



# The Shiftsteel Symbionts

Expanded Races

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## Expanded Races: The Shiftsteel Symbionts

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Requires the Use of the D20 Modern Core Rulebook, Published by Wizards of the Coast

The Shiftsteel Symbionts are a unique breed of cybernetic organism. They are humans whose bodies and souls are bonded, on a genetic level, to alien alloys. Created by a series of interlaced time paradoxes, Shiftsteel Symbionts are gifted with an assortment of unique superhuman powers and a unique perspective on space/time.

This PDF expands dramatically on the Shiftsteel Symbiont race, originally presented in the *Psi-Watch Campaign Setting*. Inside, you'll find new racial traits, dozens of new race-specific talents and feats, and plot hooks. In addition, you'll find out what Shiftsteel Symbionts look like in Othervers America and Galaxy Command.

### Shiftsteel Symbionts

Medium Humanoid (Psionic)

Shiftsteel Symbionts are a race of geniuses, strange intellects sheathed in gleaming, reflective metal. Their alien abilities are derived from bio-mechanical components salvaged from starship crashes.

When their powers emerge, typically during late puberty, a Shiftsteel Symbiont undergoes a profound physical change. A living mercury carapace oozes through her pores, and sheathes her formerly human body. Only the Symbiont's face is left uncovered; the rest of her body is sheathed in liquid metal. Under her steel, the physiological changes are even more profound: human organs atrophy,

transforming into a bio-engine resembling a alien starship's star drive. Two to three days after her transformation, the newly evolved Symbiont vomits up the remains of her former anatomy, abandoning her former flesh like a rocket abandoning its first stage boosters.

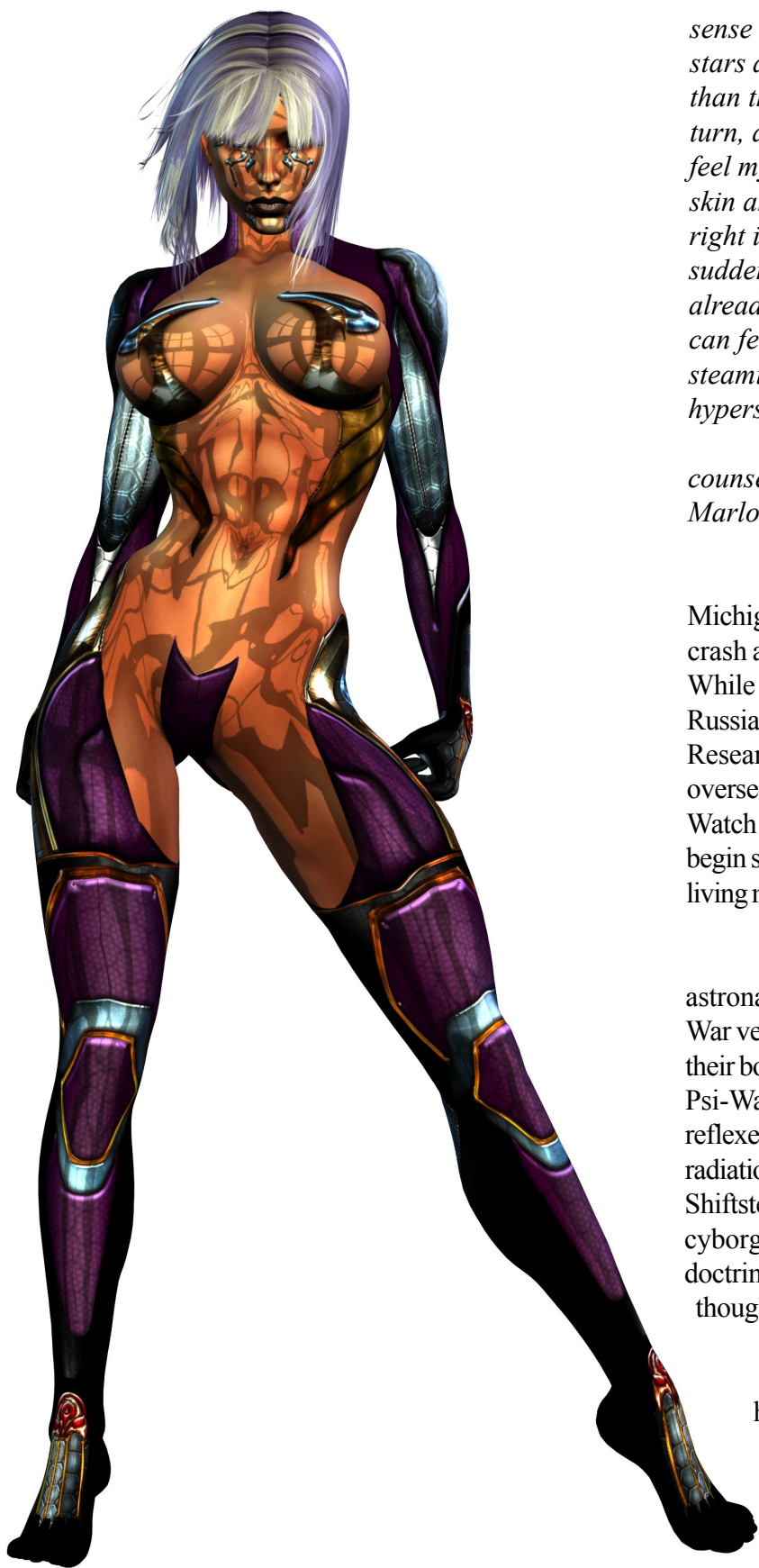
### Appearance

*"Fox Actual, this is Black Fox Six. We're pinned down five clicks northwest of Da Trang. Metahuman assault. I repeat, we're under metahuman assault. Primary attacker is proably a Shiftsteel, looks Russian made. Female, Vietnamese, flight capable, bright red hull, some kind of energy blasts from her hands. Face and left shoulder and bicep are exposed, Shiftmetal hull covers everything else. Got anybody like that in the intel files?"*

*-2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Chuck Wisenfield, encrypted radio transmission, 1969*

The Shiftsteel Symbiont's hull is a gleaming metallic layer, ranging from several nanometers at its thinnest (though the Symbiont's face appears fully human, it too is sheathed in a nearly invisible layer of alien alloy) to several centimeters thick at the torso. Smooth and warm to the touch, this bio-armor crackles with harmless electro-static discharges. Many Symbionts have gleaming silver hulls, especially those born on Earth. Other Symbionts might have soft gold, blood red, apple green, or even a hull the electric blue

of a lightning strike. Whatever color their steel, the Symbiont's hull normally has a mirror-like sheen, but when depressed or injured, her hull's color may dull and a spiderweb of fine cracks appears.



