spiraled into depression and drug use after the break-up.
- The revelation that Waldo was the Anthrophage completely shocked her. His crimes all took place after they split.
- The shock of this convinced her that she'd better start looking after herself, because you can't trust anyone to be who they claim to be. That's when she started turning her life around, giving up intoxicants, getting a higher-end waitressing job, and putting herself through school on her tips.

DOCTOR-PATIENT CONFIDENTIALITY

SCENE TYPE: CORE

Lead-in: Marcie Blunt names Dr. Steiner

Dr. Calvin Steiner is a placid, gray-faced man in his mid-fifties. He wears a red turtleneck sweater under a tweed jacket and subtly flashes the bulky \$2000 watch on his wrist. His office is decorated in early-modernist style.

Steiner pretends to be cooperative while trying to give away as little information as possible. **Bullshit Detector** shows that he's got something to hide but doesn't sort out specific lies.

He makes the following claims, in response to relevant questioning:

- He did treat Waldo Mclagan, but even in death the details of their therapy sessions are covered by doctor-patient confidentiality. Mclagan never gave permission for these records to be revealed. Upon his death, as per their agreement, Steiner destroyed all session notes. Absent a court order, Steiner can't be

compelled to testify about their contents. The existence of a copycat killer won't change that. (**Law** shows that he's right, unless they can prove a connection between Mclagan and the new Anthrophage, no judge will issue a subpoena.)

- If he had any idea that Mclagan was committing crimes, he would naturally have reported him to the authorities, as professional ethics requires. (Untrue; by manipulating his memories and through non-mutant brainwashing techniques, Steiner turned Mclagan into a psychotic killer.)
- Steiner has never met Jared Whitten and never treated him. (Untrue; Steiner attempted to groom him as a new Anthrophage, but he proved too mentally fragile and cracked under the strain.)
- Since the SME, enhanced patients have gradually taken up the greater portion of Steiner's client list. The acquisition of new mutant powers is tremendously destabilizing and can lead to many mental disorders, not just the ones on that ridiculously oversimplified Quade diagram.
- Of course, he can't reveal the names of any of his patients, or discuss their case histories.
- Again, if he knew any of his patients were committing crimes of any kind, whether related to the Anthrophage or not, he would report them, as he is legally obligated to do. (Untrue.)
- Steiner is not a mutant. (Untrue.)
- If asked for an alibi for the time of the Linnette Rose home invasion, Steiner was either seeing patients (during the day) or attending an art opening (in the evening.)

(core) **Art History** identifies the many art prints in his office as belonging to the surrealist movement of the 1930s and 40s. These include reproductions of works by Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, Man Ray, and Andre Masson. One image in particular should resonate if the group got the pipe clue from the scene "EMAT Hit." In the sparely-appointed room dedicated to therapy, a print hangs over the therapist's chair. It's a work by Dali in which a woman's body is depicted as a series of

furniture pieces. This is the "dismembered woman" of Whitten's incoherent utterance.

GOING VIRAL

SCENE TYPE: ANTAGONIST REACTION

As the interview with Steiner winds down, the squad's lieutenant calls them and tells them to fire up a laptop: the new Anthrophage has uploaded a rant to a popular video sharing site. In the darkly-lit clip, a figure wearing a mask like that of the original Anthrophage, with a similarly distorted voice, says the following:

Greetings, cattle. Your respite from fear is at an end. I, the Anthrophage, have successfully transmigrated to a new form. I am not a mortal being. I am the harbinger. I travel like a virus, from mind to mind. I devour you. I am but the first of a new cannibal race, and humans are my food. Linnette and Corrina died screaming. We feast on them now. We are legion. We are the Anthrophage. Tremble at our glorious coming. Cops, you are next. We will eat your hearts.

(core) Even after **Data Retrieval**, the bad lighting and poor resolution offer no useful visual cues as to the subject's location. However, it is possible to pull background sounds, including lapping water and the low quack of a duck.

Comparison of the new video to the original Anthrophage messages shows that this person is two inches taller and about forty pounds heavier than Waldo Mclagan.

The mask is very similar to the original, but that wouldn't be hard to duplicate.

Officials of the video sharing site take the offending clip down immediately, but it's too late; Internet users have copied it and made it available through underground file sharing networks. The video was uploaded using a newly created dummy account tied to an anonymized IP address.