## Origin of the Species: Symbionts In Psi-Watch

3

*“Patient 10-405: I’ve been trying to make sense of the dreams. I’m flying through space- the stars are just blowing by me. I see a star- bigger than the sun, red, hot. I’m traveling so fast I can’t turn, and I know I’m going to hit this thing. I can feel my skin- [hesitates] ...I guess it’s not really skin anymore because it starts to melt. The star’s right in front of me, so hot, and then all of a sudden, I feel like I’ve jumped, even though I’m already flying. And I’m somewhere cold, dark, I can feel my...[hesitant] .... My hull [emphatic] steaming, cooling off instantly. And I realize I’m in hyperspace.”*

*- Transcript of post implantation counseling session for Lt. William Robert Marlowe, 1965*

A Culture heavy cruiser crashed in Lake Michigan in 1942. Technology recovered from the crash accelerated the US space program by decades. While the public space agencies were racing the Russians to orbit, the fledgling Department of Mental Research (soon renamed Psi-Watch) was created to oversee Project: Shiftsteel. Beginning in 1951, Psi-Watch understood the alien technology well enough to begin surgically bonding fragments of the starship’s living metal hull to human volunteers.

Over one hundred and fifty of America’s best astronaut candidates and most decorated Korean War veterans had shards of living alien steel sewn into their bodies. The results were everything the fledgling Psi-Watch could have hoped for: enhanced speed, reflexes and intellect, immunity to vacuum and hard radiation, unexplainable psionic gifts. The first Shiftsteel Symbiotes were elite soldiers, and the cyborgs became a standard part of US tactical doctrine, despite the personality changes and alien thoughts that the volunteers had to endure.

As technology and understanding of the human genome advanced, succeeding generations of Symbionts were linked more intimately to the alien metal. Next generation



Symbionts were bonded to the alien metal on a genetic level, mingling human DNA with alien bio-ware. During the early 1960s, a short lived and highly controversial US government project dumped trace amounts of liquid state Shiftsteel into the water supply of black and minority communities throughout the Southern USA, birthing a generation of Tuskegee Strain Symbionts. By the 1970s, the Russians had stolen and reverse engineered the Shiftsteel Symbiont technology, exporting it to the Warsaw Pact nations.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century's Shiftsteel Symbionts are the children and grandchildren of first-gen volunteers and the 1960s' unwitting test subjects. The Shiftsteel mutation is deeply recessive, and could conceivably lie dormant for generations. Psi-Watch estimates that there are fewer than 1,000 Shiftsteel Symbionts worldwide, but has documentation of less than 100 active Symbionts. Due to their rarity and high threat level, newborn Symbionts are a hotly contested resource.

## The Singularity Event

The Singularity Event is a theoretical space-time event that happens at an undisclosed point in the future. During a climactic battle with an as-yet-unidentified enemy, the Shiftsteel Symbiont Lt. Cassandra "Crucible" Feneris is murdered. From scattered clues, it's obvious that Crucible's death occurs years, perhaps even decades after the devastation of the Timecrosser-era.

The death of this immensely powerful metahuman ripples backwards in time, as fragments of Crucible's body and consciousness are scattered throughout the multiverse. Some of these fragments coalesce upon impact into the rare, psycho-active silicate referred to as Yahn crystal.

Yahn has been discovered and used to bootstrap indigenous technology by a million sentient species across a thousand realities, including the psychic warriors of *Galaxy Command's* 3176 AD. Yahn Crystal is shaped into birthing matrixes to create young *Noble Succubi*, the guardians of the Multiverse, while women wanting to bear god-touched children masturbate to orgasm with a dildo of smooth purple crystal in *Black Tokyo*. Yahn is a vital

component of faster-than-light engines in the *Otherverses America* and *Psi-Watch* realities alike. In short, Yahn is the lifeblood of the multiverse, important in all realities, and indirectly, paradoxically responsible for the creation of the species who will eventually create Yahn.

The Culture designed the shiftmetal hulls of their starships around the properties of Yahn crystal, creating a causality-loop whereby Crucible's death was directly responsible for her creation. Today's Crucible is a junior Psi-Watch flight officer, nowhere near as powerful or determined as her martyred future-self will one day become. She is aware of her fate, mostly through precognitive dreams and the occasional time paradox. Crucible has also met at least one of her alternate selves: Cassie Andra Feneris, a pyrokinetic activist/superhero from the alternate 22<sup>nd</sup> Century of *Otherverses America*, when the two teamed up to stop a terror strike by a cross-dimensional team of Lifer extremists.

## Shiftsteel Symbionts of the Culture

The Culture claims a caste of pilot-workers fundamentally similar to the Shiftsteel Symbionts. Known as "Walkers of the Grey Corridor" these alien Symbionts are statistically identical to their Earth-born counterparts, though their appearance is slightly different. Where Earth's Symbionts resemble human figures dipped in colorful liquid chrome, the Culture's Symbionts display intricately carved, baroque armor which is invariably a rich gold against their dark skins. Their armor is gnarled coral, while Earth-born Symbionts have hulls as smooth as glass.

The Culture's "Walkers of the Grey Corridor" often select the Ghostwise starting occupation, and are assigned to the Culture's enormous space fleet. "Walkers of the grey Corridor" account for some of the Culture's greatest combat pilots, starship captains and famous Naval officers.





## In Otherverse America

In Otherverse America, Shiftsteel Symbionts represent progress and the endless mysteries of hyperspace. In Otherverse America, Shiftsteel Symbionts are a naturally occurring, cosmic phenomena, one documented among almost every culture that has developed hyper-space travel. Symbionts are servants of the Genesis, and are harbingers of progress and technological innovation. Shiftsteel Symbionts births are rare and occur seemingly at random, usually on worlds that have only recently discovered space-flight and ITF travel. The moment their shift-steel carapace deploys for the first time, the Symbiont is blessed with an insight into ITF-space and advanced physics, serving as a living ‘bootstrap’ for native technology.

Shiftsteel children are often born to spacers. No current genetic screening can detect the genetic changes inflicted on humanoid astronauts passing through the ITF Corridor. The children and grandchildren of spacers have a small, but definitely not zero, probability of being born as a Shiftsteel, or expressing their latent Shiftsteel potential when they reach puberty.

Several dozen Shiftsteel Symbiont infants were born on Diana, the Lunar colony, during the so-called “Silver Summer” of 2099. Today, these powerful post-humans are in elementary school, and several have taken their first ITF journeys out system, on visits to Kor the Stonecutter homeworld, where they are minor celebrities.

In Otherverse America, Shiftsteel Symbionts gain the following additional racial ability.

**ITF Immunity (EX):** Shiftsteel Symbionts never need to make WILL Saves to withstand ITF Trauma, described fully in the Guide to the Known Galaxy sourcebook (Otherverse Games, 2009). Shiftsteel Symbionts are immune to the harmful effects of ITF travel- their natural environment is hyperspace.

## In Galaxy Command

Shiftsteel Symbionts are often born to human astronauts who have survived time anomalies, space-warps and accidents while transiting hyperspace. As in Otherverse America, Shiftsteel Symbionts are born to those whose genetic structures were warped via various space-time enigmas. Time travelers, dimension crossers and reality nomads of all sorts can father Shiftsteel Symbionts, who tend to grow up mostly normal until their powers emerge during their teen years.

## Shiftsteel Symbiont Racial Traits

*“After engaging the target, I fired a three round burst with my M-16 into center mass. All three shots simply bounced off the weird silvery armor on the target’s torso. Then Officer Kendricks opened fire with his Desert Falcon ion rifle. The target simply stretched out his hands,*



and all of Kendricks' socks  
 simply...curved....around the targets body."  
 -After action report by Detroit PSI-SWAT  
 entry team member SGT. Darryl Holmes, 1993.

## Size and Type

Shiftsteel Symbionts are Medium humanoids with the Psionic subtype. They receive no special bonus or penalty due to their size. A Shiftsteel Symbiont's base land speed is 30 ft.

## Ability Score Modifiers

**+2 INT, +2 WIS, -2 CHA.**

Shiftsteel Symbionts are far more intelligent than the norm, incredibly strong willed and perceptive. However, they live everyday with alien thoughts encoded in their genome. They have difficulty relating to ordinary humans, and often struggle to express the great thoughts trapped inside the steel.

## Enhanced Senses

Shiftsteel Symbionts gain *lowlight vision* and *darkvision* with a 60 ft range.

## Favored Powered Hero Talent Tree

If using the One Planet, One Power rules, Shiftsteel Symbionts have **Time Manipulator** as their racially favored talent tree. Alternatively, the Symbiont's choice of Shiftsteel Machinery might determine the character's racially favored tree, if you want more versatile and diverse Shiftsteel Symbionts.

## Racial Skills

Shiftsteel Symbionts receive a +2 racial bonus on Navigate and Knowledge (physical science) checks. Their gleaming carapace whispers into their mind, giving the Symbionts a natural insight into quantum physics and stellar phenomena.

## Shiftsteel Carapace (EX)

The alien metal covering their bodies gives the Shiftsteel Symbionts phenomenal durability and energy resistance. Shiftsteel Symbionts receive a +3 natural armor bonus to Defense.

In addition, the creatures are completely immune to radiation, heat and fire damage, as well as to electrical damage. Shiftsteel Symbionts suffer only half damage from cold based attack forms, or no damage on a successful save.

Due to their bright glow, which cannot be suppressed, Shiftsteel Symbionts suffer a -8 racial penalty on Hide (Stealth) checks in dim illumination or worse.

## Shiftsteel Machinery (SU)

There are several different 'castes' of Shiftsteel Symbionts. Psi-Watch theorizes that the alien metal taken from the Culture warship is attempting to produce 'replacement parts' for the salvaged starship, and that the different 'breeds' of Shiftsteel Symbionts represent different components required for starship operation.

During character creation, the Shiftsteel Symbiont must select one of the following primary cyber-cores, which determines the Symbiont's capabilities. Once chosen, the selection cannot be changed.

*Astro-nav Engine (SU):* The Symbiont's inner hull is laced with worm-hole generators and quantum string computers. The Symbiont can teleport over extremely short distances. A number of times per day equal to 3 + her CON Modifier, the Symbiont can teleport up to 30 ft as a free action. The Symbiont must have a clear line of sight where she is jumping.

*Favored Powered Hero Talent Tree:*  
 Teleporter

*Combat Array (SU):* The Shiftsteel Symbiont can vent the exotic energies her body produces. As often as once per round, the Symbiont can fire a blast of energized particles and strange matter. The energy blast is a ranged weapon with a 30 ft range increment which inflicts 1d4 + CON modifier points of energy damage. When this ability is chosen, the Symbiont chooses whether the energy blast will inflict Cold, Electricity, Fire, or Sonic damage.

*Favored Powered Hero Talent Tree:*  
 Shooter



Shiftsteel Symbionts who choose this Machinery manifest smooth, round gems that grow, like decorative tumors, upon their torso, forearms and smaller gems at the knuckles.

The color of the gem reflects the Symbiont's energy type: yellow or crimson for Fire, blue for Electricity, green for Cold, or purple for Sonic. Culture Shiftsteel Symbionts have a different color palate: blue for Fire, violet for Cold, yellow for Electricity, and translucent for Sonic.

*EW Array (SU):* The Symbiont's internal systems generate a powerful stealth field. The Symbiont's voice and image cannot be recorded or stored electronically, though the creature can use 'real time' communications links like telephones and VOIP protocols.

The Symbiont receives a +4 racial bonus on Defense against guided ranged attacks, such as powered missiles, but not ranged weapons targeted 'by eyeball' or unguided ranged attacks.

*Favored Powered Hero Talent Tree:* Illusionist

*Lift Engine (SU):* The strange energy generating organs within their bodies give them the ability to spurn gravity and fly through the localized manipulation of gravitons. Symbionts have a flight speed of 60 ft (good maneuverability)

*Favored Powered Hero Talent Tree:* Flyer

*Quantum AI (EX):* The Shiftsteel Symbiont's incredibly keen mind works with incalculable speed, and is capable of drawing conclusions from minimal data. The Symbiont is a deductive savant. Each day the Symbiont receives a pool of bonus points equal to twice her ranks in Knowledge (physical sciences).

Any number of these daily bonus points can be spent by the Symbiont to improve the results of any INT or WIS based skill check, Concentration check, Initiative check or WILL saves. The points must be spent prior to rolling to resolve the check.

*Favored Powered Hero Talent Tree:* Genius

*Quickflex Hull (EX):* The Symbiont's liquid metal skin is designed for maximum grace and inhuman

agility. The Symbiont's chromed body can flex and stretch in ways impossible for a human, and the Symbiont receives a +2 racial bonus to DEX.

*Favored Powered Hero Talent Tree:* Reflex

*Xeno-Biology Suite (SU):* The Symbiont is programmed with a complete xeno-biological database and emergency DNA replication system. Three times per day, the Symbiont can summon any creature of the animal, aberration, dragon, magical beast or ooze type which is CR 1 or less. This creature appears in the nearest open square to the Symbiont and serves the metahuman loyally for up to one minute or until destroyed. The creature disintegrates after one minute as its flash-cloned genetic structure breaks down.

*Favored Powered Hero Talent Tree:* Summoner

## **Probability Curvature (SU)**

The Shiftsteel's body naturally generates a subtle, and omnipresent source of light, roughly equal to a heavy duty spotlight. In addition, this aura alters quantum flux and distorts probability. Psi-Watch theorizes that this aura is similar to training and shipboard damage control devices commonly used on Culture starships.

During character creation, the Symbiont selects any two skills, which must be keyed to different ability scores. Once chosen, Curved skills cannot be changed.

Performing either skill in the Symbiont's presence becomes easier. Anyone within 30 ft of the Symbiont receives a +1 luck bonus on checks with that skill. The Symbiont does not benefit from her own Probability Curvature, but can receive a bonus provided by other members of her species.

## **Symbiotic Autism (EX)**

Shiftsteel Symbionts are prone to a host of unusual psychological problems, in many ways fundamentally similar to autism. If the Symbiont ever rolls a natural one on any skill check, they enter a trance state for 1d4+1 minutes.

While entranced, the Symbiont stares blankly, her hands moving automatically as she attempts to



correct their errors, and cannot be awakened. During this time, the Symbiont is *helpless*, and will not even defend herself if attacked or injured.

## **Shiftsteel Symbiont** **Starting Talents**

*“A lot of us, we talk about our hull. When we get shot, we discuss our wounds in terms of critical system damage. We’re not cyborgs, but we’ve got more in common with them than we do with the Meat. We call it a Hull and not skin because skin’s something Meat has, and we’re definitely not Meat. We’re superior, which as obvious to us as saying Meat is superior to a chimpanzee. No prejudice, no arrogance, just simple, observable and provable fact.”*

*-Fireforged, Shiftsteel Symbiont pilot, contracted to Metamorphosis North*

### **Augmented**

#### **Xeno-Biology Suite (SU)**

**Prerequisite:** Shiftsteel Symbiont race, Xeno-Biology Suite racial trait

Once per day, when using your Xeno-Biology Suite racial trait, you can summon a single creature or group of creatures up to CR 3.