MORE MAYHEM

SCENE TYPE: ANTAGONIST REACTION

While they're digesting the video, a call comes in from dispatch—an SUV has been found, driven off the road in a lonely industrial park on the city's outskirts. The car upholstery is bloodied, its windshield smashed, its occupants missing. The words WE ARE THE VIRUS have been spray-painted across its crumpled hood, as is the cannibal happy face.

Research reveals that the car is registered to Wes Schaeffer, who turns out to be an automotive engineer from out-of-state. Contact with his employer reveals that he and his wife Sydney and adult son Phil are vacationing together in the city.

Energy Residue Analysis indicates that the car's front tires were melted by a heat blast.

What first seems to be a hit from a surface-to-surface missile turns out, after examination with **Explosive Devices**, to be a powerful strike from a blunt object—possibly a strong, flying mutant ramming into it.

Anamorphology (or a look at the Quade Diagram) shows that heat blast, flight, and strength are all closely grouped. They're also far from the Webbing power as found at the Rose house, indicating that there's more than one mutant behind the attacks.

COTTAGE COUNTRY TAKEDOWN

SCENE TYPE: CLIMACTIC CONFRONTATION

By now the group should suspect that Steiner is influencing mutants to act as the Anthrophage. However, when they attempt to trail or reinterview him, they find that he's nowhere to be found—not at his office, not at his condo in the city.

An **Accounting** search of publicly available information on Steiner shows that he owns a lake house in nearby cottage country, but has taken pains to conceal his connection to it with a shell company. The company seemingly exists only to own this property.

The sounds in the background of the new video should confirm to the squad that they need to check Steiner's cottage as a potential hideout.

As city cops, cottage country is out of their jurisdiction,

but **Law** allows an arrangement with local police, who lack mutant firepower, to let them perform the takedown.

Unless they take pains to make sure that he is elsewhere when they swoop down on his cottage, Steiner is present, and urges his brainwashed patients to attack immediately while he attempts to flee. If possible, he runs to his late model BMW and hits the road.

If he is not present, they react irrationally and attack their would-be arresting officers. There are as many patients as there are PCs. If you use fewer enemies than are listed here, drop the last ones on the list.

DR. CALVIN STEINER

Athletics 4, Driving 4, Fleeing 12, Health 6, Medic 6, Scuffling 4, Shooting 6, Shrink 12, Stability 4.

Powers: Memory Alteration 24

Weapon: handgun +1

TERRY CABLE

Athletics 6, Driving 6, Health 12, Scuffling 8, Shooting 5, Stability 2.

Powers: Blade Immunity 4, Webbing 12, Venom (Stinger) 12.

Weapon: handgun +1

Terry uses his gun until someone closes with him, then unfurls the stinger.

RAMON PINO

Athletics 8, Driving 2, Health 12, Scuffling 10, Stability 7.

Powers: Heat Blast 8, Strength 8, Flight 8.

Ramon fights with Heat Blast, using Flight to stay out of the fray.

ARIANNA CONRAD

Arianna Conrad

Athletics 8, Driving 6, Health 6, Scuffling 6, Stability 6.

Powers: Sonic Blast 12, Gills 4, Swimming 8.

If hard-pressed, Arianna tries to escape into the lake.

RICK BURNEY

Athletics 8, Driving 6, Health 6, Scuffling 6, Stability 6.

Powers: Force Field 12, Telekinesis 12.

Once safely behind his force field, Rick uses telekinesis

to hurl pieces of disassembled picnic table (+2 damage) at his opponents.



ADJUSTING THE NUMBERS

The Health ratings given for the antagonists in this scene assume that your group is clamoring for a big superhero dust-up to conclude the scenario.

For groups hoping for a foreshortened fight sequence more in keeping with police procedurals, lower the Health ratings as follows:

Steiner Health 2
Cable Health 6
Pino Health 4
Conrad Health 2
Burney Health 1

CASE CLOSED

SCENE TYPE: DENOUEMENT

Once apprehended and separated from Steiner, his patients gradually return to their senses. **Influence Detection** shows that everyone but Steiner has suffered mental alteration. **Forensic Psychology** breaks a patient of his or her connection to Steiner. They then confess their role in the Anthrophage crimes, implicating him as the mastermind who stole their memories. All of them fiercely deny taking part in any cannibalism—**Bullshit Detector** shows this to be true.