### **Culture Born (EX)**

**Prerequisite:** Shiftsteel Symbiont race

You are a “Walker of the Grey Corridor” a trusted Culture starpilot who has been uplifted to superhumanity via the implantation of alien alloys and genemods. Your hull is a rough, gnarled organic carapace, resembling coral cast from gleaming gold.

You speak and are literate in the Culture’s language, and receive a +2 trait bonus on Pilot checks. You are considered to be both a Shiftsteel Symbiont and a member of the Culture for effects

based upon race, and may select abilities unique to the Culture, such as feats, talents and advanced classes.

### **Ebon Carapace (SU)**

**Prerequisite:** Shiftsteel Symbiont race

Your Shiftmetal hull is laced with darkmatter, which absorbs light like a singularity. Most of your hull is a glossy, iridescent black, like water upon oil. Small gems and ribbed areas of grey or silver break up the gleaming ebon of your hull.



You do not suffer a racial penalty on Hide checks, nor do you shed light. Due to the light absorbing property of your hull, you receive a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks made in areas of dim illumination or worse.

**Drawback:** Your darkness eliminates most of the utility of your Probability Curve racial trait. You may select only one skill to enhance with this racial trait, and your aura only extends 15 ft.

### Forever Bound (EX)

**Prerequisite:** Shiftsteel Symbiont race, allegiance to the Blooded Ghost species, Speak/Read Blooded Ghost language

You are a strange hybrid creature created when a Blooded Ghost embryo is implanted in the powerful, but restrained body of a captured Shiftsteel Symbiont. Your gleaming metallic hull is wreathed in heat-less blue flames, the color of butane fire. Your predatory skull is wreathed in even more intense flames, and your six strange eyes glow like stellar phenomena.

Your racial abilities are modified in the following ways.

- Your Probability Curve racial trait is always keyed to the following skills: Jump and Survival.
- You gain the Scent special ability of a Blooded Ghost.
- You are considered to be both a Shiftsteel Symbiont and a Blooded Ghost for effects based upon race, and may select abilities unique to Blooded Ghosts, such as feats, talents and advanced classes.

### Hypnotic Hull (SU)

**Prerequisite:** Shiftsteel Symbiont race, Social or Special starting role

Most creatures can get lost in the shifting depths of your colorful hull, staring longingly at the shifting, distorted reflections covering your body for hours. The colors reflecting off your metallic skin have a mildly hypnotic effect. You receive a +1 trait bonus on Diplomacy checks made to prevent violence, and

the difficulty of any mind control effect you cause made specifically to prevent violence is increased by +1.

### Near Humanity (SU)

**Prerequisite:** Shiftsteel Symbiont race

You can force your symbiotic hull into dormancy, allowing you to recover some of your lost humanity. As a full round action, you can deactivate the following racial abilities: Shiftsteel Carapace, Probability Curvature and Shiftsteel Machinery, while also deactivating your Symbiotic Autism racial drawback. While dormant, you cannot use any suppressed abilities, but are not subject to the Symbiotic Autism disadvantage. You can reactivate your dormant racial abilities with one minute of concentration.

When 'dormant' your Shiftsteel hull takes the form of luminous clothing made of some shimmering, exotic 'material' that is the same color as your hull under normal circumstances. While dormant, you are considered to be both Human and Shiftsteel Symbiont, for effects related to race.

### Tailored Probability (EX)

**Prerequisite:** Shiftsteel Symbiont race, Iron Will

Your Probability Curvature racial ability is augmented. Rather than selecting two skills from different ability scores to be improved by Probability Curvature, you choose two skills from the same ability score (such as Jump and Climb, both keyed to STR, for instance) plus a third skill keyed to a second ability score (such as Treat Injury, keyed to WIS).

### Tuskegee Symbionts (EX)

**Prerequisite:** Shiftsteel Symbiont race

Your origins can be traced back to early 1960s-era experiments on Southern blacks, by rogue elements within the US government. You are one of the relatively few Shiftsteels to emerge from the tests—many other children exposed to Shiftsteel alloy died or grew up deformed, not superhuman.

You've got a particularly righteous grudge against the US government, which still hasn't acknowledged the experiments. You receive a +1 trait bonus on ranged attack rolls and a +1 trait bonus on Intimidate checks made against any character with a



primary allegiance to the USA, or to any American agencies, such as the NSA, FBI or Psi-Watch.

### Quickblade (EX)

**Prerequisite:** Shiftsteel Symbiont race, Quickflex Hull racial trait

The bonus to Dexterity provided by your Quickflex Hull racial trait improves to +3, not +2 as is typical. You have an instinctive understanding of the physics of bloodloss and the math behind knife combat. You receive a +1 trait bonus to damage with a successful attack that inflicts Slashing damage.

### Yahn Sense (EX)

**Type:** Shiftsteel Symbiont race

Your hull vibrates in tune with the harmonics of Yahn Crystal deposits. You can unerringly sense the distance of an direction to any amount of Yahn crystal (from coin sized shards to massive underground deposits) within five miles.

## Shiftsteel Symbiont Racial Feats

*“At the moment my Shiftsteel traits manifested, I became aware of the entirety of my life, from the moment I was conceived to a point several days after my physical death, as my last neural connection finally flickers and fades out. I am aware of every facet of my existence, and thus, I can act with decisiveness and accuracy that unempowered homo sapiens simply cannot match. You would do well to heed my advice.”*

- Misha Fate, 8 year old Shiftsteel Symbiont oracle, addressing the Blooded Ghost tyrant, Lord Gehenna

### Accelerated Timeline (Shiftsteel Symbiont)

You perceive time in a manner fundamentally different than other mortals. From your point of view, you have infinite time to make decisions and respond to threats. To the ordinary mortals around you, you seem to move with unnatural speed and alacrity.

**Prerequisites:** Shiftsteel Symbiont, Lightning Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Knowledge (physical sciences) 8 ranks, Character level 8<sup>th</sup>

**Benefit:** You may take up to two standard actions in a round, or trade them for move equivalent actions at a ratio of two move: one standard.

**Normal:** You may take one standard and one move equivalent action per round.

### Hollow Shell (Shiftsteel Symbiont)

You have completed the transformation into a true, evolved member of the Shiftsteel Symbiont race. Beneath your gleaming psi-metal carapace, your organs have atrophied to nothing. You have no need for internal systems- sub-quantum energy cascades alone sustain your consciousness.

**Prerequisites:** Shiftsteel Symbiont race, Knowledge (physical sciences) 4 ranks,

**Benefit:** Your metallic shell is completely hollow, and though your face appears human, it is a strange mask only a fraction of an inch thick, hiding the nothingness inside. You do not have internal organs or vital zones. You become immune to critical hits and precision-based additional damage. You are not subject to energy drain, ability score damage or ability score drain.

### Intelligent Design (Shiftsteel Symbiont)

You have taken conscious control over the functions of your changed body. The physical perfection you display is only a minor facet of your mental perfection.

**Prerequisites:** Shiftsteel Symbiont race, Educated, Smart Hero or Powered Hero (Genius) level 5<sup>th</sup>

**Benefit:** You use your INT modifier as the modifier for all actions that would normally be modified by an ability score modifier. For instance, you apply your INT modifier to all saving throws, not your CON, DEX and WIS modifiers respectively, to all skill checks and to both attack rolls and defense.

### Intelligent Recreation (Shiftsteel Symbiont)

Reassembling your body from its component molecules is a challenging puzzle for you, making you effectively immortal.

**Prerequisites:** Intelligent Design

**Benefit:** If you are slain, you may attempt a Knowledge (physical sciences) check, the DC of which is 20 + your total character level. If this check is successful, you return to life with no ill effects from the

resurrection in 10 days, minus 1 day for every point you beat the Check DC by. You may make one check per hour for a number of hours equal to your INT score upon your death. If unsuccessful, you perish and must be returned to life in another manner, if you return to life at all.

Prior to your resurrection, you might appear as a strange apparition around the place of your death or any other place with an emotional connection. You might take the form of a nervous system, hanging suspended in mid air, or a partially muscled skeleton, that screams for several seconds before vanishing.

### **Lost Humanity (Shiftsteel Symbiont)**

Your transformation into a chrome-skinned xeniform has driven human weakness from your consciousness.

**Prerequisite:** Shiftsteel Symbiont race, character level first

**Benefit:** You become immune to mind influencing effects, unless that effect is generated by another Shiftsteel Symbiont.

**Drawback:** You cannot dedicate yourself to a cause or ideal as a human could. Treat any allegiance you possess as a secondary allegiance.

### **More Perfect Machine (Shiftsteel Symbiont)**

The alien bio-tech sewn into your DNA gives you powers as a byproduct of its attempts to rebuild the Culture starship it was originally scavenged from. You alien bio-systems 'repaired' themselves more thoroughly than is normal for a member of your species, and thus you are more powerful than most Shiftsteel Symbionts.

**Prerequisite:** Shiftsteel Symbiont race

**Benefit:** You may choose another Shiftsteel Machinery component as a racial trait.

**Special:** You may select this ability up to five times. Each time you do, you gain a new racial trait. You cannot select the same racial trait more than once.

### **Yahn-Shard Affinity (Shiftsteel Symbiont)**

You are one of the few members of your species to realize that Yahn shards are the broken fragments of one of your race's greatest heroes, thrown back through space-time at the moment of her

death. This realization allows you to draw extraordinary power from these rare crystal shards.

**Prerequisite:** Shiftsteel Symbiont race, WIS 17+, Attentive

**Benefit:** When carrying an Ioun stone, a fragment of Yahn crystal or a weapon with the Yahn crystal gadget, you receive a +2 bonus to your INT, WIS and CHA scores, thanks to the lingering soul-echoes trapped in the crystalline matrix. The bonus to your INT score does not provide additional skill ranks.

The bonus provided by your Probability Curve racial trait increases to +3, and your Probability Curve radius increases to 60 ft. Shiftsteel Symbionts with this feat manifest even more impressive and ornate bio-metallic carapaces while in possession of a piece of Yahn crystal.

## **Appendix: Yahn Shards and Ioun Stones**

Yahn crystal deposits are found around the galaxy. Raw shards of the alien gem have a strange, alien beauty, and are often carried by Shiftsteel Symbionts as symbols of their race. According to the gleaming alien warriors, the memories of their greatest leader are encoded in the crystals, and by meditating on the shards, the Symbiont can catch a fleeting glimpse of the future.

A character holding or wearing a Yahn shard receives a +1 insight bonus on any three Knowledge skills of choice, chosen when the Shard is first discovered/purchased. Once chosen, the skill selections can't be changed.

A Yahn Shard is a Tiny Object (about 1 lb), with a Purchase DC of 8+1d4.



## Ioun Stones (PL 8)

The Culture word for “tool” is Ioun (pronounced oy-een), and the Culture name for these psychoactive crystals has migrated to multiple worlds. Ioun Stones are psycho-reactive technology based around the unique property of Yahn Crystal.

Ioun Stones come in various shapes and colors, which indicate their purpose. Nearly microscopic circuitry is visible within the crystalline facets. All Ioun stones are machine cut and polished to microscopic tolerances. They are smooth and

perfectly faceted. The coin-sized gems float in the air and must be within 3 feet of their owner to be of any use. When a character first acquires a stone, she must hold it and then release it, whereupon it takes up a circling orbit a few feet from her head. Thereafter, a stone must be grasped or netted to separate it from its owner.

The owner may voluntarily seize and stow a stone (to keep it safe while she is sleeping, for example), but she loses the benefits of the stone during that time. Ioun stones have Defense 24, 10 hit points, and hardness 5. The stones can also be incorporated

| Color                  | Shape      | Effect   | Purchase DC |
|------------------------|------------|--|-------------|
| Clear                  | Spindle    | Sustains creature without food or water  | DC 22       |
| Iridescent             | Spindle    | Sustains creature without air  | DC 18       |
| Rose                   | Circle-Cut | +1 insight bonus to Defense  | DC 25       |
| Rose                   | Sphere     | +1 dodge bonus to Defense  | DC 22       |
| Deep red               | Diamond    | +2 enhancement bonus to Dexterity  | DC 34       |
| Incandescent blue      | Circle-Cut | +2 enhancement bonus to Wisdom   | DC 34       |
| Pale blue              | Rhomboid   | +2 enhancement bonus to Strength   | DC 34       |
| Pink                   | Circle-Cut | +2 enhancement bonus to Constitution   | DC 32       |
| Green                  | Rhomboid   | +2 enhancement bonus to Charisma   | DC 35       |
| Pale Purple            | Sphere     | +2 enhancement bonus to Intelligence   | DC 35       |
| Dark blue              | Rhomboid   | Alertness (as the feat)  | DC 26       |
| Pink marbled with gold | Diamond    | The character's Psionic and Lifechained subtypes are suppressed anytime doing so would be advantageous to the character. Lifechained subtype cannot be detected by genetic tests | DC 30       |
| Pale Blue              | Diamond    | Gain the following Feats: Martial Weapon Proficiency, Personal Firearm Proficiency, Advanced Firearms Proficiency  | DC 36       |
| Canary yellow          | Square-Cut | Character gains one Psionic Precursor feat which must have no prerequisites  | DC 40       |
| Pearly white           | Spindle    | Regenerate 1 point of damage per hour  | DC 41       |
| Pale green             | Prism      | +1 competence bonus on attack rolls, saves, skill checks, and ability checks   | DC 43       |



into a costume, placed in the hilt of a weapon or otherwise permanently stored. They function as long as they are within 2-3 ft of the owner.

Ioun Stones are always Licensed (+1) items. On Culture worlds, they are Restricted (+2) items for non-Culture characters.

## **Appendix:** **Young Shiftsteel Symbionts**

The following low level characters are all Shiftsteel Symbionts, though aside from their race, they have little in common. Future sourcebooks will include more powerful Shiftsteel Symbionts suitable for use as major campaign NPCs and epic level threats.