A search of the cottage turns up a mini-fridge in a crawlspace, powered by an extension cord. This contains both fresh and preserved human remains. DNA analysis matches the fresh remains to Linnette Rose and Corrina Giesler. The preserved remains match Delma Black and Bernard Leichtner, victims from the original Anthrophage spree—proving that Steiner was responsible for Waldo Mclagan's crimes as well. Traces of his saliva are found on the body parts.

Steiner never directly admits to the crimes. Under interrogation, he allows in a third-person hypothetical that a person like him might do something like that to satisfy inexplicable urges, and to delight in the thrill of terrifying the pathetic humans.



Assuming that the squad apprehends him and assembles the evidence given above, Steiner is found guilty and sentenced to life without parole at Kane Correctional.

In a letter to the editor of the local paper, Leonard Wayne Lennard announces his hope that he'll get to know Steiner in prison, just as he did Waldo Mclagan.



CHARACTER QUICK REFERENCE

Refer to this list of characters when you lose track of names or roles. This does not include the list of victims from the first Anthrophage crime spree, who don't really figure in the current investigation. Characters who are referred to but not seen appear in brackets.

Marcie Blunt — Waldo Maclagan's ex-girlfriend

Rick Burney — Steiner's force field using accomplice

Arianna Conrad — Steiner's gilled, sonic-blasting accomplice

Terry Cable — Steiner's webslinging accomplice

Tamara Carrera — Warden, Kane Correctional Facility

Dr. Alexa David — police medical officer

(Corinna Giesler) — shipping broker, initial victim of new Anthrophage

Dianne Gongaware — DHS agent, now responsible for monitoring Whitten's Article 18 status

Leonard Wayne Lennard — Waldo killer

Celeste Mosser — Waldo Maclagan's mother

(Waldo Maclagan) — the original Anthrophage

(Ben Napier) — DHS agent who dropped the ball on Whitten's Article 18 status

Ramon Pino — Steiner's heat-blasting, flying accomplice

Lt. Lauryn Pritchard — hostage negotiator

(Linnette Rose) — wine importer, initial victim of new Anthrophage

Wes, Sydney and Phil Schaeffer — second group of victims

Dr. Calvin Steiner — memory-altering mastermind behind the new and old Anthrophage attacks

Lt. Ken Swailes — tactical team leader

Cole Whitten — Jared's thoroughly unpleasant father

Jared Whitten — bus hijacker; briefly groomed by Calvin Steiner as a new Anthrophage

Dr. Jillian Wortman — clinic doctor who briefly treated Whitten after his experiences with Steiner



MUTANT CITY BLUES

CHARACTER NAME

CHARACTER CONCEPT :

ACADEMIC	Rating	Pool
Anthropology		
Archaeology		
Architecture		
Art History		
Forensic Accounting		
Forensic Psychology		
History		
Languages ^{1*}		
Law		
Natural History		
Occult Studies		
Research		
Textual Analysis		
Trivia		

INTERPERSONAL	Rating	Pool
Bullshit Detector		
Bureaucracy		
Cop Talk		
Flattery		
Flirting		
Impersonate		
Influence Detection		
Interrogation		
Intimidation		
Negotiation		
Reassurance		
Streetwise		

TECHNICAL	Rating	Pool
Anamorphology		
Ballistics		
Chemistry		
Cryptography		
Data Retrieval		
Document Analysis		
Electronic Surveillance		
Energy Residue Analysis		
Forensic Entomology		
Evidence Collection		
Explosive Devices		
Forensic Anthropology		
Fingerprinting		
Photography		

HEALTH

GENERAL ABILITIES	Rating	Pool
Athletics ^{2†}		
Driving		
Filch		
Health		
Infiltration		
Mechanics		
Medic		
Preparedness		
Scuffling		
Sense Trouble		
Shooting		
Stability		
Surveillance		

MUTANT POWERS - INVESTIGATIVE

MUTANT POWERS - GENERAL

DEFECTS

SUB PLOTS

* 1 language per rating pt. / † rating of 8+ increases Hit Threshold by 1

Player Name:

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