Shiftsteel Symbiont Ninja:

Killshade (CR 1) Killshade (CR 5)

Shiftsteel Symbiont Time Traveller:

Quanta (CR 1) Quanta (CR 5)



## Shiftsteel Symbiont Ninja (CR 1)

Code Name: Killshade  
File Name: Vang Chu  
Medium Humanoid (Psionic),  
Fast Hero 1

### XP 400

**Init** +4 **Senses** lowlight vision,  
Darkvision 60 ft  
**Aura** Probability Curvature (+1 luck  
bonus on Disable Device checks made  
within 15 ft of Vang Chu)  
**Allegiances** money, the Blacklist

### Defense

**AC** 20 (+3 natural armor, +4 DEX, +3  
class)  
**HP** 1d8+1 HP (9 HP)  
**FORT** +1 **REF** +5 **WILL** +1  
**Immune:** Radiation, Fire, Electrical  
Damage  
**Half Damage:** Cold  
**Weaknesses** Symbiotic Autism  
(helpless for 1d4+1 minutes after rolling  
a natural 1 on any skill check)

### Offense

**Spd** 30 ft  
**Melee** +4 balisong knife, (1d6 slashing,  
19-20 crit)  
+4 unarmed strike (1d4  
bludgeoning)

### Statistics

**Str** 11 **Dex** 19 **Con** 13 **Int** 15 **Wis** 13  
**Cha** 9

**Base Atk** +0 **CMB** +0 **CMD** 14

**Starting Occupation** Criminal

**Starting Talent** Ebon Hull (+4 Hide in dim  
illumination or worse)

**Feats** Simple Weapons Proficiency, Brawl, Weapon  
Finesse

**Skills** Climb +4, Drive +8, Hide +9(+13 in dim  
illumination), Jump +4, Knowledge (physical sciences)  
+4, Knowledge (streetwise) +7, Navigate +4, Move  
Silently +8, Swim +4

**Talents:** Sneak Attack I

**Languages** Vietnamese, English



**Gear** two balisong knives, cell phone  
**Action Points** 6

**Quickflex Hull (EX):** +2 racial bonus to  
DEX

**Sneak Attack (EX):** If Vang can catch an  
opponent unaware, he can strike for extra damage.  
Vang's sneak attack inflicts +1d6 points of extra

damage anytime his target is denied his DEX bonus to Defense (even if the target does not actually have a DEX Bonus), or when the assassin flanks his target. On a critical hit, the extra damage is added in, rather than being multiplied. Vang may deal sneak attack damage with a ranged weapon only when within 30 ft of the target.

With a weapon that deals non-lethal damage, Vang can make a sneak attack that deals non-lethal damage at his option. Vang cannot deal non-lethal sneak attack damage with any weapon that can only inflict lethal damage, not even at a -4 penalty.

## Appearance

*“You just bought the best. You say Tai Duc dead, I make him dead tonight. Cut his balls off and feed them to him. No problem, but just make sure all the money is in that case, or I do same to you. And to your wife, to your daughter, even your little slut Vanya. I got knife enough for everybody you know, that no joke.”*

*-Vang Chu, negotiating a contract, 2011*

Vang Chu is a slender Shiftsteel Symbiont of 19, who grew up poor, hard and angry on the worst streets of Cho Tho. His eyes are sociopathic flecks of flint, and his hull is a gleaming black. His knuckles are ringed with faintly luminous azure rings, and blue tracery covers his forearms and knees like glowing spider webs. Vang’s strange body twists and morphs with unearthly dexterity (his Quickflex Hull racial trait), and he moves with ninja like grace, though he has never had a day of formal martial arts training. Vang Chu learned to fight from two places- pirated John Woo movies and the alleys where he grew up and where he murdered his first man at 13.

Vang Chu usually wears only a web-belt to carry his paired balisong knives (with tacky rattlesnake patterned handles) and other equipment when on a mission. Outside of combat, Vang Chu adopts a voluminous hooded kimono to move about the streets of Cho Tho, a city the wealthy, flashy, assassin now considers himself a master of.

## Campaign Use

Vang Chu is a good pre-gen for players who like stealthy, efficient killers and prefer morally ambiguous protagonists. He’s a nasty little sociopath with a pair of well honed knives which are his pride and joy. You can use his statblock for any superhuman gangster or contract killer.

## Shiftsteel Symbiont Ninja (CR 5)

Code Name: Killshade

File Name: Vang Chu

Medium Humanoid (Psionic), Fast Hero 3, Powered Hero 2

**XP** 1,600

**Init** +8 **Senses** lowlight vision, Darkvision 60 ft

**Aura** Probability Curvature (+1 luck bonus on Disable Device checks made within 15 ft of Vang Chu)

**Allegiances** money, the Blacklist

### Defense

**AC** 22 (+3 natural armor, +4 DEX, +5 class)

**HP** 3d8+2d10+5 HP (20 HP)

**FORT** +3 **REF** +6 **WILL** +3

**Immune:** Radiation, Fire, Electrical Damage

**Half Damage:** Cold

**Weaknesses** Symbiotic Autism (helpless for 1d4+1 minutes after rolling a natural 1 on any skill check)  
Bio-Mech Anatomy (-4 on Treat Injury checks to aid Vang unless the medic has the Xeno-Medic feat)

### Offense

**Spd** 30 ft

**Melee** +9 plasma blades, (1d8+1 fire slashing, 20/x3 crit)

+7 unarmed strike (1d4 bludgeoning)

### Statistics

**Str** 11 **Dex** 20 **Con** 13 **Int** 15 **Wis** 13 **Cha** 9

**Base Atk** +4 **CMB** +4 **CMD** 15

**Starting Occupation** Criminal

**Starting Talent** Ebon Hull (+4 Hide in dim illumination or worse)

**Feats** Simple Weapons Proficiency, Brawl, Weapon Finesse, Deceptive, Improved Initiative, Powered Plus, Weapon Focus (knife)



**Skills** Bluff +11, Climb +6, Drive +11, Gamble +5  
Hide +10 (+15 in dim illumination), Jump +4,  
Knowledge (physical sciences) +4, Knowledge  
(streetwise) +7, Navigate +4, Move Silently +15,  
Swim +4

**Talents** Sneak Attack I, Sneak Attack II, Peak  
Human I, Dynamic, Healing Surge

**Languages** Vietnamese, English

**Gear** two masterwork plasma blades, cell phone,  
Lamborghini Diablo with custom paint job

**Action Points** 30 maximum (usually 8 + 1d4 per  
encounter)

**Ability Push (EX):** As a full round action,  
usable twice per day, Vang can receive a +2  
Enhancement bonus to his DEX score and +1  
enhancement bonus to his CON score. These bonuses  
remain in place for one hour.

**Dynamic (EX):** Any time Vang expends an  
action point for any reason, his place in the initiative  
order is improved by +1d6.

**Healing Surge (EX):** Any time you expend  
an action point for any reason, if you are wounded  
you also recover 1d6 Hit Points. This healing can not  
raise your HP total above your normal maximum.

**Quickflex Hull (EX):** +2 racial bonus to  
DEX

**Sneak Attack (EX):** Inflicts +2d6 damage,  
otherwise as the CR 1 version.

### **Campaign Use**

This older, harder and more vicious version of  
Vang Chu has gained two additional Fast Hero and  
two Powered Hero levels. He's chosen *Street  
Enhancile* tech, which is all that available on Mung  
Thoy Than's black markets. His cybernetics are  
glitchy and badly coded, at best, and interact poorly  
with his native abilities. Never the less, they have  
made him a more effective killer.

The older Vang Chu has definitely upgraded  
his gear. He carries a pair of Culture-made plasma  
blades in place of his older balisongs, though he hasn't  
thrown away his old weapons. He keeps his old  
balisong knives above the mantle in the lavish 22

million dollar mansion that he's bought with drug  
money. That same money has bought him his new  
pride and joy, a jet black Lamborghini whose paintjob  
perfectly matches his luminous, blue streaked ebon  
hull.

### **Shiftsteel Symbiont Time Traveler (CR1)**

Code Name: Quanta

File Name: Victoria Tereshkova

Medium Humanoid (Psionic), Powered Hero 1

**XP** 400

**Init** +2

**Senses** lowlight vision, Darkvision 60 ft

**Aura** Probability Curvature (+1 luck bonus on  
Knowledge (history) and Spot checks made within 30  
ft of Tereshkova)

#### **Defense**

**AC** 16 (+1 class, +2 DEX, +3 natural)

**HP** 1d10 +1 HP (11 HP)

**FORT** +2 **REF** +2 **WILL** +3

**Immune:** Radiation, Fire, Electrical Damage

**Half Damage:** Cold

**Weaknesses** Symbiotic Autism (helpless for 1d4+1  
minutes after rolling a natural 1 on any skill check)  
Bio-Mech Anatomy (-4 on Treat Injury checks to aid  
Tereshkova unless the medic has the Xeno-Medic  
feat)

Glowing (-8 on Hide checks in dim illumination or  
worse)

#### **Offense**

**Spd** 30 ft **Fly** 90 ft (good)

**Melee** +1 unarmed strike (1d4 subdual + 1d6 fire  
with Corona active)

**Ranged** +3 plasma bolt (1d6 fire, 25 ft range  
increment, 20x2 crit, usable at will)

#### **Statistics**

**Str** 10 **Dex** 15 **Con** 12 **Int** 18 **Wis** 16 **Cha** 12  
+0 +2 +1 +4+3 +1

**Base Atk** +1 **CMB** +1 **CMD** 13

**Starting Occupation** Time Crossover

**Starting Talent** Split Second Life (See Below)

**Feats** Personal Firearms Proficiency, Light and  
Medium Armor Proficiency, Precognitive Dreams,  
Powered Plus

**Skills** Bluff +3, Computer Use +6, Sense Motive +5, Knowledge (history) +9, Knowledge (technology) +9, Pilot +7, Treat Injury +5

**Talents** Flyer I, Shooter I, Corona

**Languages** English

**Gear** first aid kit, encrypted cell phone, lap top computer

**Corona (SU):** As a move equivalent action, Tereshkova can activate or deactivate her Corona. This fiery aura inflicts an additional +1d6 points of Fire damage on any successful melee attack, or 1d6 points of Fire damage to a grappler per round of contact.

**Split Second Life (SU):** Once per day, Tereshkova can declare that she is remembering/foreseeing a critical juncture. Doing so is a free action, which can be performed even when it is not her turn.

During a critical juncture, Tereshkova receives a +10 bonus on her Initiative score, and is never considered flat-footed. However, during this critical juncture, she suffers a -5 penalty on attack rolls, and cannot inflict critical hits. Once initiated, the critical juncture lasts for the duration of a single encounter.

**Precognitive Dreams (SU):** Tereshkova receives Precognitive Dreams as a bonus feat.

### **Precognitive Dreams (Precursor)**

When you sleep, you occasionally receive uncannily accurate glimpses of your future. You've had precognitive dreams your whole life and always wake up knowing when a nightmare was just a nightmare, and when it predicts real danger in the near future.

**Prerequisites:** Creative, Concentration 2 ranks

**Benefit:** By spending an action point prior to sleeping, your character can trigger a precognitive dream. While dreaming, the player has a chance to dictate some aspects of the coming adventure, allowing the character to be prepared for these specific threats, challenges or situations.

Each precognitive dream allows the player to dictate one aspect of an upcoming adventure, which usually will occur within the next few hours or days of 'game time'. The gamemaster can also choose to provide a precognitive flash of events that are expected to happen further along the campaign's time

line- for example, providing a glimpse of the campaign's main villain relatively early on.

The player can try for any of the following effects:

**Threat Precognition:** The game master provides either the total challenge rating for an upcoming important battle, or provides a list of adversaries of approximately the same challenge rating. The precognitive player selects an appropriate adversary, which can become a random encounter, a minion or a major recurring adversary.

**Challenge Precognition:** Identical to threat precognition, except instead of an adversary, the precognitive character selects an appropriate challenge, such as a skill check, trap or environmental hazard from either a gamemaster approved list or a more general list of challenges by CR.

**Dramatic Precognition:** The precognitive character adds a significant element to an upcoming scene or encounter, subject to game master approval. This new element can't directly conflict with or contradict the ongoing story, or provide the character with an 'instant win', but can provide a concrete advantage to the player if exploited properly.

For example, the player can declare that the next time his character is brought below ½ HP, some kind of power surge knocks out the lights, possibly aiding his escape. Alternatively, the player might declare a setting detail which serves as a useful clue, such as stating that it will be raining when the group encounters the real killer during a mystery plot.

The gamemaster is free to interpret these precognitive demands as he sees fit. For instance, in the second example, the player could have the group meet all the suspects in a mystery during a driving rainstorm, clouding the precognitive's vision slightly.

It requires at least 8 hours of sleep or rest to receive a precognitive vision. If the character's sleep is interrupted, the action point is not expended, and the precognitive vision simply does not occur. If the event dreamed occurs several days or weeks into the future, the precognitive can dream of the same event multiple times, in hopes of clarifying the event's details. Note



that once a vision occurs, the precognitive's actions, or those of his allies might render the future moot.

## Appearance

*"This situation is rapidly becoming untenable. Crossfire, get airborne, and take the right flank. Wolfsword, you and Charm handle those mercenaries. I'll personally deal with Lord Gehenna..... We have about three minutes until he kills Crossfire, and I'd prefer him dealt with before that.*

*-Quanta, laying out a plan of attack for her squad, 2012*

Victoria Tereshkova was a Psi-Watch field researcher in her home time line, until the Collapse happened, and Bradbury Station was ripped from the sky by Blooded Ghost terrorists. She died during the fighting, and at the moment of her extinction, shards of her consciousness blasted backwards in time, awakening the powers of her younger self five years too soon. Circa 2012, Victoria Tereshkova was a promising young physicist still working on her doctorate at NYU. Then, in one horrible and mind-blowing moment, twenty years of future memories forced themselves into her brain, and her body exploded into component molecules. When she reformed, she was both precognitive and Shiftsteel.

Before her transformation, Tereshkova was a slight, dark woman with mousy black hair. Now, her Shiftsteel form has the inhumanly perfect proportions of a department store mannequin. Only her face, sad and slightly curious, is visible beneath a gleaming golden hull, as smooth and reflective as a mirror.

## Campaign Use

Driven by her often confusing dreams, Tereshkova tries her best to prevent the dystopian future she lived with. She has been recruited into Psi-Watch about five years before her memories says she should have, but she does her best to adapt. She makes an excellent, flight-capable blaster, and her precognitive talents make her shockingly effective tactician, if she has a chance to dream, plan and remember.

## Shiftsteel Symbiont Time Traveler (CR 5)

Code Name: Quanta

File Name: Victoria Tereshkova

Medium Humanoid (Psionic), Powered Hero 4, Smart Hero 1

**XP** 400

**Init** +2

**Senses** lowlight vision, Darkvision 60 ft

**Aura** Probability Curvature (+1 luck bonus on Knowledge (history) and Spot checks made within 30 ft of Tereshkova)

### Defense

**AC** 16 (+1 class, +2 DEX, +3 natural)

**HP** 4d10 +1d6+5 HP (25 HP)

**FORT** +5 **REF** +3 **WILL** +5

**Immune:** Radiation, Fire, Electrical Damage, Critical Hits, Precision Based Damage, Energy Drain, Ability Score Damage or Ability Score Drain

**Half Damage:** Cold

**Weaknesses** Symbiotic Autism (helpless for 1d4+1 minutes after rolling a natural 1 on any skill check) Bio-Mech Anatomy (-4 on Treat Injury checks to aid Tereshkova unless the medic has the Xeno-Medic feat)

Glowing (-8 on Hide checks in dim illumination or worse)

### Offense

**Spd** 30 ft **Fly** 90 ft (good)

**Melee** +4 unarmed strike (1d4 subdual + 1d6 fire with Corona active)

**Ranged** +6 plasma bolt (2d6 fire, 25 ft range increment, 20x2 crit, usable at will)

### Statistics

**Str** 10 **Dex** 15 **Con** 12 **Int** 18 **Wis** 16 **Cha** 12

**Base Atk** +4 **CMB** +4 **CMD** 16

**Starting Occupation** Time Crosser

**Starting Talent** Split Second Life (See Below)

**Feats** Personal Firearms Proficiency, Light and Medium Armor Proficiency, Precognitive Dreams, Powered Plus, Hollow Shell, More Perfect Machine, Combat Expertise

**Skills** Bluff +3, Computer Use +11, Sense Motive +5, Knowledge (physical sciences) +12, Knowledge (history) +12, Knowledge (technology) +12, Pilot +10, Treat Injury +8, Repair +8

**Talents** Flyer I, Shooter I, Corona, Shooter Plus, Savant (Computer Use)

**Languages** English

**Gear** first aid kit, encrypted cell phone, lap top computer

**Astro-nav Engine (SU):** Tereshkova's hollow inner hull is laced with worm-hole generators and quantum string computers. Tereshkova can teleport over extremely short distances. A number of times per day equal to 3 + her CON Modifier, Tereshkova can teleport up to 30 ft as a free action. She must have a clear line of sight where she is jumping.

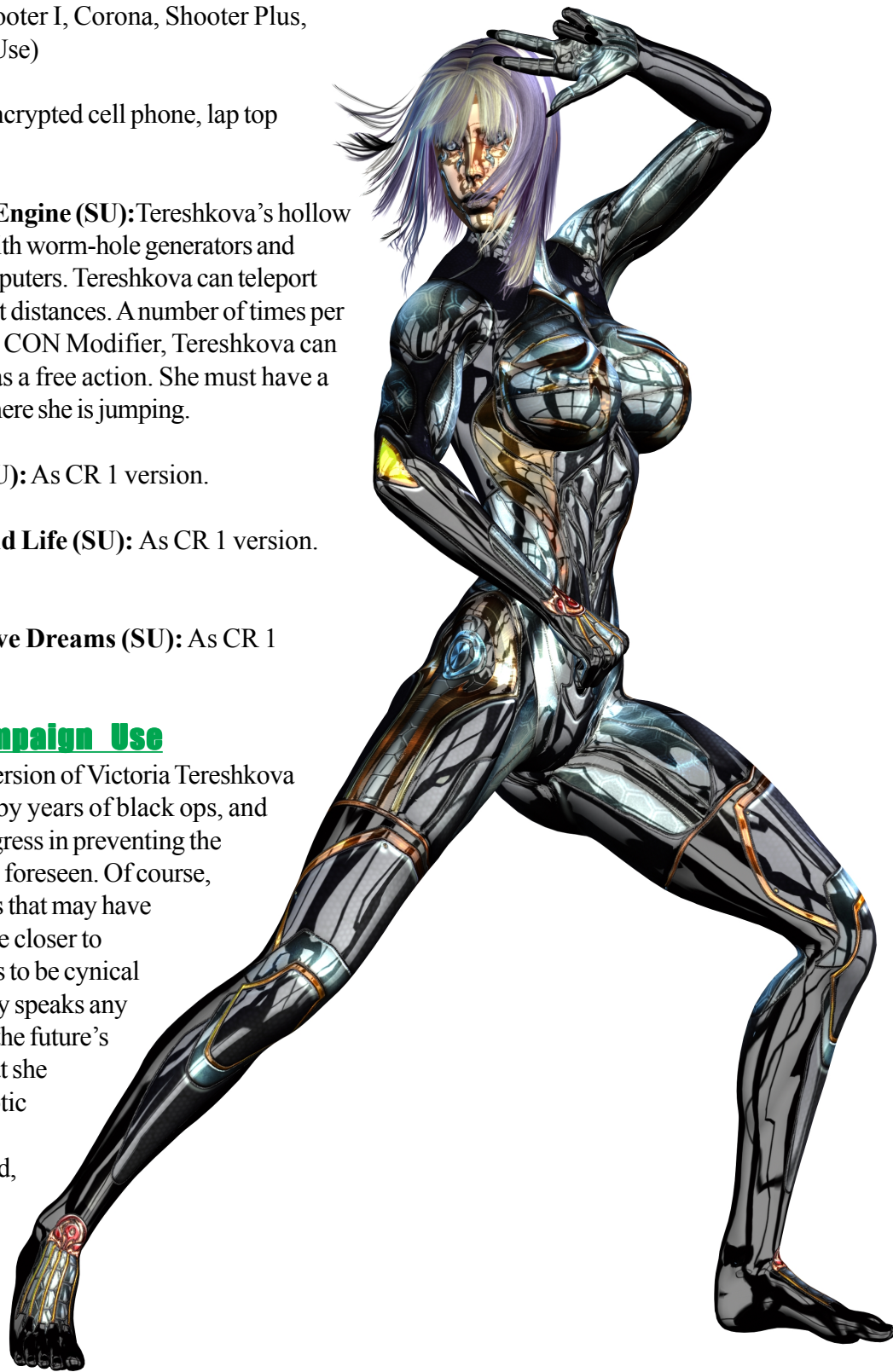
**Corona (SU):** As CR 1 version.

**Split Second Life (SU):** As CR 1 version.

**Precognitive Dreams (SU):** As CR 1 version.

### **Campaign Use**

The older version of Victoria Tereshkova has been tempered by years of black ops, and has made some progress in preventing the horrible future she's foreseen. Of course, she's made mistakes that may have brought the Collapse closer to fruition, so she tends to be cynical and silent. She rarely speaks any more, unless it is to the future's direct advantage that she utter one of her cryptic prophecies. As Tereshkova has aged, she's become more inhuman- she rarely answers to her birth name any more, only responding to her callsign: Quanta.





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